

THE GERMAN LANGUAGE IN CENTRAL TEXAS TODAY

by Joseph Wilson

There are two major focal points of German settlement in Texas. The Texas Germans discussed in this paper are not from the better-known of the two, the area around New Braunfels and Fredericksburg (treated in the following article by Gilbert Jordan), but from the extensive German communities around La Grange and Giddings, about sixty miles east of Austin. There are of course some differences in the German spoken in the different areas of Texas, but there are more similarities than differences. To summarize the language situation: most of the Texas Germans do not speak a dialect, but modified standard German. That is to say, Texas German does not exhibit the radical differences of a dialect such as Bavarian (or Low German or Swiss German), but is to be compared with the everyday colloquial standard German spoken by the Bavarian (or North German or Swiss, respectively), i.e., standard German with a local coloration. Any two Texas Germans can understand each other perfectly, though they may in some instances note some differences, and they have no trouble understanding a German from modern Germany or being understood by him. We should not lose sight of this basic fact. The differences of one group of Texas Germans from another and from the modern standard language of Germany are very interesting, especially to linguistic scholars, but one must be cautious not to overplay these differences. The German of a farmer from La Grange is of course not exactly the same as that of a taxi-driver in Hamburg; there is no reason to expect that it should be, any more than one would expect English-speaking Texans to talk like Londoners.

As samples of written Texas German, figures 1 and 2 depict typical sections of a Texas German newspaper (in this case, a 1935 issue of the *Giddings Deutsches Volksblatt*, published weekly from approximately 1900 until 1949). Figure 1 shows the masthead with subscription information, homespun poetry calling for faithfulness to the German language, and—embarrassingly enough—a eulogy of Hitler on the occasion of his birthday (evidently reproduced uncritically from the German foreign news agency). In figure 2 we see

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Giddings Deutsches Volksblatt
Erscheint jeden Donnerstag.

J. A. PROSKE, Herausgeber.

Entered in the Postoffice at Giddings
Texas, as Second Class mail matter.



Alle Briefe, Korrespondenzen und
Bestellungen sind zu adressieren:
Volksblatt,
Box 596, Giddings, Texas.

Abonnementspreis:

Erzitt im Voraus zahlbar.

Jährliche Subscription \$2.00

Halbjährliche Subscription . . \$1.00

Nach Deutschland, portofrei . . \$2.75

Donnerstag, den 9. Mai 1935

4. — 35

Leser setzt zu ob ihr obigen Datum
auf eurer Zeitung habt, wenn so,
dann schickt euer Jahresabonnement
in den nächsten drei Wochen ein, dar-
mit keine Unterbrechung in der Zu-
sendung eintritt.

Unsere Leser werden hiermit
freundschaftlich ersucht uns sogleich Mit-
teilung zu machen, im Fall ihnen
das Volksblatt oder andere damit ver-
wandene Zeitungen nicht regelmäßig
gegangen.

Der Herausgeber.

Im Licht und Sonnenschein.

Mit der Sonne in den Rücken
Geht der Schatten uns voran,
Weldes mag uns oft bedrücken,
Alhier auf der Lebensbahn.

Dem das Pilgern in dem Schatten
Stört sehr oft den frohen Sinn,
Doch man selbst im schönsten Garten
Geht oft freudenlos dahin.

Aber laß die Sonne strahlen
Vor uns auf dem Lebensweg,
Wird sie unsern Schatten malen
Hinter uns auf jedem Steg.

Dem wenn wir im Lichte wandern
Lebensfroh der Heimat zu,
Werden wir auch mit den andern
Finden süße Herzensthu.

Dem wir auf den Lebenswegen
Pilgern in dem Sonnenschein,
Können wir durch Gottes Segen
Andern auch zum Segen sein.

Werden in die Zukunft schauen
Voller Hoffnungsfreudigkeit,
Gläubig auch dem Herrn vertrauen
Auf dem Weg zur Ewigkeit.

Wo uns scheint die Gnadensonne
Als ein helles Himmelslicht
Und wir in der reinsten Sonne
Schauen Gottes Angezicht.

Alles Schatten wird dort schwinden
In dem Land der Seligkeit,
Wo wir frei von allen Sünden
Schauen Gottes Herrlichkeit.

Pastor J. Schneider,
Aus dem Sonntagsbote.

Die Nachkommen.

Es war einmal ein Pionier,
Der kam vom deutschen Strand,
Er schoß im Wald das wilde Tier
Und pfliff auf Lob und Tand.

Er jähwang das scharfe Beil mit Wuch
Und suchte öfters mal;
Er zog durch manche tiefe Schlucht,
Und jingend durch das Tal.

