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**Gone with the Wind?:  
German Language Retention in North Carolina  
and the United States in Comparative Perspective**

**German-speaking immigration and the German language in the United States<sup>1</sup>**

According to the 1990 United States Census descendants of German-speaking immigrants represent the largest ancestral immigrant group in the United States. But not much of this fact is reflected in the retention of German language, ethnic institutions, and culture.<sup>2</sup> Once a first ranking foreign language in the United States spoken by an estimated nine million of Americans in 1910, both World Wars and anti-German hostility are blamed for the loss of German. The steep decline of the German language in comparison to their former representation in the United States has provoked among researchers gloomy comments. Eichhoff, for example, stated pessimistically that, except for a few loan words and names—often negatively loaded because of Germany's ever-present Nazi past in the American public and media—not much has remained of an ethno-lingual German tradition in the United States (Eichhoff 1985, 238). Although Eichhoff's view may exaggerate the degree of language and ethnic identity loss (as Fishman 1985 and Ammon 1994 have pointed out), there is little disagreement among researchers that the decline of German language use in the context of both World Wars represents one of "the largest assimilation process(es) that ever occurred in a single speech community, in a single nation, in one country" (Huffines 1985, citing Kloss 1980).

In contrast to popular opinions, I argue that the disappearance of the German language in America was not merely the result of anti-German and nativist "Americanization" policies (ranging from public ostracism to internment and deportation of German-speaking "enemy aliens" during and after World War I), nor was it primarily the German elements moral isolation, psychological

defeat, and retreat into passivity and silence before and during World War II, as for example Hakuta (1986, 167f.) claims. I will argue that from a comparative perspective the fate of German language use in the United States is not so different from that of most other European immigrant languages. Even without the undeniable accelerating negative impact of both World Wars on the German-American community and its institutions, German language loss would have occurred given long term trends of voluntary assimilation, the decline of German-American institutions, and reduced immigration from German-speaking countries, trends that had already begun in the late nineteenth century.

I will in the following discuss general factors and developments of language maintenance and retention struggles on a national level and then look at similar processes in North Carolina on regional and local "micro" levels. I also will explore some of the conditions of German language maintenance in comparison with other non-English immigrant languages, such as Spanish, French, Italian, Polish, and Dutch.

The three hundred-year history of immigration,<sup>3</sup> cultural maturation, and language maintenance of more than nine million German-speaking immigrants to the United States from Germany, Austria, Switzerland and certain areas in France, Central Europe, Poland, Romania, Russia, and other countries is a most fascinating subject, not least because German-speaking immigrants were a comparatively heterogeneous religious, cultural, social, intellectual, and linguistic cross-section of people that shaped in many ways American society.<sup>4</sup> In some regions immigrants from German-speaking countries and their offspring of many generations still represent a relative majority of the population. The current distribution patterns of German-Americans and their descendants in the North and Midwest were visible by the mid nineteenth century. For example, in 1860 most German-speaking immigrants had settled in the Middle Atlantic States (where 39 percent of the population was German-born), East North Central States (25 percent German-born), Pacific States (13 percent German-born), West North Central States (7 percent German-born), and South Atlantic States (6 percent German-born). According to the 1890 Census, Americans claiming German ancestry represented the largest group in seventeen states along the northern border of the continental United States and Alaska (Eichhoff 1985, 224f.; Conzen 1980, 412). However, following the literature, large numbers of German language speakers in some areas were never sufficient to replace English as the dominant language (contrary to the Mühlenberg legend), nor were German-speaking Americans able to maintain their distinctive ethnic features in the long run against prevailing assimilation pressures. In fact, various attempts to institutionalize German as a second official language in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries failed because of the difficulties achieving bilingualism at the



local level, not to mention attempts at the state or national level (Eichhoff 1985, 225ff.; Adams 1993, 26). Studies also confirm that in relation to its number, the German-speaking element in the United States has maintained only very weak institutions, common bonds, pressure groups, and an almost non-existent cultural and language identity. Some of this may be explained by the above mentioned diversity of country of origin, cultural and social background, religion, and area of settlement, which from the beginning of German-speaking immigration was reflected in many varieties of spoken and written German found in the United States, consisting of many Anglicized, Northern and Southern German dialects, and even regional American-German idioms like Pennsylvania "Dutch" (Eichhoff 1985, 230ff.). Diversity was so great, that in some areas English actually acquired the status of a "lingua tertia" to bridge otherwise impaired communication among speakers of German language dialects (1985, 234).

In addition to a lack of unifying identity, diversity of origins, and ingrained internal discord between, e.g., "Club Germans" versus "Church Germans," or Catholics versus Protestants and Liberals (see Rippley 1976, 22; Kloss 1978, 223ff.), other "internal"<sup>5</sup> and "external"<sup>6</sup> factors contributed to the fast assimilation of immigrants from German-speaking countries already before both World Wars.

According to historians the American Civil War became a watershed in the German-Americans integration into United States society. The German-speaking immigrants mostly pro-Union patriotic surge encouraged the acquisition of United States citizenship and disproved widespread nativist anti-German resentment (anti-Catholic "Know-Nothing" movement) in the early and mid-nineteenth century. By 1875 acculturation and assimilation of about six million German-speaking immigrants into the American mainstream culture was progressing faster as ever before, although continuing immigration from German-speaking areas fed thriving ethnic institutions (schools, press, clubs, etc., see Table 1) at the same time. But language retention was made more difficult by increasingly rigid school legislation after 1880 that gave predominance to the English language and rejected notions of cultural autonomy in education, to the point of revoking language privileges given since 1777 to denominational schools and immigrant communities.<sup>7</sup> The predominance of interaction in English in secondary schools and institutions of higher education, combined with assimilation of the of upper-class German-American elite in business, law, politics, and mass culture removed at first slowly, and then at an accelerated pace, the basis for a continuous use of German language and dialects. The lack of bilingual education in schools corresponded among the second and third generation of immigrant children a decreasing use of German as the main

language among family members and in the religious and social spheres (church services, newspapers, clubs, unions, cultural institutions, and associations). In addition, the number of intermarriages between German-speaking immigrants and English, Irish, and other immigrant groups increased (Eichhoff 1985, 228).

