A Description of *äuä* in the Bernese dialect of Swiss-German[1]

Mason M. Hartley

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics

Swarthmore College

2023

Abstract

Äuä is one of the most salient features of the Bernese dialect of Swiss-German. It is mostly used as a phatic interjection, although can also appear as other forms of interjection, as well as an adverb when paired with another discourse marker. It has a wide range of meanings depending on the intonation pattern used by the speaker. Despite entering the cultural identity of the city of Bern, there has been no linguistic research completed on it. In this thesis, I gather some of the discussion about the word and attempt to create a short grammar, displaying some of its many meanings as well as examining the intonation patterns associated with each one.

Table of Contents

i List of figures

1 Introduction

The focus of this thesis is the description of the Swiss-German word *äuä* and its usage, specifically in the city of Bern. *Äuä* is an informal word with a multitude of meanings, appearing sometimes as a discourse marker, specifically as an interjection, and other times as an adverb. Meanings can include an expression of disbelief, *probably,* and *I don't mind,* to name a few. The various meanings are discerned with intonation as well as phrasal position. The intonation across both the word itself and the discourse markers associated with its usage as an adverb have an effect on the meaning. There has been no academic research into *äuä*, despite it being one of the most salient features of the Bernese dialect. This thesis seeks to describe *äuä* and sociolinguistic associations of it, as well as offering examples of usage and a brief description of the intonation patterns associated with its various meanings.

Section 2 provides background on the various sources which I have used to define *äuä,* as well as relevant research on interjections (Amika, 1992) and (Schiffrin, 1987). These sources will also help me define the term interjection as it is used in this paper. A look at the sociolinguistic environment around *äuä* is taken from conversations with native speakers and information found online. The methodology used in order to gather examples of intonation can be found in section 4, with the spectrograms and descriptions given in section 5. This section is divided by part of speech, with instances as interjections being looked at separately to adverbs. Finally, this thesis ends with a discussion examining limitations of the current study, as well as looking at potential avenues for further research.

2 Background

Äuä plays multiple roles linguistically, some of which are not universally defined. Therefore, in this section I will define my usage of the term interjection, as well as providing information from *Berndeutsches Wörterbuch* (Bernese-German dictionary) by Otto Von Greyerz and Ruth Bietenhard which documents and defines *äuä*. This definition is very brief, but provides a good starting point from which I intend to continue.

2.1 Interjections

Interjections have a fairly debated definition, and I will be using *Interjections: The Universal Yet Neglected Part of Speech* (Ameka, 1992) to establish the definition in use throughout this paper, as well as establishing why I consider *äuä* to belong mostly to interjections under this definition. I will also be drawing on Schiffrin (1987) in an effort to define *äuä*. For further discussion of interjections, see Wharton (2007).

Ameka first discusses the history of interjections, explaining that they were first categorised by the ancient Greeks as a form of adverb. Over time they became recognised as syntactically independent, with John Wilkins suggesting that they are a substitute sentence, while others considered them to be paralinguistic, that is, not a part of speech at all, and considered classification impossible.

Ameka then goes on to discuss interjections, making a distinction between primary and secondary interjections. Primary interjections are words that are not used elsewhere in the language, and that can be used on their own or be followed by another utterance. Examples are *oh, ouch,* and *wow* (Ameka, 1992, all following examples from the same source). He also makes a distinction between connectors and primary interjections, in that connectors cannot stand on their own without being an elliptical utterance, while primary interjections can:

> Oh, I have another suit.
>
> And, I have another suit.
>
> Oh!
>
> ??And

When *and* is used by itself, the utterance appears incomplete, and can only be used as such, indicating a request for more information, or to hold the conversational floor. *Oh*, however, is recognised as an entire utterance.

Other features of primary interjections are that they can be morphologically and phonetically anomalous, although this is not a requirement. *Tsk-tsk* is an example of both a morphological and phonetic anomaly, as clicks are not used anywhere else in English, and English words, normally, must contain a vowel. Primary interjections are used to describe a state of the mind, such as an emotion, attitude, or as a response to an event. Secondary interjections are words that can be used in other utterances, but can also be used by themselves to describe a state of the mind. Expletives are also included in this category. Examples would include *help,*

careful, and *shame*. There are also multi-word utterances which do not fulfil the usual requirements for a phrase, yet can stand on their own. Examples include *good god* and *thank goodness*. They share many features of primary interjections, in that they are also used to quickly convey a state of mind and can form an entire utterance, but they are more limited in their usages. Generally their meaning as an interjection is related to their meaning in other categories. For example, *help*, when used as an interjection, will only ever be a request for assistance.