Er nie vergaß sein Vaterland,
Stets echt' er Mutterpsach';
Ein deutscher Spend; hing an der
Wand,
Deutsch grüßt er jeden Tag.

Er fand ein edles, treues Weib,

diget werden dürfe. Es entbehrt nicht
der Merkwürdigkeit, daß zu gleicher
Zeit, wo der Ferne Osten sich so gegen
die moderne Monarchie englischen
Musters auflehnt, England selbst und
sein ganzes großes Reich zu gewal-
tigen Feierlichkeiten rühen und an-
lässlich des 25. Regierungsjubilä-
ums König Georgs V. beweisen wol-
len, daß auch dem Briten die Krone
durchaus ein persönliches Symbol der
Treue geblieben ist. Und doch liegt
der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts
nicht mehr im Glauben an die Mon-
archie von Gottes oder von des Vol-
kes Gnaden, sondern im Glauben an
das Volk als nationale und soziali-
stische Gemeinschaft. Die beiden eng-
lischen Minister Sir John Simon
und Anthony Eden haben in den
letzten Wochen Gelegenheit gehabt,
außer Adolf Hitler auch andere Füh-
rergestalten des Kontinents persön-
lich zu treffen. Die beiden großen
Gegensätze, die sich bekämpfen, und
der rote Parteisekretär Stalin im
Kreml und der ehemalige Parteire-
dakteur und Duce des Faschismus
Mussolini. Zwischen ihnen nimmt
Marschall Pilsubski eine Ausnahme-
stellung ein, die dem hohen Alter
und der militärischen Betonung noch
am ehesten mit dem zu vergleichen
wäre, was der greise Hindenburg als
Vater des Vaterlandes den Deutschen
in der schweren Zeit des Uebergangs
gewesen ist.

Der Führer Adolf Hitler ist mit
seinem 46 Jahren jünger als alle die
Genannten und hat keine Vergangen-
heit aus der Zeit vor 1914. Zur
Weltkrieg völlig namenlos als einer
unter Tausenden von tapferen Kriegs-
freiwilligen, hat er voraussetzungslos
erlebt und erlitten, was jeder Mann
und Soldat damals erlebt und erlit-
ten hat. Erst in der Tiefe des Erle-
bens und in der leidenschaftlichen Auf-
lehnung gegen das unmagbare Leid
deutscher Nation hat dieser Mann aus
dem Volk seine persönliche Sendung
gefunden und ist ihr unbeirrt gefolgt,
fünfundzwanzig Jahre lang, bis aus dem
unbekannten Frontkämpfer der erste
Mann in Deutschland geworden war.
Es heißt nicht nur den Nationalsozi-
alismus und seinen Führer völlig
verkommen, sondern auch die Deutschen
als Kulturvolk beleidigen, wenn man

1935 Chevrolet gefallen. Die neuen verbesserten „Knee Action“ verhindert Uebersturz beim Ausblafen der vorderen Reifen und man kann über Graben oder Erdwelle hinweg fahren, ohne daß man die Kontrolle verliert. Kommt und laßt euch überzeugen, daß Chevrolet die beste und billigste Car ist, ehe ihr irgend eine kauft. Wir haben eine gute Auswahl zweiter Hand Cars wie folgt:

1934 Chev. Sedan mit Knee Action.
1933 Chev. Coach, kauft wie neu.

1932 Chev. Coupe, neue Maschine und neue Farbe.

1933 Chev. Coupe, ist extra gut.
Große Chev. Truck, im besten Zustand
1928 Chev. 4 Türen Sedan.

Alle diese Autos sind in bestem Zustand.

Wir sind im Handel für zwei schöne zahme Arbeits-Ges. haben eine schöne zahme Mähre für nur \$20.00 oder wir verhandeln sie für Vieh, haben 3 schöne billige Eisigdränke, der Sommer kommt jetzt herein, so kommt und kauft euch einen Eisigdrank.

Wir handeln für irgend etwas ein, kommt und handelt mit uns.

O. K. Sales Company

Die fünf Billionen „Relief“ Vorlage, die nunmehr Gesetz ist, wird 3,500,000 Menschen Arbeit verschaffen.

Bargain

Nur zwei neuester Sorte McCormick Deering neue Four balancierende Weit-Cultivators, jeder \$47.50

Giddings Machinery and Supply Company.

W. A. Darter, Mgr.

gar nichts mehr von sich hören. Ihr Schwiegerjohn Erwin Rinkus ist mein Cousin; auch Frau Vingnau unsere Väter waren alte Freunde.