Industrialization and urbanization (followed by more individualist, secularized, and suburban lifestyles), increased geographical and social mobility, and the spread of a consumption-oriented mass culture further decreased rural isolation and ethno-cultural segregation of immigrant groups which originally had supported the immigrants's language retention. These processes not only eroded communal life, cultural institutions, ethnic bonds, traditional values, and customs but also weakened the importance of religious affiliations for the retention of non-English languages in everyday life. The use of German or its dialects became more and more a sign of inferiority, rural backwardness, and self-isolation (Huffines 1985, 243, Eichhoff 1985, 238).

In other words, the use of German in public was already in decline before World War I, influenced by the dissolution of conditions of rural isolation and social segregation (with the exception of territorially segregated religious sects such as the Old Order Amish, Hutterites, Mennonites and others). In addition, the lack of official support for school education in German and the functional loss of German in everyday life, where it was not any more required for the sustenance of business contacts or as an entrance into an occupational career, weakened the languages retention among the German-speakers. As Huffines (1985) observes, the immigrant community approaches

a threshold of contact with the dominant society beyond which it becomes impossible to retain the ethnic language. The school systems do not support the mother tongue of children who are raised speaking German [at home]; churches must meet the religious needs of younger generations who can no longer follow the teachings in German; secular clubs are irrelevant to German-Americans who comfortably interact with the dominant society and have come to accept its values. . . . Without the institutional support . . . increased interaction with the dominant society is accompanied by a language shift to English. (Huffines 1985, 249)

These trends of assimilation were further accelerated (but not caused) by anti-German legislation, propaganda, and hysteria after America's declaration of war against the German Empire in 1917, since these events severed in particularly the ties between second, third, and fourth generation descendants of German-speaking immigrants and institutions of German-American public life. In fact,



neither the immigrants's ethnocultural institutions nor the German language recovered significantly in the 1920s and 1930s, although Anglo-Saxon chauvinism, nativism, and anti-German sentiments abated. It was now the increasing "melting" pressure of "Americanization" that prevented a resurgence of non-English communities, institutions, and languages in general. The only difference between the German-speaking community and other groups was that the period of decline and neglect of the German language respective to ethnicity and its retention in America was to receive another accelerating blow. The rise of Nazism and America's involvement in its defeat created a second strong wave of anti-German resentment that led to an almost total extinction of ethnic institutions, cultural, and language bonds that seemed to have survived during the inter-war years. In addition to low public prestige of openly displayed sympathy with Germany and the German language, declining numbers of new immigrants from German-speaking countries with a strong motivation to retain their language and culture in America weakened ethnic institutions and language retention further.

In the post-World War II years non-English language survival seemed to increase its chances. "Melting pot" policies and "America-centrism" became less prominent in public discourse. However, the almost uncontested advance of American values and civilization on the one hand and pseudo-scientific arguments brought forward by educational psychologists on the other hand gave bilingualism a bad name and effectively suppressed retention and acquisition of non-English languages until the mid-1970s, as Census statistics indicate. That trend was only halted by ethnic revival movements that started in the mid-1960s. Debates about minority rights, multiculturalism, diversity, and pluralism increased the number of those who claimed the use of non-English mother tongues and those who identified more strongly with their ancestry, including persons with German-American heritage.

But the abstract notion of identification with ancestry, ethnic symbols, or cultural habits as such does not necessarily affect language acquisition or even retention, unless combined with other factors such as new immigration and the rebuilding of ethnocultural institutions that foster the use of a foreign language in "primary" (family, neighborhood) and "secondary" (community, schools, churches, clubs, media) groups. In that respect only Spanish can be considered an effectively retained immigrant language in the United States today.

In the case of the newly discovered identification of Americans with their real or assumed German ancestry, the lack of huge waves of most recent immigrants from German-speaking countries and the rather declining institutional basis of German-Americans support Fishman's statement that their new ancestral identification "cannot be explained on either natural demographic

Table 1. Historical Overview of Immigration, Assimilation, and Language Retention of German-Americans.

	Colonial Period 1683-1776	Post-colonial period 1777-1819	Industrialization 1820-1919	Between WW I and II 1920-1949	Post WW II 1950-1994
Strength of immigration (Germans in % of all immigrants)	medium (0.2 million, about 10%)	medium (0.5 million, about 10%)	high (5,946,000 or 16.5%)	medium (0.623 million or 10.7%)	low (1,018,000 or 4.2%)
Main destinations	Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey	Northeast, Midwest	big cities, Midwest, South, and West	scattered in mostly urban areas	scattered in mostly urban areas
Spatial concentration and location	high (rural)	high (rural)	high to medium (rural-urban)	medium to low (urban)	low (urban)
Immigrant type	farmers and craftsmen from Southwest Germany in search of religious freedom	farmers, craftsmen, cottage industry workers, and mercenaries from West and Northwest Germany	farmers, farm hands, day laborers, industrial workers, and intellectuals from South, West, and Eastern Germany	blue and white collar workers, academically educated immigrants	GI-spouses, business people, educated and skilled persons
Ethnic institutions	communities, churches	communities, churches, schools	communities, churches, schools, press, clubs, unions, cultural institutions and associations	press, clubs, associations, radio broadcast	few press, TV, and radio broadcast
Assimilation pressures and opportunities (see text)	low	low	medium to high	very high	high
Ethno-national identity/ language prestige (see text)	low	low	medium to high	high to medium	medium to low
Degree of language retention (see text and Table 2)	high	medium to high	high to medium	medium to low	low