Ameka concludes with a proposal for a categorisation of interjections, dividing them into three main categories: expressive (subdivided into emotive and cognitive) conative, (expressions directed at achieving a want of the speaker) and phatic (for the maintenance of conversation). He also makes clear that the same form can be used across multiple categories. For example, *hey*, which could be used as a conative interjection to get someone's attention, or as an expressive interjection to indicate emotional injury.

In summary, the definition reached by Ameka and the one I intend to use is as follows: interjections are entire utterances that are used to convey the speaker's state of mind, request something from someone, or maintain the conversation. They often, but not always, break a language's established phonetic, morphological, and syntactic rules.

Äuä fits this overall definition, but defies fitting perfectly into any one category formed by Ameka. I would consider it a primary interjection, despite its ability to be used within another utterance. This is because it does not take its meaning from its non-interjection usage as secondary interjections usually do. *Äuä* can be used for a multitude of reasons. It can be expressive, such as when used to show disbelief, but it is primarily a phatic interjection, providing reactions, back channelling, and sometimes complete answers.

Äuä can also appear as an adverb. Schiffrin discusses the distinction between adverb and discourse marker through the example of *now*. When the word itself appears twice in a sentence, it must be being used in both ways, as a time adverb and as a discourse marker. I have no examples of *äuä* being used twice in a sentence, although I don't doubt that this is possible. What is more relevant is that Schiffrin mentions intonation being used to aid identification when there is only one instance of the word in the utterance (Schiffrin, 1987, 231). This is also seen with *äuä*.

2.2 Berndeutsches Wörterbuch

2.2.1 *Äuä*

While there is no linguistic research into *äuä*, it has been documented in an official capacity in the *Berndeutsches Wörterbuch* (Von Greyerz and Bietenhard, 1997). The entry on *äuä* redirects to the entry for *allwäg, allwä, auwää(g)*, all cognates used generally outside the city of Bern. The dictionary entry and translation is as follows:

Adv., 1. Im Satzinnern: jedenfalls, wahrscheinlich (überzeugt), vermutlich, vielleicht (zweifelnd). ... 2. Als Antwort: ja, sicher. ... Iron. ... Ach, warum nicht gar, dummes zeug (eher derb)

Adv, 1. In a sentence: in any case, probably (confident), assumedly, maybe (doubt). ... 2. As an answer: yeah, certainly. ... Iron. ... Oh, why not, stupid thing (rather crude)

The dictionary also contains example sentences, glossed below:

(1)   Bernese-German

Er   het's   allwäg   scho   gmerkt

3.M   AUX.3   probably   DM   notice.PST

He's probably noticed it

There is an important comment to make about this gloss with regards to *scho.* In normal usage, it would translate as *already.* However, in this case it acts as a discourse marker, due to its usage in tandem with *äuä* (in this case *allwäg*). This will be explored further in section 5.2.1.

(2)   Bernese-German

Du hesch   das   allwä troumet!

2.S AUX.2.S   that   ADV   dream.PST

You must have dreamt it!

As will be a theme when glossing *äuä,* it's almost impossible to correctly guess the meaning from only writing. My translations are based on what I believe is most likely given the context.

(3)   Bernese-German

Bosch   chrank? -auwää!

COP.2.S   sick?   -DM

Are you sick? Oh, it's nothing!

This entry confirms that *äuä* has multiple, contradictory, meanings, with no clear written way to distinguish between them. Additionally, that *äuä* can take on multiple syntactic roles, sometimes being used as an adverb (as in the first case) and sometimes as a discourse marker.

It is worth noting that this entry doesn't line up perfectly with my understanding of *äuä*. The main discrepancy is that, according to this entry, as an answer, *äuä* can only mean "yes, certainly", but as will be looked at more in depth in section 3.1,[2] it can be used to mean the exact opposite. This opposite meaning is not present anywhere in the dictionary entry, unless this it is ironic usage and an example of sarcasm. Even so, this dictionary is from 1997, and it's likely that there has been a semantic shift since then, which is to be expected from a word with such a nebulous definition. This entry is still relevant to the thesis, even if it is no longer entirely accurate, since the word is used in a similar fashion and many definitions still overlap. While the meaning has shifted, it hasn't shifted enough to render this entry obsolete.

2.2.2 Cognates of *äuä*

The *Berndeutsches Wörterbuch* introduced *allwäg, allwä, auwää,* and *äuää*, which are all defined identically to *äuä*. The pronunciation of these variations are very similar to *äuä*, and it's apparent from social media posts and discussions with native speakers that *äuä* is the primary form in use in the city of Bern today. The variations in spelling and pronunciation were confirmed by the native speakers I talked with. They explained that they consider them all to be the same word, and that variations are either due to a lack of standardised spelling, or differences in pronunciation across dialects. *Äuä* is the spelling I have chosen to use and focus on, as it appears to be the accepted spelling in the city of Bern, with the others occurring closer to the borders of the Canton. Further research could look at the other variations.