Pastor Wickmann sein Schreiben lese ich immer sehr gerne, denn er war auch eine Zeit mein Pastor und die Leute die er nennt bei Gedor, die habe ich auch fast alle gekannt. Viele davon sind nicht mehr, nun die Zeit geht hin und wir mit ihr. Das lese

Kleine Anzeigen

Beseitigt das Jucken.

Wenn Sie an Hautbeschwerden leiden, als Jucken, Ekzema, atletische Füße, Ringflechte, Flechten oder Mittelfeuer (Pimples), so wollen wir Ihnen eine Büchse Mad Hawk verkaufen, unter Garantie, Preis 50c.

P. S. Luecke and Co.

Dixie Theatre
Giddings, Texas

Freitag und Samstag
“Sweet Music”

mit
Rudy Wallace — Ann Dvorak

“Red Rider”

mit Buck Jones

Unser „Gang“ Komödie

Sonntag und Montag

“Rumba”

George Raft — Carole Lombard
sowie Komödie.

Distrikt Court.

Am Donnerstag v. Woche wurde die Anklage gegen einen Neger der angeklagt war, ein Schwein gestohlen zu haben, verhandelt, worauf der Neger zwei Jahre Zuchthaus erhielt.

Am Freitag wurden drei Neger die wegen Diebstahl verklagt wurden zur Suspensionshaft auf je 5 Jahre angelegt.

Am v. Montag wurde die Anklage gegen die Lexington Staats Bank auf Schadenersatz von Milton McGregor eingereicht, vorgenommen, und ist als wir zur Presse gingen noch in Verhandlung.

Das deutsche Volk hat nach 15jähriger Duldung seiner Entrech-

Bekanntmachung.

Unterzeichnete empfiehlt sich dem werten Frauenpublikum zur Anfertigung von Homstiching Säumen an Kleibern, Tischdecken, Bettdecken u. i. w.

Alle Aufträge werden prompt, zufriedenstellend und mäßigen Preisen besorgt.

Frau Emil Hilsberg,
in neuem Heim unweit Touristpark

Eisenbahn-Fahrplan

In Giddings einlaufende Passagierzüge

Nach Austin:	
Tageszug	11:11 vorm.
Nachtszug	2:40 morgens
Nach Houston:	
Tageszug	3:36 Nachm.
Nachtszug	1:45 morgens
Nach Dallas,	12:18 mittags
Nach Waco	8:20 morgens
Nach Yoakum	7:00 abends

Marktbericht.

Mittwoch, den 8. Mai 1935

Widdling,	12:10
Baumvollmehl per Sad ...	\$2.10
Baumvollmehl per Tonne .	\$40.00
Baumvollhülsen per Tonne	\$15.00
Baumvollfamen per Tonne	\$38.00

Hühner per Pfund	12 u. 14c
Ferkel per Pfund	15c
Eier, per Dutzend	19c
Wafers, per Pfd.	10c
Bienenwachs, per Pfund ..	8 u. 10c
Perlhühner, per Stück	20c
Hähne, per Pfd.	04c
Butter, per Pfund	10 u. 12c
Butterfett per Pfd.	18 20c



FIG. 2. ADVERTISEMENTS AND NOTICES from the Giddings Deutsches Volksblatt, May 9, 1935, p. 5.

advertisements for used cars, movies, etc.; a market report giving prices of cotton, chickens, and other farm products; the local train schedule; a court report about civil and criminal lawsuits (the latter concerning "negroes," a comparatively innocent linguistic reflection of the racism of the time), and a fragment of one of the many letters from subscribers, which served both as "letters to the editor" and as sources of local news from the various villages served by the newspaper.

From these newspaper samplings we can see that we are talking about standard German, naturally influenced by English. This is quite in contrast to Pennsylvania German, which is basically Palatinate dialect (*Pfälzisch*) and which is almost as different as Dutch from standard German. The language of this Giddings newspaper is indistinguishable from that of the famous *Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung*, the oldest German newspaper in the state, which was founded in 1852 and published in German for over a hundred years, until 1954. Of course it must be remembered that the language of a newspaper is again not exactly the same as the language of the home, but it obviously has to be fairly close to it (or the folks at home would not be able to read it). The newspapers were, as a matter of fact, one of the several strong factors that tended to preserve the German language and to "correct" it towards the standard language. Furthermore, these small-town German newspapers, with even the ads for used cars and for movies in German, furnish graphic evidence of the former strength of German in Texas. And there were dozens of these German newspapers, existing for many decades, even until after the Second World War.¹ Surely many Americans are unaware that generations of Texans, though native born, lived out their entire lives as Germans—that is, they spoke German in their homes, they had their own German communities with their own churches and private schools, their newspapers were in German, they were baptized, married, and buried in German (and the official documents of these events were in German), and their graves have lengthy inscriptions (Bible verses, poetry, etc.) in their beloved mother tongue. Thus German was not only their home language but their official language for all private and community purposes. Only when they had official dealings at the county or state level did they have to use English.