or immigration grounds. It is almost entirely attributable to a redefinition of self-concept on the part of many who had previously denied the German mother tongue" (1985, 254).<sup>8</sup> In other words, the revival of ethnic awareness or ancestral identification did not effectively change or contradict the ongoing assimilation of German-Americans and the decline of language use over generations. However, this could be observed among almost all non-English European immigrants and language groups and thus was not unique to German. In the 1970 Census 17 percent of all Americans (33 million persons) reported a language other than English as the language spoken at home when the respondent was a child. A general decline of non-English language use in subsequent generations could be observed too. According to the United States Bureau of the Census (1973) and community studies (see Hayden 1978), 82 percent of all "first generation" immigrants reported the use of a non-English mother-tongue. However, that figure dropped to 59 percent in the next (second) generation of immigrant descendants, and only 7 percent of the third and later generations of immigrants reported a continuing non-English language use.

In the case of German-speaking Americans the gap between ancestral identification and continuing language loss is particularly striking. While almost 58 million adult Americans claimed in the 1990 Census some degree of German ancestry, only 1.5 million respondents reported the use of German as a mother tongue.<sup>9</sup> If one considers the almost 1.9 million immigrants from German-speaking areas between 1921 and 1990 (excluding their American-born children, probably many growing up in a bilingual environment), the separation of ethnic identification from language use becomes obvious. The figures even indicate a language loss among German-born. Again, the phenomenon of foreign-born immigrants giving up their mother-tongue is not limited to German speakers but can be observed among other groups (such as Dutch-born immigrants), confirming Hayden's (1978) findings about language assimilation. Continuously shrinking numbers of non-English European language speakers point into the same direction for Polish, Italian, and French.

If one compares immigration, institutionalization, and language retention indicators over the last decades (Table 2), the relationship among these factors become evident. In the case of German only a few religious groups (Pennsylvania "Dutch," Mennonites, Amish) were able to keep their German dialects because of their isolation and continuing dependency on separate schools, churches, and local institutions (Fishman 1985, 263). Poles and Italians had thriving ethnic, cultural, and religious institutions, communities, interest groups, and bonds in relation to their ancestral group size until the 1980s. Since then their ethnic ties and representation in media (press, television, and radio) are weakening and student enrollment in foreign language classes and nonpublic

Table 2. Non-English Language Retention and Corresponding Ethno-Lingual Institutions in the United States

	German	Spanish/ Mexican/ Puerto Rican	French	Italian	Polish	Dutch	N/All
Legal immigrants 1901-1920 (% of all 6 language groups)	1,665,314 (21.9%)	390,543 (5.1%)	515,657 (6.8%)	3,155,401 (41.4%)	1,800,000 (23.6%)	91,980 (1.2%)	7,618,895 (100%)
Legal immigrants 1921-1940 (% of all 6 language groups)	597,879 (25.1%)	564,983 (23.7%)	417,129 (17.5%)	523,343 (22%)	244,760 (10.3%)	34,098 (1.4%)	2,382,192 (100%)
Legal immigrants 1941-1960 (% of all 6 language groups)	822,531 (39.5%)	622,806 (29.9%)	311,047 (14.9%)	243,152 (11.7%)	17,529 (0.8%)	67,137 (3.2%)	2,084,202 (100%)
Legal immigrants 1961-1980 (% of all 6 language groups)	321,997 (8.9%)	2,444,676 (67.9%)	360,661 (10%)	343,479 (9.5%)	90,773 (2.5%)	41,098 (1.1%)	3,602,684 (100%)
Legal immigrants 1981-1990 (% of all 6 language groups)	91,961 (3%)	2,747,468 (90.5%)	32,353 (1.1%)	67,254 (2.2%)	83,252 (2.7%)	12,238 (0.4%)	3,034,526 (100%)
Census ancestry in 1990 in million (% of all ancestral groups)	57,947 (23%)	13,611 (5.5%)	12,488 (5.0%)	14,665 (5.9%)	9,366 (3.8%)	6,227 (2.5%)	248,710 (100%)
Immigrants admitted 1921-1990 in million (% of all immigrants)	1,843 (7.1%)	8,009 (30.8%)	1,121 (4.3%)	1,177 (4.5%)	436 (1.7%)	155 (0.6%)	25,992 (100%)
Speaking a non-English language at home (age 5+) in 1990 in million (% of all non-English speakers)	1,547 (4.9%)	17,339 (54.5%)	1,703 (5.4%)	1,309 (4.1%)	723 (2.3%)	143 (0.5%)	31,800 (100%)
Speaking a non-English language at home (age 5+) in % of Census ancestry 1990	2.7%	127.4%	13.6%	8.9%	7.7%	2.3%	12.8%