---

[2] The example being referenced is an instagram comment from @lia_15_ which reads: *äuäää (diesmal: sicher nicht) (äuäää (this time: definitely not))*

3 Socio-linguistics

As mentioned previously, there has been no academic research into *äuä* but it's a very salient part of the Bern dialect. As such, has plenty of non-academic information available. According to native speakers, it's so associated with Bern that Swiss people will often attempt to use *äuä* with them after finding out they are from Bern, in the same way someone not from Australia might say "g'day mate" to someone who is. While *äuä* is also used outside of the city of Bern, it is still strongly associated with the city specifically. There is even an "äuä shop"[3] selling shirts, bags, and other items with the word on it. Additionally, conversations online such as travel guides and instagram posts mention the frequency with which this word is used, and the utility it provides, being used to mean just about anything.

3.1 "Dieses Schweizerdeutsche Wort kannst du für ALLES verwenden"

This instagram video[4] from user @loriszimmerli explains that *äuä* can mean *probably*, *are you serious?*, and *of course not*. It then explains that the meaning depends on the tone used by the speaker. In other words, the meaning changes based on the intonation. The video is captioned "*Dieses Schweizerdeutsche Wort kannst du für ALLES verwenden*" (You can use this Swiss-German word for EVERYTHING).

This alone is interesting, but even more important are the comments. There are hundreds of comments, many supporting the video's explanation, although there is some debate over if *äuä* is used in Swiss-German generally, or if it is specific to Bern. @f_ru_b_y comments "*Äuä ist aber nur in Bern gebräuchlich. Liebe nicht Schweizer, äuä sagt man nicht in der ganzen Schweiz*" (But äuä is only common in Bern. It's better not to say Swiss, they don't say äuä in all of Switzerland.). This is supported by multiple comments, although @ummdschafar replies "*im Kanton Solothurn sagt man auch äuä*" (In the Solothurn Canton they also say äuä). It is unclear then exactly how widespread the word is. I believe it's safe to say that it is very common and well known in Bern, and while it may be used in other locations, it is by no means used across all of Switzerland.

The video's explanation of intonation defining the word is also supported by some comments, although this is harder to pin down. Often online, users will vary spelling and

---

[3] https://aua-shop.ch/
[4] https://www.instagram.com/reel/Cu1-ucItsW1/?igshid=NTc4MTIwNjQ2YQ%3D%3D

punctuation in order to imitate the tone that would have been present in a verbal conversation. This is explained in detail in chapter 4 of *Because Internet* by Gretchen McCulloch, titled "Typographical tone of voice". Examples she gives include the Sarcastic Tilde, using multiple letters to lengthen a word, choosing between using new lines or an ellipsis to mark pauses, and even using smileys to soften otherwise harsh expressions :). Her examples are not exhaustive, but the use of repeated letters to lengthen a word, and the usage of ellipsis to indicate any pause are particularly relevant.

  Examples of users doing this with *äuä* are as follows: @monila85_einfachmami comments: "*äuä….? … Komisch - du bisch äuä chli komisch.*" This is glossed below:

(4) Bernese-German

äuä…?   *Komisch*   *du*   *bisch*   *äuä*   *chli*   *komisch.*
DM   weird   you.SG   COP.2.SG   ADV   little   weird
What…?... weird- you're definitely a little weird.

  While I am not a speaker of Bernese German, I am confident my translations are accurate enough to demonstrate my points here. From this example, it is shown that *äuä* is being used in two different ways and the commenter has used variations in their punctuation to help inform the reader of the different meanings, by using the tools at their disposal to mirror spoken tonal variations. The ellipsis followed by a question mark calls to mind a rising tone indicating some form of question.

  Other examples of users attempting to show intonation through writing come from @susa.bi and @lia_15_ who commented, respectively: "*Do säg i numä; äääuäää (sic)*" (do you say that; äääuäää[?]) and "*äuääää (diesmal: sicher nicht)*" (äuääää (this time: definitely not)). The first comment is a joke, so there is no specific meaning behind the spelling used, but it does reinforce the usage of variations in spelling to imply intonation. The second is implying a lengthening of the final vowel, and specifies that this instance means "definitely not". Of course, any concrete analysis of intonation without audio is impossible, but it's clear that this is ingrained enough that meaning can be conveyed only with the internet's accepted substitute for tone.