This strength and all-pervasiveness of the German language was due of course to the fact that the people often immigrated in groups and formed (with other groups) cohesive communities with their own churches—about which their lives centered—and church schools. It is as though a modern group of several thousand Americans would emigrate to the jungles of Brazil in the hope of starting a new and freer life. They would clear the land, start their farms, and—not speaking Portuguese—they would stick together, form their own communities, of course with their own English-language churches, private schools (if possible), newspapers, etc. And they probably would not want their gravestones to be in Portuguese, either.

The German communities in Texas not only maintained themselves in the 1860s, '70s, '80s, and so on into this century, they also put out shoots into the countryside, forming many new German settlements. Even into the 1930s and '40s and through the Second World War, as damaging as it and the First World War were to the German language in America, the German communities maintained their German language, even for the official usage of church and private records, for schools and newspapers. Through the 1930s, few of the people went to secondary school; the eight grades of the German church school were considered sufficient. In the 1940s, however, more and more children began to go to high school, and this meant going to public school, which meant English only, in the days before bilingualism was accepted by Americans. Young men came back from several years in the armed forces of the Second World War finding their German a bit rusty, and actually finding it easier to speak English. More and more young people moved to the city and were thrust into an English environment. Thus began the transition to English, the last stages of which we are witnessing today. In the 1940s and '50s, German was still the basic language of the home. The children of that time, now in their twenties and thirties, though still possessing a native ability to understand German, have usually received no training in reading or writing it and themselves now use English almost exclusively. And their own children—the present younger generation—speak no German. To my knowledge, even in the country, there are virtually no families raising their children in German. There are still German church services at five or six churches in the area, but no longer every Sunday,² and the church business meetings and other affairs are conducted in English. Thus, before our eyes, the active native use of German is passing away. Although there are still tens of thousands of middle-aged and older people who speak German—and for many of them it continues to be their preferred and normal home language—there are no more children being raised in German, so the roots of the vine have been cut through. As the present speakers pass away, so also will Texas German.

As has been mentioned, Texas German is not comparable to a dialect but to a modified standard German. The principal reason for this use of the standard language by the immigrants in Texas (and in America in general), besides the ever-present tendency towards the standard language, especially when used in schools and churches and newspapers, is that the groups did not remain homogeneous enough to maintain a dialect. Immigrants from different parts of Germany found themselves in the same settlements in America, so for mutual intelligibility the standard language was used. Frequently, of course, in a given area immigrants from a particular region of Germany predominate, and the standard language used then has the flavoring of this region. The people from the La Grange and Giddings area are mostly from Saxony, so the few dialectal peculiarities one hears are Saxon (*Obersächsisch*). As a matter of fact, many of these people are Wendish Germans; that is, they

belong to an ancient Slavic group which became encapsulated in the Spree-wald region south of Berlin in the Middle Ages, as the Germans expanded to the east. Down to the present day, these Wends (or Sorbs, to use the Slavic word), of whom there are about 100,000 left in Germany, speak an archaic Slavic language, closely related to Russian. They form the only sizable linguistic minority within Germany. Because of the friendship of East Germany, where the Wendish area lies, with the Slavic countries, the Wendish language now enjoys the status of an official language. In the nineteenth century, however, the Wends were an oppressed minority in Germany. In the 1850s two large groups of Wends left Germany, hoping to find religious liberty, economic improvement, and the freedom to preserve their Slavic language and customs. These two groups were the only large-scale emigrations of the Wends; one group went to Australia, the other to Texas.³ In Texas they founded the town of Serbin, which means 'home of the Sorbs (or Wends),' and in the following decades they and their descendants spread all over this central Texas area. It is ironic that these Wends, who had left Germany to preserve their Wendish language and customs from Germanization, found that their natural brothers and sisters in the new world were the Germans—that they, after all, were Germans, too—and as a result merged with the other German immigrants. After one or two generations the Wends became thoroughly Germanized in Texas, in much the same way that they and the other German immigrants have now become Anglicized. Thus the area around La Grange and Giddings was for decades actively trilingual: in Wendish, German, and English. The *Giddings Deutsches Volksblatt* contained a Wendish column (the only Wendish publication in the Western Hemisphere⁴) until 1939, and even today there are a few older people left (very few) who are natively fluent in all three of these so different languages. The climax of the irony is that in the present last-ditch struggle of those who wish to preserve German, the Wends (i.e., Serbin and vicinity) are the most German of all. The fact that originally their home language was Wendish is another of the several factors favoring standard German: they did not speak Saxon dialect, they spoke Wendish, and, like other Germans, they used a (slightly Saxonized) form of standard German for more official dealings.