Speaking non-English language at home (age 5+) 1990 in % of immigrants admitted between 1921-1990	83.9%	216.5%	151.9%	111.2%	165.8%	92.3%	122.3%
Absolute change of non-English language speakers at home (age 5+) adjusted for immigrants admitted between 1980 and 1990 (% of change 1980-90)	-178,542 (-11.2%)	3,042,532 (+26.3%)	-61,798 (-3.9%)	-391,254 (-24%)	132,252 (-16%)	-15,238 (-10.4%)	2,540,956 (11%)
Places of worship in non-English language in 1979	1.9% (Penn. Germans 12.7%)	18.6%	1.3%	2.0%	3.4%	N/A	13,409
Ethnic mother tongue schools in 1979	2.8% (Hutterites Penn. German 10%)	11.3%	1.8%	1.2%	2.0%	0.02%	6,445
Non-English press in 1880*	80.5%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	770
Non-English press in 1910**	53.1%	3.4%	2.7%	5.8%	4.8%	3.5%	1,043
Non-English press in 1930**	19.8%	8.3%	3.8%	11.5%	11.4%	2.7%	737
Non-English press in 1960*	9.2%	15.5%	4.0%	6.6%	5.8%	0.8%	698
Non-English publications in 1979	5.0%	16.9%	2.0%	4.4%	6.3%	0.5%	953

Non-English language radio instruction in 1960*	16.7%	21.4%	45.2%	9.5%	4.8%	N/A	42
Non-English broadcasts in 1970*	10.9%	30.7%	8.4%	11.4%	15.2%	0.1%	761
Radio broadcasts in non-English languages in 1980	7.7%	37.6%	5.1%	6.9%	10.4%	0.5%	2,2471
Non-English language class attendance in private elementary schools in 1886	280,000	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Non-English language class attendance in private elementary schools in 1990	350,000	N/A	80,000	N/A	70,000	10,000	600,000
Non-English language class attendance in nonpublic elementary schools in 1935	20,000	N/A	100,000	23,000	300,000	N/A	550,000
Non-English language class attendance in nonpublic elementary schools in 1960	5,000	30,200	127,000	4,000	10,600	N/A	250,000
Foreign language enrollment Gr. 9-12 in public secondary schools, Fall 1948 (% of all students)	43,000 (0.8%)	443,000 (7.9%)	254,000 (4.5%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	741,000 (13.2%)
Foreign language enrollment Gr. 9-12 in public secondary schools, Fall 1960 (% of all Students)	151,000 (1.8%)	933,000 (10.9%)	744,00 (8.7%)	20,000 (0.2%)	N/A	N/A	1,867,000 (21.7%)
Foreign language enrollment Gr. 9-12 in public secondary schools, Fall 1970 (% of all students)	411,000 (3.1%)	1,811,000 (13.6%)	1,231,000 (9.2%)	27,000 (0.2%)	N/A	N/A	3,514,000 (26.4%)



Foreign language enrollment Gr. 9-12 in public secondary schools, Fall 1990 (% of all students)	295,000 (2.6%)	2,611,000 (23%)	1,089,000 (9.6%)	40,000 (0.4%)	N/A	N/A	4,093,000 (36.1%)
Non-English class attendance Gr. 7-12, 1990	333,213	N/A	1,292,778	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Foreign language student enrollment in two- and four-year colleges in Fall 1960	146,000	179,000	229,000	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Foreign language student enrollment in two- and four-year colleges in Fall 1970	202,000	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Foreign language student enrollment in two- and four-year colleges in Fall 1980	126,725 (13.7%)	379,250 (41%)	248,825 (26.9%)	35,150 (3.8%)	N/A	N/A	923,000
Foreign language student enrollment in two- and four-year colleges in Fall 1990	133,348 (11.3%)	533,984 (45.1%)	272,472 (23%)	49,728 (4.2%)	N/A	N/A	1,184,000
Foreign language student enrollment in two- and four-year colleges in Fall 1995	96,263 (8.5%)	606,286 (53.3%)	205,351 (18%)	43,760 (3.8%)	N/A	N/A	1,138,772 (8% of all students)

Bold figures = areas in which a group is relatively over-represented in relation to its ancestral representation or the average. Sources: 1996 Statistical Yearbook of Immigration and Naturalization Service (1996:26, own calculations), Fishman (1985, 258f). Data with \* from Kloss (1977) and \*\* from Fishman (1978).

Enrollment in foreign language courses compared with enrollment in grades 9 to 12 of public secondary schools, see U.S. Department of Education (1995, Table 56, p. 69). College enrollment in 2,399 institutions, see MLA survey, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 7, 1996.

ethnic mother tongue schools are stagnant or decreasing, as my data indicate. In the case of the heterogeneous group of Spanish speakers (including 2.7 million Puerto Ricans, who officially are not counted as immigrants), language retention and even expansion benefits from continuous immigration from Spanish speaking countries, and the popularity of the language, which is reflected in increasing enrollments in public secondary schools and colleges. Spanish (and to some extent French and even German) also benefit from provisions that guarantee the representation of foreign language education in schools, higher education, and the media.<sup>10</sup>

All of these factors together can, in the best case, prevent rapid language decline or may even allow language retention on a high level. Continuous new immigration is probably the most important factor shaping the "vitality" and survival rate of an immigrant language group. If new immigration declines and if pressures as well as opportunities favor integration or assimilation, then language retention is difficult. Exclusion, discrimination, and segregation of a group, however, can speed up or slow down language retention. Ethnic institutions and resources also mediate this process.

