

Most German dialects spoken in Switzerland (collectively known as Schwytzertütsch) belong to the High Allemanic dialect group (Keller 1961). Bärndütsch is the dialect spoken in the Canton of Berne. Our speaker was born outside the city of Berne, but in this recording he demonstrates his knowledge of the city dialect thanks to his advanced education.

Bärndütsch Consonants:

Bärndütsch is typical of the High Allemanic dialects in that the basis of its consonantal oppositions is the fortis/lenis dimension. These fortis/lenis contrasts are produced by varying the amount of vocal tract tension used in the articulation. Voicing and aspiration are not employed as distinguishing features in either the plosives or the fricatives. The lenis fricatives [ʒ] and [ʝ] are allophones of their fortis counterparts. The liquid [r] is a trill.

The fortis fricatives [s] and [ʃ] never occur in initial position. The voiced bilabial glide [w] is usually found in initial position, and has the character of an approximant with the same place of articulation as the lenis fricative [v].

Fortis:	p	t	ts	tʃ	k	kχ
Lenis:	b	d			g	
Fricatives:	f	s		ʃ		χ h
	v	z		(ʒ)		(ʝ)
Nasals:	m	n			ŋ	
	mm	nn				
Liquids:				r	l	
					ll	
Glides:	w				j	

Bärndütsch Vowels:

Bärndütsch has eleven full vowel qualities in both short and long phonemes. Our speaker's dialect seems to have lost the long vowel [u:], however. It also shows the reduced vowels /ɪ, ə/ in unstressed positions.

i(:)	y(:)	u(:)
ɪ(:)	ʏ(:)	ʊ
ɛ(:)	æ(:)	ɔ(:)
	ə	
æ(:)		ɑ(:)

Bärndütsch exhibits six diphthongs.

ɪə	ʏə	uə
ɛɪ	æɪ	ɔʊ

I. Word ListsConsonants:

1	[p]	[pu:r]	"peasant"
2		[papi:r]	"paper"
3	[b]	[buəb]	"boy"
4		[ybəl]	"evil"
5	[t]	[dæŋkχə]	"to think"
6		[glæjtig]	"quickly"
7	[d]	[du]	"thou"
8		[lædəɾ]	"leather"
9	[k]	[kæ:]	"given" (p. part.)
10		[rukə]	"back"
11	[g]	[gæ:]	"to give"
12		[æjgə]	"(my) own"
13	[v]	[vrɑ:gə]	"to ask"
14		[i:vrɪg]	"eagerness"
15	[f]	[dɔ:rf]	"village"
16	[s]	[hejsə]	"to be named"
17		[gʊs]	"street"
18	[z]	[zægə]	"to say"
19		[læzə]	"to read"
20	[ʃ]	[tæʃə]	"bag"
21		[zʊf]	"otherwise"
22	[ʒ]	[ʒrɛklɪχ]	"terribly"
23		[ʒɪəsə]	"to shoot"
24	[χ]	[χʊftə]	"covered trough"
25		[wulχə]	"cloud"
26	[k]	[kʊχɪ]	"kitchen"
27		[gli:k]	"same"
28	[h]	[hozə]	"pants"
29	[pf]	[pfund]	"pound"
30	[ts]	[tsəpfə]	"cork"
31	[tʃ]	[dy:tʃ]	"German"
32	[kχ]	[kχennə]	"to know"
33		[drækχ]	"dirt"
34	[m]	[mit]	"with"
35	[n]	[nɑ:dina:]	"one by one"
36	[ŋ]	[kəŋə]	"gone" (p. part.)
37	[l]	[læ:r]	"empty"
38		[mø:dəli]	"habit"
39	[r]	[jɑ:r]	"year"

40		[rɪəmə]	"strap"
41	[j]	[juŋ]	"young"
42	[mm]	[nymmə]	"no longer"
43	[nn]	[grænnə]	"to cry"
44	[ll]	[uffstəllə]	"to stand something up"
45	[j]	[træ:jə]	"to turn"
46	[w]	[græw]	"grey"

Vowels:

1	[i]	[tsit]	"time"
2	[ɪ]	[frɪdə]	"peace"
3		[hɪndər]	"behind"
4	[ɛ]	[rɛdə]	"to talk"
5		[ɛrχənnə]	"to recognize"
6	[æ]	[gæld]	"money"
7		[næχtɪ]	"last night"
8	[ɑ]	[gas]	"road in the city"
9		[si ɡəŋə]	"they go"
10	[ɔ]	[hɔkχə]	"to sit"
11		[glɔfə]	"run" (past participle)
12	[ʊ]	[tsomft]	"guild"
13		[χlumpə]	"lump"
14	[u]	[hut]	"skin"
15		[uvə]	"up"
16	[œ]	[vrœmd]	"strange"
17		[brœnnə]	"to burn"
18	[ɣ]	[χɣnɪg]	"king"
19		[lypfə]	"to lift"

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20	[y]	[lyt]	"people"
21		[hysər]	"houses"
22	[i:]	[zi:]	"to be"
23		[wi:s]	"white"
24	[ɪ:]	[ʃpɪ:l]	"game"
25		[wɪ:rtʃaft]	"inn"
26	[ɛ:]	[ʃlɛ:g]	"blows, hits"
27		[rɛ:d]	"speech"
28	[æ:]	[ʃpæ:t]	"late"
29		[χæ:z]	"cheese"
30	[ɑ:]	[rɑ:t]	"council"
31		[grɑ:d]	"straight"
32	[ɔ:]	[rɔ:t]	"red"

33		[trɔ:g]	"trough"
34	[u:]	[hu:s]	"house"
35		[bru:χə]	"to use"
36	[æ:]	[bæ:z]	"bad"
37		[dæ:rfə]	"to be allowed"
38	[ɣ:]	[gʃpɣ:r]	"felt" (past participle)
39	[y:]	[ny:t]	"nothing"
40		[zy:ftsgə]	"to sigh"

Diphthongs:

1	[ɛɪ]	[mɛɪnɪg]	"opinion"
2		[frɛɪ]	"free"
3	[ɔʊ]	[ɔʊgə]	"eyes"
4		[bɔʊə]	"to build"
5	[æɪ]	[tæɪbi]	"anger"
6		[χnæɪ]	"knees"
7	[ɪə]	[ʃɪər]	"almost"
8	[ʊə]	[buəsə]	"fines"
9		[luəgə]	"to look"
10	[ɤə]	[mɤəsə]	"must"
11		[fɤəχt]	"damp"

Contrast between initial fortis and lenis plosives:

The preservation of the fortis/lenis contrast between plosives in initial position is perhaps the most interesting phenomenon in Bärndütsch. Strangely, this contrast is not maintained through the use of voicing or aspiration, and the audible distinction between the segments is very subtle. Try listening for a greater degree of "brightness" in the vowel which immediately follows a fortis plosive.

1	bilabial	[bɑ:r tsələ]	"to pay cash"
2		[pɑ:r]	"couple"
3		[bɑχə]	"to bake"
4		[pɑχə]	"baked" (past participle)
5		[bɔʊə]	"to build"
6		[pɔʊə]	"built" (past participle)
7		[bi:gə]	"to pile up"
8		[pi:gə]	"piled" (past participle)

9		[brɑ:tə]	"to roast"
10		[prɑ:tə]	"roasted" (past participle)
11		[bli:bə]	"to remain"
12		[plibə]	"remained" (past participle)
13	alveolar	[diənə]	"to serve"
14		[tiənət]	"served" (past participle)
15		[dɔ:rf]	"village"
16		[dœ:rfə]	"to be allowed"
*this pair is not contrastive in Bärndütsch			
17	velar	[gæ:]	"to give"
18		[kæ:]	"given" (past participle)
19		[gɑ:]	"to go"
20		[kɑŋə]	"gone" (past participle)
21		[gri:fə]	"to seize"
22		[krifə]	"seized" (past participle)
23		[gli:ʁə]	"to resemble"
24		[kli:ʁə]	"resembled" (past participle)

II. Reading Sample:

Two paragraphs from a Bärndütsch text by Swiss author Rudolph von Tavel.

III. Spontaneous Speech

References:

- Keller, R. E. (1961) *German Dialects*, Manchester: Manchester U. Press.
- Russ, Charles V. J. (1990) "High Allemannic," in Charles V. J. Russ (ed.) pp. 364-393, *The Dialects of Modern German*, London: Routledge.