4 Methodology

This research plans to examine the various intonation patterns associated with *äuä* and to briefly describe their meanings. I decided to interview two native speakers of Swiss-German from the city of Bern. I held an informal interview over zoom, as we had met before and are acquaintances. We started by discussing their personal usage of the word, as well as ways they have heard others using it. We then briefly talked about the social associations of the word and its usage before moving onto elicitation, where I asked them to use it in a sentence with each of the meanings I had encountered in my previous research. They gave multiple examples of each usage that mirrored how they would use in day to day speech. Finally, I asked them if there were any meanings they have heard or used that had not already been said, of which there were a few. They translated each token for me, and often discussed between each other to agree on a meaning. This interview was recorded, then later cropped and analysed in Praat[5]. Based on what I could hear in the interview, I chose to focus on pitch across the word, as well as duration. Additionally, I looked at the sentence position of *äuä.*

   Swiss German Intonation Patterns by Adrian Leemann (2012) looks at the Bern dialect in great detail, however, it made no mention of *äuä* specifically. It is a valuable resource for more analysis of intonation across the dialect, if further research is done into how *äuä* fits more generally into the dialect.

5 Description

In the following section I seek to describe the factors which affect the meaning of *äuä* based on the data I have gathered. I will discuss sentence position and intonation, as well as additional features I came across during my research. Table 1 below shows a summary of the tokens collected, along with the frequency with which they appear:

---

[5] http://www.praat.org/

Gloss	Frequency
Probably	11
Probably Not	4
Surprised	1
Disbelief	3
Maybe not	1
Maybe	6
Surprised (positive)	4
That's rubbish	8
I don't mind/care	5
Total	43

Table 1. Number of tokens collected by definition

The frequency of tokens is not reflective of the frequency of use in natural speech, as these were all elicited. This thesis will not examine the frequency of usage of meanings. However, this gives a good overview of the data I have and therefore of the reliability of my results.

5.1 Sentence position

The sentence position of *äuä* depends on whether it is being used as an interjection or an adverb. It can only be used in the middle of a sentence as an adverb, or as an entire utterance as an interjection. Although the interjection usage is sometimes followed by more information, giving the appearance of occurring at the start of a sentence, it acts as a distinct phrase. It never appears in any usage at the end of a phrase. Table 2 demonstrates the relationship between sentence position and part of speech:

Gloss	Interjection	Phrasal middle
Probably		11
Probably Not		4
Maybe		6
Maybe not		1
Surprised	1	
Disbelief	3	
Surprised (positive)	4	
That's rubbish	8	
I don't mind/care	5	

Table 2. Definition vs phrasal position

5.2 Intonation

In this section I will briefly analyse the intonation patterns associated with a selection of meanings of *äuä*. I have chosen to look at interjections and adverbs separately, as they appear in different environments. In all following spectrograms, the blue line follows the pitch of the utterance. Every spectrogram begins with the word *äuä,* in which the darker areas indicate the /a/

while the lighter section is /u/. Some spectrograms contain a second word, which will be discussed when used.

5.2.1 Adverbs:

It would be most accurate to consider *äuä* as a marker of probability when not used as an interjection, rather than translating perfectly into any particular adverb. When asked, native speakers changed the intonation used based on the probability of an event, but mostly used *probably* as the English translation, although some were translated as *maybe*. Additionally, certain words will almost always appear directly after *äuä* when it is being used as an adverb. During interviews with native speakers, they were always present, however, example 2 in section 2.2.1 demonstrates an adverbial usage without a supporting word. It is unclear if this is outdated usage, a special case, or due to the demographic of the speakers. When used as an interjection, *äuä* is always used in isolation. The words normally present as an adverb are *nit* and *scho*, which translate respectively to *no/not* and *already* in normal usage. *Nit* negates the adverb, while *scho* indicates the positive. Further research could examine the development that led to this usage, although *schon,* the standard German equivalent, is often used as a discourse marker as well. An example is glossed below:

> (5)   High German
> *Ich glaube   scho*
> 1S   believe.1.S   DM
> I think so

In this case, *schon* does not mean or imply *already*. It is required when contesting something someone said, and when agreeing with someone, it implies a certainty and interest that might not be present when saying simply *ich glaube.*