Considering current trends in immigration and immigrant policies, immigrant minority birth-rates, and institution-building among new immigrants from Central and South America and Asia, one can expect that America's future language map will look differently. Whereas Spanish will probably retain its rank as the first and foremost foreign language, the popularity and position of French (rank 2) and German (rank 3) will most likely be challenged by Asian languages, such as Chinese. Similarly one can predict that with the continuous trends of reduced European immigration into the United States, European languages like Italian, Polish, Dutch, and their respective ethnic and cultural representations will most likely stagnate or decline, unless specific factors, such as those discussed above, turn the tide.

### **Language Retention and Loss: The Case of North Carolina**

In the first section, I discussed general trends of language maintenance on a national level. I concluded that "internal" factors such as assimilation, the degree and character of immigration, ethnocultural institutionalization, domestic language policies as well as "external" political events can explain the loss of a language in the long run, not only in the specific case of the German language group but also for other non-English languages. Our understanding of these processes increases if we also compare and analyze them in a regional and local context because different "micro" environments can decisively shape the vitality of a language-group. Therefore, I will in the following section specify processes



of language survival looking at the German community in North Carolina in comparison with other non-English foreign languages. I will ask how has the German (and for that matter Spanish, French, Italian, Polish and Dutch) language fared in a somewhat different Southern setting in comparison to national trends.

Swiss and Southern Germans mostly from Palatinate founded New Bern near the Inlet Sounds of North Carolina 1710. Since the late 1740s until about 1775 an ever increasing number of German-speaking immigrants began to settle in North Carolina when real estate prices in Virginia and Pennsylvania went up and many immigrants decided to trek along the "Great Wagon Road" to less populated areas (Hammer 1965: 25ff.). Given the low population density at those times, a relatively numerous group of several thousand Lutheran Germans settled with Ulster Irish and Scotch-English in the Yadkin area in Western Piedmont (Rowan, Cabarrus, Davidson, Lincoln, Stanly, Iredell, Wilkes, Catawba, and several other counties). Moravians (Mährische Brüder), arriving from Savannah after 1753, settled west of Greensboro and around Salem (Guilford, Forsyth, Alamance counties). At their height, German-speaking immigrants represented about forty percent of the local population in some regional pockets. Tight religious, community, and family bonds and the early establishment of church-supported elementary and secondary schools (Kloss 1978, 215, 217), of Sunday schools (Nixon 1912: 38ff.), and of sermons and religious services in German and by German ministers (Hammer 1965: 35ff.) preserved the use of original German dialects for more than two generations. However, when the influx of new settlers ceased after 1790 and new German-speaking immigrants began to settle further north and in the Midwest (parallel to the expansion of the Western frontier), the scattered rural communities in North Carolina with their now fewer German-speaking pastors, schools and other institutions with instruction in German, and without support from a German press failed to retain German monolingualism. "Children who, at the age of fourteen or fifteen, had completed the course in religion in the 'German schools,' attended the 'English school'; and some parents began reading books printed in English" (Gehrke 1935, 4). After a bilingual transition period which lasted until about 1825, even the conservative Lutheran church—which originally was the main bulwark of German language retention—had to accept the new reality and became the assimilationist "Reform Church." With the loss of supportive institutions and lack of new immigration, the use of the German language declined steadily. In addition to secularization, intermarriage with neighboring Scottish, Irish, and English immigrant communities, an increase of social and geographical mobility, and the predominance of schooling in English weakened further social cohesiveness and language retention. Finally, the ability

to read and to speak German disappeared in families, church sermons, and in teaching. In other words, the German-speaking population in North Carolina became assimilated long before the war-related anti-German campaign between 1917 and 1920 and Hitler's Germany hastened the disappearance of German elements in other parts of the U.S. (Gehrke 1935, Hammer 1965, Rippley 1976, 171). The last German service during synodical convention in North Carolina was reported in 1849 (Gehrke 1935, 16) and Hammer (1965, 97) traces the last regular German church sermon performed in North Carolina to the year 1883. "Thus, about one hundred years after the pioneer Pennsylvania-Germans had come to North Carolina, the German language had almost entirely disappeared" (Gehrke 1935, 17). Between that era and now, German influence has survived mostly in architecture, surnames, a few customs, and some scant memories about German cultural heritage.<sup>11</sup>

After World War I, three distinct waves of German-speaking immigrants arrived in North Carolina. Mostly skilled and highly qualified Jews and other political refugees arrived between 1933 and 1941 but left few marks on the "language-map" since they had little motivation to retain their German mother tongue and cultural heritage, given the circumstances of their departure from Europe.<sup>12</sup> After 1950 an increasing number of so-called GI-spouses arrived with their returning American husbands from military service in Germany. These German immigrants (estimated to be at least 2,000 persons) were concentrated in areas with strong military presence, such as Fort Bragg and Fayetteville. The group's concentration in military enclaves or outposts (often isolated from the surrounding community), their relatively weak ethnic identification and other disincentives, such as their small number, in combination with voluntary assimilation into mainstream America, did not advance the establishment of a vibrant language community, except for one German-American club in Fayetteville and some informal networks.

A third and highly scattered influx of German-speaking business people and employees ("contract Germans"), plus teachers, academics, scientists, and students occurred with the expansion of international trade and the establishment of industrial and research parks in North Carolina since the late 1960s.<sup>13</sup> The latter immigrants are mostly concentrated in the urban areas of Charlotte and the so-called Research Triangle-Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill. Observers agree, that many in this group are highly mobile, temporary residents, and rather individualistic in their outlook, willing to blend fully into their multiethnic and multicultural environment. More recently, increasing numbers of short-term tourists from German-speaking countries (Germany, Austria, Switzerland) are visiting North Carolina's mountains, shores, and other attractions, but their presence will—as is demonstrated by other states with high



volumes of foreign tourists—most likely leave no significant or lasting imprint on the language chart of North Carolina.<sup>14</sup>

However, there are some indications that an ethnic heritage revival after 1980 and increased interest in bilingual education by some native-born and new immigrants may have slowed the decrease of non-English language use in North Carolina. In fact, the increase of German and other non-English speaking persons, in particularly between 1980 and 1990, is in contrast to the nationwide decline. According to Table 3 all compared languages gained ground, though differently. Adjusted for recent immigration,<sup>15</sup> the number of Spanish speakers increased 117 percent, followed by French (56 percent), an—ranking third—German (49 percent) before Italian (42 percent), Polish (38 percent), and Dutch (4 percent).