The influences on the German of the La Grange and Giddings area are consequently threefold: Wendish, Saxon dialect, and English. Although the influence of English is naturally great, one must be cautious about attributing any given item to English influence, though it may seem obviously to be the case. For example, *schmoken* ('to smoke,' used alongside *rauchen* and *räuchern* in the different senses) seems to be, at first glance, one of the many Anglicisms, and indeed it surely has been influenced by the English word, but its origin is undoubtedly the Saxon *schmoochen* (a variant of standard German *schmauchen* 'to smoke').

In discussing the German of this area, many of the features can be taken as "standard Texas German," and even "standard American German," but others would have to be categorized as "standard La Grange-Giddings German," while a few items might be more specifically restricted to my own relatives and friends than I realize. Only further comparative studies can correctly make such distinctions.

Some of the most noticeable characteristics of the German of this region are the following:⁵ In pronunciation, the umlauts are unrounded (as commonly in Texas German and American German and—again illustrating the way the influences often converge—in Saxon), i.e., *ö* and *ü* are pronounced as if written *e* and *i*, respectively. In some words long *e* is shortened, so that one may hear *geben* 'to give' and *leben* 'to live' pronounced as if spelled *gebben* and *lebben*. In other environments, however, the distinction between long *e* and long *ä* is maintained in a fashion that seems almost hypercorrect, e.g., *spät* 'late' does not rime with *geht* 'goes,' as it does so frequently in colloquial standard German. Another peculiarity of this area is that the pronunciation of the written *w* (as in *wissen* 'to know,' and *wohnen* 'to dwell') is quite similar to (but not exactly the same as) the English *w*; again, this is not an Anglicism but a Saxonism, possibly strengthened by Wendish. As a matter of fact, this German *w* is used by some people when speaking English, where English requires a *v*, yielding such pronunciations as *Nowember* and *wery*—quite the opposite of the usual "German accent" substitution of *v* for *w* ("*it vas vunderful*"). Final unstressed *e* is not dropped (except in verbs, as commonly in colloquial standard German, e.g., *ich geh* 'I go'), as it is in some areas of Texas German, but is given a kind of half-stressed long-*e* pronunciation (*eine gute Lehre* 'a good lesson'). The *r* was naturally originally the front trilled *r* of older German, tending to become *d* or *t* in certain positions; thus, while *fahre* 'drive' and *Beere* 'berry' are pronounced in approximately the standard way, the plurals *fahren* and *Beeren* are commonly pronounced as if written *fadd'n* and *Bedd'n*. Similarly, *schwarz* 'black' and *Bart* 'beard, mustache' usually sound like *schwatz* and *Batt*, the latter giving rise to a humorous table-saying: *bist du satt, putz dein Batt* 'if you're finished eating, wipe your mustache, i.e., clean your mouth.' Younger speakers tend to use the American *r*, one of the few cases of sound substitution from English. Naturally, however, those younger people whose native language is really English and who do not know much German may make wholesale substitutions of English sounds, as in *Wie geht's, Onkel Paul?* with severely Texas American pronunciation of the *w*, *e*, and *au* (the latter two being the "Texas twang" versions of English *ay* and *ow*); but this is not typical of the active native speakers.⁶

As in colloquial standard German, words are often syncopated to make for more rapid speech, so that *wohnen* 'to dwell,' *verheiratet* 'married,' *schadet* 'hurts,' *mehrere* 'several,' and *hübscheste* 'prettiest' become *wohn*, *verheirat*, *schatt*, *mehre*, and *hübschste*, respectively. These changes and many other of

the deviations from the standard are often done subconsciously, and the speaker may well give the standard form if asked about it specifically, and he would almost always write the standard form.