I chose to include *nit* and *scho* when analysing the intonation of the adverbial usage. Spectrograms are as follows:
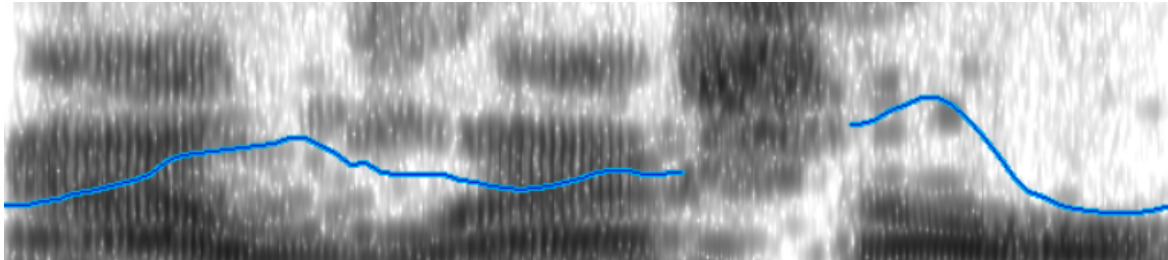
14

Maybe:

Fig.1. Spectrogram of *äuä scho*
meaning *maybe*

Fig.1. displays a rise in pitch across the first /a/, which peaks on the /u/. It then drops for the rest of the word. In this token there was also a glottal stop after the /u/ with the rest of the word being pronounced /wa/. The pitch stays flat for the rest of the word but rises again on *scho* (this can seen in the spectrogram, with the /sh/ appearing where the blue line disappears) where there is a slight rise followed by a steep fall. It then remains flat and low. In this token, the /u/ is lengthened, as well as the /o/ in *scho*.
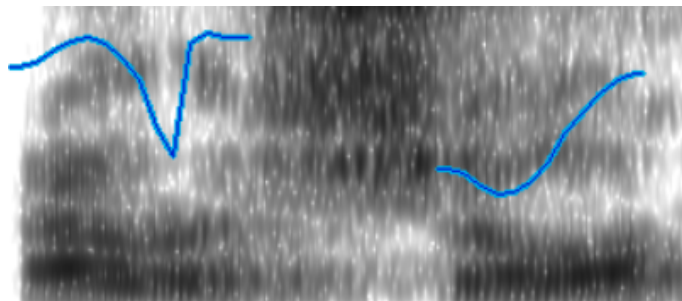
Probably:

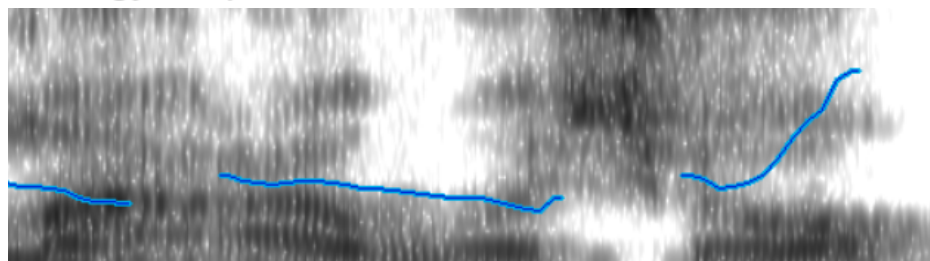Fig.2. Spectrogram of *äuä scho*
meaning *probably*

Fig.3. Spectrogram of *äuä scho*
meaning *probably*

There was massive amounts of variation in tokens meaning *probably*. The two examples shown in Fig.2 and 3 demonstrate some of them. *Äuä* itself varied massively, although generally it had either a fairly flat tone, as in Fig.2., or a slight rise, followed by a fall and then another rise, as in Fig.3. (although the pitch line is slightly distorted, the general pattern can still be seen). The one consistent thing was *scho*, which generally displayed a steady rise. I believe this variation is due to the fact that *probably* can have a wide variety of meanings, all it concretely does is indicate some amount of probability being involved, but while eliciting these tokens, the exact degree was never specified. Therefore, *probably* is too vague a definition to reduce to a single category, and closer research into the amount of probability associated with each utterance would produce clearer and more productive results. The following definitions were more clearly defined, and produced more consistent patterns.
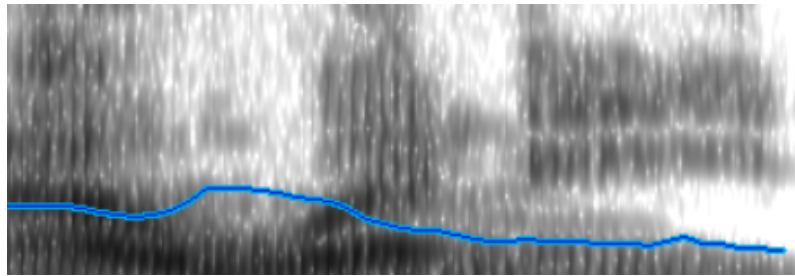
Maybe not:

Fig.4. Spectrogram of *äuä nit* meaning *maybe not*

The pitch line in Fig.4. shows a constant but subtle downward movement. There is a slight rise on the /u/. Additionally, the final /a/ appears to be shortened. *Nit* is said with a flat, low pitch.
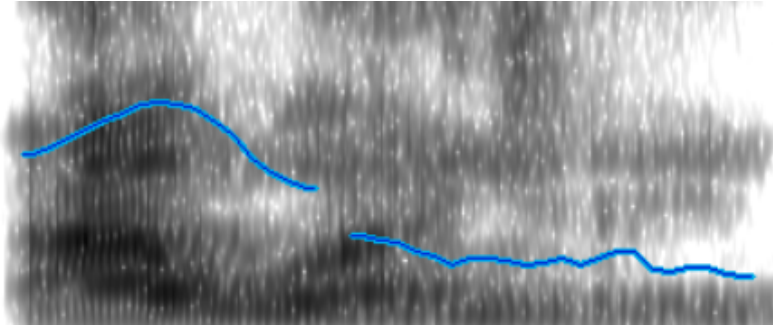
Probably not:

Fig.5. Spectrogram of *äuä nit*
meaning *probably not*

In Fig.5. the pitch starts high and shows an initial lift followed by a steady fall. The /u/ appears to be shortened. *Nit*, as in Fig.4., is said with a low, flat pitch.

From the above examples, it's clear that the intonation used between the various adverbial uses can vary massively. Additionally, the meaning is difficult to categorise into a specific translation when used in this manner.

5.2.2 Interjections

Interjections appear to make up the most common usage of *äuä*, and is where the effect of intonation on the meaning becomes very apparent. I believe it's likely that there are many more meanings than just those that I elicited, which I will discuss more in section 6.1.

I don't mind/care:

I chose to group these definitions together as, while we make a distinction between these in English, it is not the case in German. There was no clear difference in the intonation patterns between them.
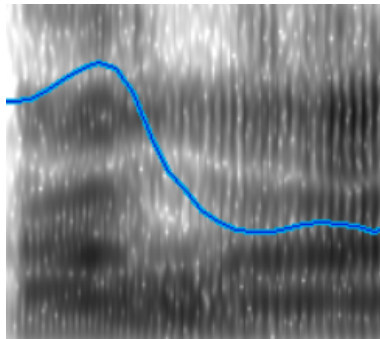

Fig.6. Spectrogram of *äuä* meaning *I don't care/mind* (speaker 1)

At first glance, Fig.6. looks very similar to the spectrogram shown in Fig.5. (*probably not*), however, there are important differences. The pitch here also starts high and shows an initial rise followed by a drop, it then stays flat and low. However, the fall is faster and steeper than in Fig.5. Additionally, here the final /a/ is lengthened whereas in Fig.5. there is no lengthening. The lack of *nit* is therefore not the only difference between these two meanings.
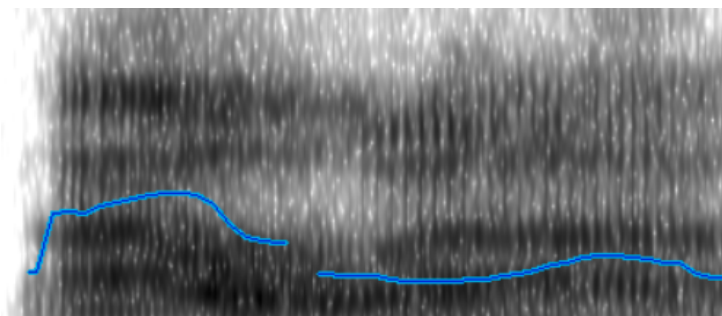

Fig.7. Spectrogram of *äuä* meaning *I don't care/mind* (speaker 2)

Fig.7. demonstrates a second speaker using the same meaning. This speaker uses a lower register and has less movement in their voice. However, the same rise/fall pattern can still be

18

seen. The final lengthening of the /a/ is much clearer here, as well as a lengthening of the initial /a/, which is less evident in speaker 1
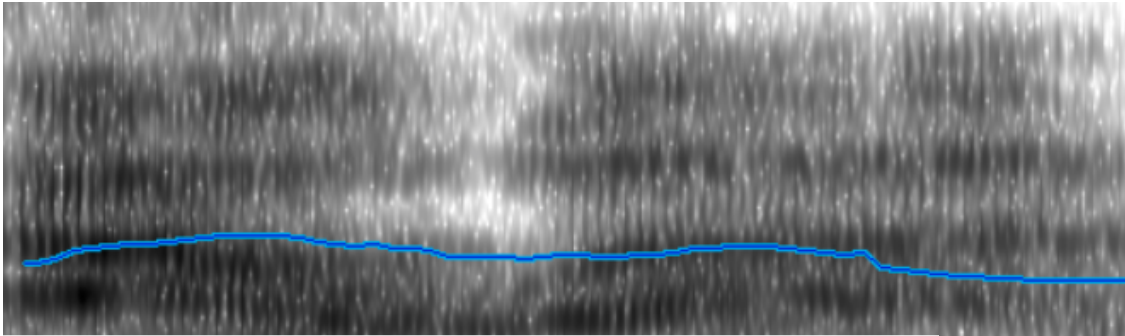
That's rubbish:

Fig.8. Spectrogram of *äuä* meaning *That's rubbish*

The pitch line in Fig.8. shows a subtle rise/fall/rise/fall pattern. Audibly, this is very clear, and it could be due to the pitch range shown that it appears so subtle on the spectrogram. Additionally, there is extreme lengthening of both the initial and final /a/, resulting in a very unique pattern.
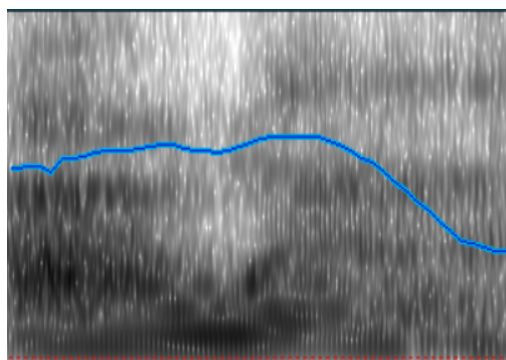
Surprise (positive):

Fig.9. Spectrogram of *äuä*
indicating positive surprise

In Fig.9. the pitch line starts relatively high, and rises slowly until the final /a/ where it drops significantly. Both the initial and final /a/s are lengthened, although the final /a/ is much longer than the initial.
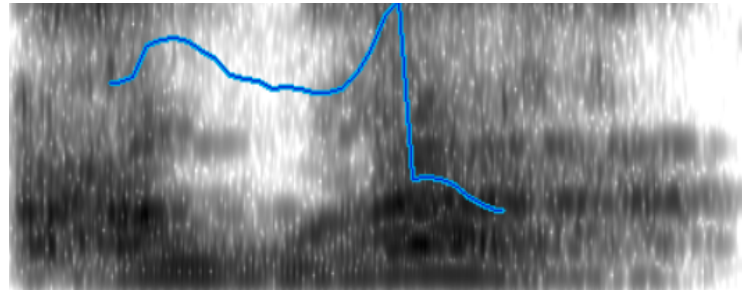
Surprise:

Fig.10. Spectrogram of *äuä*
indicating surprise

The pitch line in Fig.10. is slightly distorted due to the audio quality. However, it is still possible to understand. The pitch begins high and rises sharply on each /a/, with another sharp drop at the end of the final /a/, although not as dramatically as the pitch line would suggest. Additionally, the final /a/ is lengthened while the first is slightly shortened.
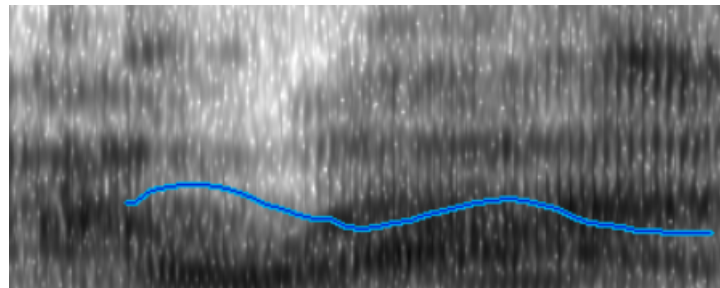
Disbelief:

Fig.10. Spectrogram of *äuä*
indicating disbelief

Fig.11. looks fairly similar to Fig.8 (*That's rubbish*), which makes sense as their meanings are quite similar. An important difference is that this disbelief is softer, indicating more doubt than a complete rejection of the other person's statement. The rise/fall/rise/fall pattern is present, although more exaggerated. This is from the same speaker as in Fig.8., so the increase in movement is due to meaning as opposed to a difference in speakers. Additionally, the final /a/ is

lengthened far more than the initial /a/, but in Fig.8., they were both lengthened by a similar amount.

5.3 Summary and Conclusions

I will start by discussing the adverbs, although I have already discussed this a bit in 5.1 and in 5.2.1. *Probably* was the translation most commonly used but due to the vagueness of it, it included many different actual meanings. Despite that, there was a general trend: the supportive word *scho* usually had a downward pitch when indicating a lower probability, something closer to *maybe*, and a rising pitch when used to suggest a more likely result. Additionally, the negations had fairly consistent patterns, with *nit* always having a low, flat pitch.