In addition to an increased identification with ethnocultural heritages, factors such as the high status of French and the geographical affinity of Spanish-speaking America, including the existence of a tight and residentially segregated Hispanic and Mexican (mostly lower class) subculture in North Carolina, have favored Spanish and French language acquisition and retention, at least for the first immigrant generation. Without the stabilizing factor as the third most frequently-studied foreign language in school and college (after Spanish and French) and the prominence of Germany during and after unification, the growth in German language use might have been less pronounced, like other languages with lower public status and/or weak institutional foundations in North Carolina such as Polish, Italian, and Dutch. This demonstrates again the importance of domestic factors for language maintenance, the degree of ethnic identification, the existence of institutional “anchors” (school), public image/prestige, and the influence of (often short lived) historical events, such as German unification.

This said, however, one has to recognize some methodical limitations of the data. Some indications exist that respondents answered the ambiguous Census question about “speaking a language at home” differently, i.e., not only as a measure of their daily interactions in a foreign language “at home,” as intended by the Census Bureau, but also as a measure of some proficiency, former study, or a positive attitude toward a non-English language (see also Ammon 1994, 42, n. 2).

Like the national data, the Census for North Carolina also revealed the existence of a skewed relationship between the number of respondents who declare a particular ethnic ancestry and the number of persons who speak the corresponding non-English language (see also Table 2). As mentioned earlier, the shift from the “melting pot” ideology towards more pluralism and awareness of non-English ancestry among a large segment of the population in North Carolina

Table 3. Non-English Immigration and Language Retention in North Carolina

	German speakers	Spanish speakers/ Hispanics	French speakers	Italian speakers	Polish speakers	Dutch speakers	N/All
Census ancestry in 1990 (% of all ancestral groups)	494,166 (7.5%)	69,020 (1%)	51,366 (0.8%)	46,763 (0.7%)	22,124 (0.3%)	30,297 (0.6%)	6,628,637 (100%)
Immigrants admitted 1980-1990 (% of all immigrants)	1,995 (3.8%)	12,490 (24.0%)	883 (1.7%)	235 (0.5%)	717 (1.4%)	250* (0.5%)	52,090 (100%)
Immigrants born outside the U.S. speaking a non-English mother tongue in 1970 (% of all)	6,472 (22.9%)	2,273 (8.1%)	1,355 (4.8%)	724 (2.6%)	431 (1.5%)	500* (1.8%)	28,206 (100%)
Immigrants born outside the U.S. speaking a non-English language (age 5+) in 1980 (% of all)	11,539 (18.6%)	5,200 (8.4%)	2,440 (3.9%)	1,400 (2.3%)	719 (1.2%)	707 (1.1%)	62,000* (100%)
Immigrants born outside the U.S. speaking a non-English language (age 5+) in 1990 (% of all)	9,303 (10.9%)	22,647 (26.5%)	3,510 (4.1%)	915 (1.1%)	1,371 (1.6%)	1,029 (1.2%)	85,374 (100%)
Speaking a non-English mother tongue at home in 1970 (% of all non-English speakers)	21,890 (23.3%)	13,779 (14.7%)	11,283 (12.0%)	5,073 (5.4%)	3,526 (3.8%)	1,600* (1.7%)	93,988 (100%)
Speaking a non-English language at home (age 5+) in 1980 (% of all non-English speakers)	15,244 (11.8%)	43,082 (33.4%)	23,527 (18.2%)	3,216 (2.5%)	1,059 (0.8%)	1,200* (0.9%)	129,168 (100%)



Speaking a non-English language at home (age 5+) in 1990 (% of all non-English speakers)	24,689 (11.8%)	105,963 (44.0%)	37,590 (15.6%)	4,801 (2.0%)	2,179 (0.9%)	1,500* (0.6%)	240,866 (100%)
Speaking a non-English language at home (age 5+) in % of ancestry 1990	5%	154%	73%	10%	10%	5%	19%
Speaking a non-English language at home (age 5+) in % of immigrants born outside the U.S. speaking a non-English language in 1990	265%	468%	1070%	525%	159%	146%*	282%
Change of non-English mother tongue/language spoken at home (age 5+) between 1970-1980 (% change 1970-1980)	-6,646 (-30%)	+29,303 (+146%)	+12,244 (+109%)	-1,857 (-37%)	-2,467 (-70%)	-400* (-25%)	+35,180 (+37%)
Change of non-English language spoken at home (age 5+) between 1980-1990 (% change 1980-1990)	+9,445 (+62%)	+62,881 (+146%)	+14,063 (+60%)	+1,585 (49%)	+1,120 (106%)	+300* (+25%)	111,608 (+86%)
Change of non-English language spoken at home (age 5+) between 1980-1990 adjusted from immigrants admitted 1980-1990 (% change)	+7,450 (+49%)	+50,391 (117%)	+13,180 (+42%)	+1,350 (+42%)	+403 (38%)	+50* (+4%)	59,608 (+46%)