The most important grammatical characteristic is the loss of the genitive and dative cases in the spoken language (and considerable case confusion in the written language). This loss of cases, common in American German, which sounds so appalling to those versed in standard German, should really be viewed dispassionately—or even welcomed—for what it actually is: a two-thousand-year-old general trend toward the simplification of the case system, found not only in all Germanic languages, but throughout the entire Indo-European language family, which has resulted in the marvelous case-simplicity of modern English, Dutch, Scandinavian, French, etc. We should try to remember this when the Texas German says *reich mich* (instead of *mir*) *die Butter* 'hand me the butter,' or *sie liegt auf die* (for *der*) *Erde* 'she is lying on the ground,' or *er ist gut zu die Kinder* (for *den Kindern*) 'he is good to the children.' As in many forms of colloquial German (and other Germanic languages), the possessive genitive is regularly replaced by circumlocutions like *die Kinder ihr Zimmer* 'the children their room' = 'the children's room.' Similarly common in colloquial German is the great preponderance of the perfect tense rather than the simple past: *er legte sich hin und schlief ein* 'he lay down and went to sleep' would hardly be heard in American German, but rather *er hat sich hingelegt und ist eingeschlafen*.

It should be borne in mind, as one contemplates these few simplifications, that no all-out slaughter of German grammar or vocabulary or pronunciation has occurred; far from it: 90% of what an American would call the difficulties of German are preserved flawlessly, e.g., the complete *der-die-das* gender system, the verbal endings (*ich komme* 'I come,' *du kommst* 'you come,' etc.), the participles (*sprechend* 'speaking,' *gesprochen* 'spoken'), the word order, etc.

Other German colloquialisms that are widespread are the use of *tun* 'to do' as an auxiliary in the present tense (*er tut fischen* 'he does fish[ing]' = 'he is fishing') and in the subjunctive (*er täte fischen* 'he would do fish[ing]' = 'he would fish') and the use of *was* ('what') as universal relative pronoun (*die Leute, was da wohnen* 'the people what [= who] live there').

There are a few grammatical peculiarities which seem to be restricted to this area; since they have parallels in older German, they may well be centuries old. An interesting verb usage is found in such forms as *ihr wird* 'you will,' *ihr nimmt* 'you take,' and the corresponding imperatives *nimmt* 'take,' *gibt* 'give,' etc., in which the more regular forms *werdet*, *nehmt*, *gebt*, etc., have been replaced, evidently because of an analogy with the third person singular (e.g., *er wird* 'he will'). An adjectival deviation which cannot be called a simplification is the employment of the inflected form of *unser* 'our' and *euer* 'your' in such phrases as *unsers Haus* 'our house.' The dropping of the article is very common in participial phrases and certain other usages, as in *sie ist in*

Küche 'she's in [the] kitchen' and *wir müssen kleine Weile warten* 'we have to wait [a] little while.' In the English of the area (i.e., the English spoken by the Germans), there are similar omissions of the article, but not always congruent with the omissions in German, e.g., *he went with Smiths* (for *the Smiths*), *at quarter to seven*, and *it costs dollar twenty-five*.

I have been able to find only relatively very few dialectal or otherwise unusual German words or forms used. In my article on unusual lexical items (see note 5), I list about 250 items, but many of these are only slightly different from standard German, such as *ansteckig* for *ansteckend* ('contagious') and *Aten* for *Atem* ('breath'). Some of the more interesting forms in common usage in this area are *ich darf, wir dürfen*, etc., for *darf, dürfen* 'to be allowed'; *die Älte* for *das Alter* 'age'; *brinklig* for *krümelig* 'crumbly'; *ermachen* for *schaffen* in such phrases as *es ist zu spät, wir werden's nicht mehr ermachen* 'it's too late, we won't make it'; *klietschen* for *klatschen* 'to slap, swat'; *gramhaftig* for *geizig* 'stingy'; *jagden* for *jagen* in the sense of 'to hunt [game],' contrasting with *jagen* in the sense of 'chase' or 'run'; *jukeln* for 'to poke along, drive too slow,' and the derivative noun, as in *so ein Gejukele!* 'what poking!'; *Gescheeche* (i.e., *Gescheuche*) for a strange-looking person; *Kusenk* (*Couseng*) for *Vetter* 'cousin'; *panschen* 'to spill'; *Pateten* 'sweet potatoes' for the standard German *Bataten*, possibly influenced by the English word *potatoes* (but regular potatoes are always called by the standard German term *Kartoffeln*); *Schiewer* 'splinter'; *strakt* 'straight'; *tickschen* 'to pout'; and *tschutschen* 'to suck.' The examples given are the common usage in the La Grange and Giddings area; almost without exception they are regionalisms from Saxony (or the neighboring Silesia). Such dialect words will naturally vary from region to region of American German. A few of these words might not be understood by a New Braunfelser, just as, conversely, a few of the latter's terms, such as *prattschen, knettschen, and Flatsch*,⁷ would not be understood around La Grange.