The interjections had far more consistent and distinctive patterns, although this could also be due to the number of tokens collected, as I had far more meaning *maybe* and *probably* than I did for each interjection. However, even among them, there was little variation, and often agreement between speakers, as with *I don't mind/care.* This makes me more confident in these results and descriptions.

Among all examples, there are a few recurring intonation patterns: The rise/fall/rise pattern is very prevalent, as in the rise/fall/rise/fall. This could be made stronger by the /u/ causing a natural drop in pitch, as the first fall was generally on the /u/. Duration was then often very important to help distinguish between each pattern, and was seen on all three sounds, although most commonly on the final /a/. Further research could quantify the pitch and length differences to be able to more closely examine the distinctions between each meaning.

6 Concluding discussion

This final section will examine problems with the methodology used, discussing possible solutions as well as reasons why the method used was chosen despite its flaws. I will also, in 6.2, suggest avenues for further research.

6.1 Issues with methodology

My initial plan for gathering data was to pull instances of *äuä* from television shows and podcasts in order to get a more natural usage, but I was not able to find enough examples in the time frame available. There were examples like the instagram reel examined in section 2.1, but

they were few and far between, and it was very difficult to get all the various meanings of *äuä*, let alone multiple instances to ensure consistency. Additionally, as I am not a native speaker myself, I didn't feel confident I had the correct definitions of each instance. With more time and resources, this would have been my preferred method to ensure audio quality and natural usage.

Interviewing and eliciting was ultimately fairly successful, and I don't think the problems are significant enough to seriously affect any results or analysis completed in this thesis. However, the interview was completed over zoom, and I was unable to record both speakers in person. This means that all recordings first went through zoom, which would have affected the quality. The general pattern will have been preserved, and the quality was high enough during the interview that both speakers could understand each other, which is why I don't believe this issue was significant enough to impede the analysis completed here. It would have been much more preferable to have completed interviews in person with high quality microphones.

My interview method was also flawed. It's likely that meanings were missed simply because we didn't remember them in that interview, or because the speakers didn't use that meaning. If I had been able to, I would have liked to have conducted more interviews with a wider demographic of speakers. Both of my speakers were men in their late twenties, who happen to work together. A wider sample size would have helped to ensure I had as many different definitions as possible. Finally, the issue of using *probably* as a translation. It would have been more beneficial to offer more specific probability values in order to more accurately distinguish between meanings. This could be an opportunity for further research in itself.

6.2 Future Research

This thesis seeks to lay a groundwork from which to examine *äuä* from a linguistic perspective. As such, the potential for future research is vast. As well as the various suggestions throughout the rest of this thesis, I will offer more here. Firstly, I only looked at the city of Bern. As brought up in the background section, *äuä* is used at least across the Canton of Bern, and potentially in bordering Cantons as well. Is it used in the same way as in the city? If those dialects have differences in general intonation patterns, will the usage of *äuä* reflect that? Are the cognates mentioned in section 2.2.2 used identically to *äuä* ? There is also a rich sociolinguistic angle. For example, does the usage of *äuä* vary by demographic? As brought up by one of the speakers, there is a stereotype surrounding the word in other parts of the country. Does that then affect how

22

people interact or view others who use *äuä* as opposed to those who do not? There are many questions still posed from multiple linguistic fields, all of which could be avenues for further research.

7 References

Ameka, F. (1992). Interjections: The Universal Yet Neglected Part of Speech. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *18*(2-3), 101-118. https://www.proquest.com/llba/docview/58242074/DEB243A380FD4C47PQ/1?accountid=14194

Boersma, Paul & Weenink, David (2023). Praat: doing phonetics by computer [Computer program]. Version 6.4, retrieved 15 November 2023 from http://www.praat.org/

Greyerz, O. v., & Bietenhard, R. (1997). *Berndeutsches Wörterbuch: für die heutige Mundart zwischen Burgdorf, Lyss und Thun*. Cosmos Verlag

Leemann, A. (2012). *Swiss German Intonation Patterns*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

McCulloch, G. (2019). *Because Internet: Understanding the New Rules of Language*. Penguin Publishing Group.

Schiffrin, D. (1987). *Discourse markers*. Cambridge University Press.

Zimmerli, L. [@loriszimmerli] (2023, July 18), *Dieses Schweizerdeutsche Wort kannst du für ALLES verwenden.* [video]. Instagram. Retrieved September 2023 from https://www.instagram.com/reel/Cu1-ucItsW1/

Wharton, T. (2007, March 17). Interjections, language and the 'showing'/ 'saying' continuum. https://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/PUB/WPL/00papers/wharton.pdf