Bold figures = areas in which a group is relatively over-represented in relation to its ancestral representation or the average. Sources: 1996 *Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service* (1997), U.S. Census 1970, 1980, and 1990, Ammon (1994, 38f), 1980 and 1990 ancestry does not include "multiple" and "not reported" ancestry. \* = estimated values. Not included are return migration/emigration and internal migration data.

and in the United States has not been transformed into a higher degree of language retention or acquisition, although it may have slowed trends of mother-tongue loss. In other words, the value of ancestral affiliation seems to be mostly symbolic, representing a search for collective roots and identification with distinct ethnocultural assets rather than an active move to reclaim the language and cultural institutions of most ethnic groups. This finding contradicts the notion of an alleged "Balkanization" of America into ethnic fiefdoms and multilingual segments feared by critics of ethnopluralism, bilingualism, and multiculturalism, who overgeneralize some observations from a few urban centers in California, New York, Texas, or Florida. Assimilationist forces retain their power in the United States, and contrary to the claims of English-only advocates, the acquisition of English continues to be the primary goal of immigrants and their descendants because it is central in opening avenues of economic and social success.

The dominant role of English as the primary if not only language in use is confirmed by recent observations. Ammon (1994), for example, found that the German language is rarely used outside of family and business contacts in North Carolina. Except for a few cases where German is present in the media, in Lutheran church liturgy during Christmas celebrations, and in school language instruction, German can be found mainly in loan-words, texts on commodities, food labels, menus in German restaurants, in advertising, entertainment (Oktoberfest), the fine arts, tourist brochures, and tourist paraphernalia, such as beer mugs, etc. Ammon contends that in addition to statistics about language use the institutionalization of intraethnic contacts, i.e., the ethnocultural "infrastructure," has to be considered. I will elaborate on the importance of this "internal" factor in the following.<sup>16</sup>

Because the settlement of German-speaking groups occurred in North Carolina in spatial clusters, it is possible to analyze and compare regional areas for ethnic and language characteristics. Both early and more recent concentrations of German-speaking immigrants and their descendants exist around Winston-Salem/Greensboro (Moravians) and around Charlotte in Mecklenburg County. Following more recent trends in migration are the centering of German-speaking persons in the Research Triangle area and the migration of German GI-spouses with their husbands into military training areas around Fayetteville/Fort Bragg, as mentioned earlier. In his article Ammon (1994, 35ff.) compared indicators of language retention in two of these areas, finding that the number of persons born in Germany and who speak German were comparatively high and had not decreased between 1970 and 1990. In 1990, Charlotte/Mecklenburg had about 1,900 persons speaking German at home (800 German-born), in comparison with Cumberland county (Fayetteville and Fort



Bragg), which together had about 1,700 German speakers (800 of whom were born in Germany).

Tables 4 and 5 reveal several trends. First, they highlight the existence of local differences. The ratio of persons speaking German at home to German-born in 1990 was two to one with notable exceptions of about three to one in Winston-Salem and Fort Bragg. But the ratio was only 1.5 to one in Durham. Between 1970 and 1990 the ratio rose above average (82 percent) in the Winston-Salem and Fayetteville area and declined in Durham.

Second, although German ancestry reporting has significantly increased between 1980 and 1990 following a general trend outlined above, this ancestral awareness did not significantly increase the number of those who claim to speak German. Nevertheless, we still have insufficient information about the impact of ethnic identification on language retention, particularly for the second and third postwar generations in the United States

Third, Table 5 confirms the weak relationship between ethnic ancestry and language use mentioned earlier. In Western Piedmont counties, such as Catawba, Rowan, Lincoln and others with a significant above average percentage of persons of old German "stock," no trace of language retention exists (indicated by the ratio of German language speakers to persons with reported "first" German ancestry). Persons who report speaking German at home, however, are now above average located in urban areas with international business contacts, universities, research centers, and particularly, in areas with military bases (Fayetteville and Fort Bragg).

Fourth, between 1970 and 1990, the absolute number of persons speaking German at home in the state of North Carolina has increased although the number of German-born immigrants has decreased, particularly in the Winston-Salem and Greensboro area. The number of German-speakers increased above average in Fayetteville, about average in Charlotte, and declined in the other urban centers listed.

At first glance, the statistical increase of German-speakers in Fayetteville suggests the existence of a viable language group. Following Ammon (1994), a closer look, however, illustrates that the maintenance of the German language is in a much better position in Charlotte than in the Fayetteville/Fort Bragg area. Whereas the latter lacks a sufficient ethnic "infrastructure" (only one club in the early 1990s), Charlotte, in contrast, had 71 German and 28 Swiss owned companies or subsidiaries, i.e., over half of all such companies (N=189) located in North Carolina are concentrated in Charlotte. Also a German Honorary Consul in Charlotte is in contact with the German consulate in Atlanta, with the Atlanta German-American Chamber of Commerce (since 1978), and with the Atlanta Goethe Institute. In addition, Charlotte has a comparatively advanced

Table 4. Ancestry and German Mother Tongue/Language Spoken at Home in North Carolina by Place