The gender almost never deviates from the standard; an example of its occurrence is *das* (for *der*) *Ast* 'branch.' Similarly rare is a non-standard plural form such as *Näme* 'names'; however, an analogical plural ending of *-n* or *-s* is often added to distinguish the plural in the case of words whose standard plural does not differ from the singular, e.g., *die Lehrer/Lehrern/Lehrers* 'teachers,' *die Fenstern* 'windows.'

As is common in American German, 'in town' and 'to town' are always *in Stadt* and *nach Stadt*. Similarly universal in American German is *gleichen* for 'to like' (*ich gleiche das nicht* 'I don't like that'), which, however, by no means has eliminated the standard *gefallen* and *gern haben*.

Strangely enough, there are almost no words from Wendish used in German or English. The only one I know of that was commonly used in German is *der Braschka*, the man in charge of the food at a wedding, obviously taken over because of its handiness and the lack of an easy German

equivalent. The common term *der Bobbak* 'boogie man' is of Slavic origin, but probably was long since used in Saxon German.

There are various categories of English words used in Texas German. Some, like *der Belt*, *der Phone*, *der Store* (pronounced as if written *Schtohr*), *die Road* (like *Roht*), *die Yard* (like *Jatt*), *die Car*,⁸ have been Germanized only to the extent of occasional modifications of pronunciation plus the assumption of German gender. Surprisingly enough, the gender is quite stable, although the reason a certain word has taken a certain gender may at times be impossible to ascertain. The English words adopted and the genders attached to them agree to a remarkable extent with those adopted by other German groups in the United States and Canada. It is, of course, only natural that new concepts such as *die Roach*, *die Mosquito*, *der Airplane*, and such handy terms as *plenty*, *sure*, and *all right* should have been taken up, but in other cases, for example *der Basket*, *der Belt*, *der Bucket*, etc., one wonders why the German word fell into neglect. In some cases, the loan words have evidently been adopted in order to expand the vocabulary for the provision of new distinctions. Thus *die Road* is used in contrast to *die Strasse* ('road' vs. 'street'), paralleling the English differentiation (whereas standard German employs *Strasse* for both meanings). Similarly, *painten* 'to paint' is used for the painting of houses, walls, etc., as opposed to the standard *malen*, which is reserved for the painting of pictures or otherwise painting in bright colors. Naturally, the verbs and adjectives adopted receive the necessary endings, e.g., *sie haben ihr Haus gepaintet* 'they have painted their house'; *sie hat ein neues pinkes Kleid gekauft* 'she has bought a new pink dress.'

Although *der Korb* has been replaced by *der Basket*, the German idiomatic meaning of 'refusal' has survived, transferred to the English word, as in *sie hat ihn ein Basket gegeben* 'she gave him a basket,' i.e., 'she refused him.' Besides such "hybrid idioms" there are, of course, many "hybrid compounds" like *Butchermesser* 'butcher knife,' *Pecanbaum* 'pecan tree' (which could, as a matter of fact, be considered standard German, now that pecans are known in Germany), *Bibhosen* 'bib-pants' = 'overalls,' and even *zwei-Bit* 'two bits, i.e., 25 cents.'

Other English words have been given a more Germanized form, e.g., *die Quilte* 'quilt,' and sometimes a German plural (*Quilten*, *Fencen*).⁹ Sometimes curiosities of number usage have arisen, as in the common employment of *Okries* as a plural instead of the English collective singular *okra* (*unsre Okries sind reif* 'our okras are ripe'). Conversely, the English word *cotton* sounded like a German plural and was so used (*die Cotten brauchen Regen* 'the cottons need rain') and a new singular was derived from it: *die Cotte*, meaning a single boll of cotton. The use of *cotton* as plural has gone over, consistently enough, into the people's English ("those cotton look good"). In a few other cases, also, their English reflects the German number, even though the English word

is not used in their German, e.g., *that weeds, that grapes, a scissors* (with the singular number of the German *Unkraut, Wein, Schere*).

In observing the easy transfer of English words into the German, the outsider might easily get the mistaken notion that this German is a chaotic mishmash in which any word may at any time be replaced—in whole or in part—by English. This is not at all the case. The basic vocabulary that was brought over from Germany has remained virtually unchanged. It is only overlaid with certain English words, mostly such words as were learned in the new world for new concepts—and even this overlaying is only partial, because some new German words found their way across the Atlantic, e.g., *Auto* (used alongside *Car*), *Kaugummi* 'chewing gum,' *Luftschiff* 'airship' (which took on the meaning 'airplane'). What may be said in Anglicized form and what may not is rather rigidly fixed. The Texas German will say *die Lampe* (which is, by the way, not an Anglicism) *ist ausgeplugt* 'the lamp is unplugged,' utilizing the basic German verbal prefix *aus* 'out,' coordinated with the new (English) word *plug*, which has been given the normal German participial form. One might have expected **entplugt* (via a different German analogical route) or even a more thoroughly Anglicized form such as **ungeplugt*, but these would never be used. Similarly the Texas German will say *die Electricity* (or *Elektrizität*) *ist abgeschnitten* 'the electricity is cut off,' translating the English idiom exactly and resulting in German which is grammatically correct but unidiomatic. Such basic words as *ab* 'off' and *schneiden* 'to cut' would never be replaced by the English equivalents; thus, such imaginable forms as **offgeschnitten*, **abgecut*, and **offgecut* cannot occur.

These last considerations bring us back to my initial contention that this Texas German is still essentially good standard German—not at all a dialect comparable to Bavarian or Low German or Pennsylvania German. Now that Germany is a modern, prosperous nation, and allied to us in bonds of friendship, and when a trip to Germany is within the financial scope of the average citizen, one can only lament the fact that the native speaking of German in Texas is all but gone. One cannot help wondering what strength Texas German might have today if the present favorable conditions had prevailed a generation ago.

NOTES

This paper is a revision of an address given at a symposium on the German Cultural Heritage of the Southwest, which was held in Dallas on October 11, 1975, under the sponsorship of the Southwest Chapters of the American Association of Teachers of German (see the Foreword to this volume). The address was published with minor changes in *Schatzkammer der deutschen Sprachlehre, Dichtung und Geschichte* 2 (1976): 43-49.

1. Karl J. R. Arndt and May E. Olson, *German-American Newspapers and Periodicals 1732-1955* (2nd rev. ed., 1st reprint, Johnson Reprint Corp., New York, 1965), pp. 614-635 (the section on Texas, which lists over 130 publications from 35 different cities).

2. See, for example, the church directory in current issues of the *Giddings Times and News* (newspaper).

3. George C. Engerrand, *The So-called Wends of Germany and Their Colonies in Texas and Australia* (*University of Texas Bulletin No. 3417*; Austin, 1934); Reinhold Olesch, "The West Slavic Languages in Texas with Special Regard to Sorbian in Serbin, Lee County," in Glenn G. Gilbert, ed., *Texas Studies in Bilingualism* (*Studia Linguistica Germanica* 3) (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970), pp. 151-169.

4. Arndt and Olson, *German-American Newspapers*, p. 623.

5. For more details, see my articles "The Texas German of Lee and Fayette Counties," *Rice University Studies* 47 (No. 1): 83-98; and "Unusual German Lexical Items from the Lee-Fayette County Area of Texas," in *Texas Studies in Bilingualism*, pp. 142-150.

6. It would be most interesting if someone would make some careful "generation studies," showing the changes from the older to the younger generations; e.g., the transitions from Wendish to German to English, and (within the German) the loss of cases and the assimilation of English words. One not-so-obvious fact that would be brought out would be the abruptness of the loss of the language, once the transition has set in: the loss is essentially effected in one generation. Thus, after several generations of more or less practical monolingualism, the children (of a single family or of a community) find themselves in a different linguistic world from their parents (German vs. Wendish, English vs. German); these children become the transitional, actively bilingual generation. Their own children are then monolingual in the new language. Similarly, although one could trace the increase, for example, in the number of English words used in the German, the situation is not at all such that this number becomes greater and greater and finally predominates. As long as German is used, the vocabulary is always at least 90% German stock; otherwise—within the family or in the case of the individual speaker—the shift is made to English (which then again is at least 90% "pure").

7. Fred Eikel, Jr., *The New Braunfels German Dialect* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1954), p. 38.

8. As in the case of *schmoken* and a number of other words, *die Car* is not purely an adoption of an English word but an adaptation of a German word (*die Karre* 'cart') to a slightly different meaning and/or pronunciation, i.e., the coalescence of a German and an English word. One can still hear older people say *die Karre* for 'car,' but it has been almost completely supplanted by *die Car*. By the way, the Texas German thinks it is amusingly incorrect to say *der Wagen* for 'car,' as modern standard German does, because he still uses this word only in its original meaning of 'wagon.'

9. Similarly, *die Gate*, plural *Gaten*; however, *die Box*, plural *Boxen*, is probably another of those words which, despite their appearance, are not recent adoptions.