	Charlotte	Winston-Salem	Greensboro	Raleigh	Durham	Fayetteville	Fort Bragg	N/All
Population in 1990 (% of all)	396,003 (6%)	143,485 (2.2%)	183,521 (2.8%)	207,951 (3.1%)	136,594 (2.1%)	75,695 (1.1%)	34,862 (0.5%)	6,628,637 (100%)
Foreign-born residents in 1990 (% of all)	15,119 (13.1%)	3,014 (2.6%)	4,839 (4.3%)	10,434 (9.1%)	5,205 (4.5%)	2,622 (2.3%)	1,250 (1.1%)	115,007 (100%)
Change of foreign-born residents 1970-1990 (% of all)	6,620 (+78%)	-881 (-23%)	207 (+4%)	5,315 (+104%)	1,680 (+48%)	334 (+15%)	N/A	20,796 (+22%)
German-born or of mixed parentage 1970 (% of all)	1,050 (6.3%)	451 (2.7%)	526 (3.2%)	671 (4%)	344 (2.1%)	833 (5%)	N/A	16,614 (100%)
German-born residents in 1990 (% of all)	845 (7.3%)	181 (1.6%)	269 (2.3%)	478 (4.1%)	342 (3%)	648 (5.6%)	159 (1.4%)	11,523 (100%)
Change of German-born residents 1970-1990 (% of all)	-205 (-20%)	-270 (-60%)	-257 (-49%)	-193 (-29%)	-2 (-1%)	-185 (-22%)	N/A	-5,091 (-31%)
Census ancestry in 1990 (% of all ancestral groups)	792,006 (6%)	286,970 (2.2%)	367,042 (2.8%)	415,902 (3.1%)	273,188 (2.1%)	151,390 (1.1%)	69,724 (0.5%)	13,257,274 (100%)
German ancestry in 1990 (% of all with German ancestry)	67,165 (6.0%)	23,680 (2.1%)	28,739 (2.6%)	34,375 (3.1%)	15,698 (1.4%)	9,980 (0.9%)	7,089 (0.6%)	1,111,220 (100%)
Change of non-English mother tongue/language spoken at home (age 5+) 1970-1990 (% of all)	15,504 (205%)	2,457 (+75%)	3,723 (+94%)	8,779 (+185%)	4,783 (+153%)	3,029 (+158%)	N/A	153,826 (+177%)



Speaking German mother tongue in 1970 (% of all)	1,710 (7.8%)	706 (3.2%)	798 (3.6%)	1,202 (5.5%)	696 (3.2%)	736 (3.4%)	N/A	21,890 (100%)
Speaking German at home (age 5+) in 1990 (% of all)	1,895 (7.7%)	523 (2.1%)	470 (1.9%)	948 (3.8%)	512 (2.1%)	1,174 (4.8%)	534 (2.2%)	24,689 (100%)
Change of German mother tongue/ language spoken at home (age 5+) 1970- 1990 (% of all)	185 (+11%)	-183 (-26%)	-328 (-41%)	-254 (-21%)	-184 (-26%)	438 (+60%)	N/A	2,799 (+13%)
German-born in % of all foreign-born residents in 1990	5.6%	6.0%	5.6%	4.6%	6.6%	24.7%	12.7%	10%
Persons with German ancestry in % of all ancestry groups in 1990	8.5%	8.3%	7.8%	8.3%	5.7%	6.6%	10.2%	8.4%
Speaking German at home (age 5+) in % of German ancestry reported 1990	2.8%	2.2%	1.6%	2.8%	3.3%	11.8%	7.5%	2.2%
Speaking German as mother tongue in % of German-born residents or persons of mixed parentage in 1970	163%	157%	152%	179%	202%	88%	N/A	132%
Speaking German at home (age 5+) in % of German-born residents in 1990	224%	289%	175%	198%	150%	181%	336%	214%
Increase of German speaking persons in relation to German-born 1970-1990	61%	132%	23%	19%	-52%	93%	N/A	82%

Bold figures=areas in which a group is relatively over-represented in relation to its ancestral representation or the average. Sources: 1970 and 1990 U.S. Census and own calculations.

Table 5. German Ancestry and Language Spoken at Home (age 5+) in 17 Counties in North Carolina in the 1990 Census

	Persons with First German Ancestry	Persons with First German Ancestry in Population	Persons who speak German at Home (age 5+)	Person who speak German at Home (age 5+) in Population	Ratio of German Language Speakers to Person with First German Ancestry
	in 1000	in Percent	in 1000	in Percent	
<i>USA</i>	45,583,932	18.3	1,547,987	0.67	3.39
<i>North Carolina</i>	902,265	13.6	24,689	0.40	2.74
COUNTIES					
Catawba	37,295	31.5	266	0.24	0.71
Rowan	33,143	30.0	378	0.37	1.14
Lincoln	14,596	29.0	126	0.27	0.86
Cabarrus	25,029	25.3	196	0.21	0.78
Davidson	31,249	24.7	334	0.28	1.07
Stanly	11,337	21.9	73	0.15	0.64
Iredell	17,824	19.2	320	0.37	1.80
Forsyth (Winston-Salem)	45,583	17.1	1,065	0.43	2.34
Alamance	16,769	15.5	295	0.29	1.76
Orange (Chapel Hill)	13,724	14.6	446	0.50	3.25
Mecklenburg (Charlotte)	74,771	14.6	2,426	0.51	3.24
Wake (Raleigh)	57,981	13.7	1,715	0.44	2.96
Guilford (Greensboro)	47,335	13.6	941	0.29	1.99
Wilkes	7,566	12.7	129	0.23	1.70
Cumberland (Fayetteville)	34,637	12.6	4,560	1.83	13.17
Durham	17,590	9.7	701	0.42	3.99
Hoke (Fort Bragg)	1,390	6.1	120	0.57	8.63

First ancestry includes the first response of all persons who reported at least one codeable entry in the 1990 U.S. Census.



German-speaking community life which is recognized in the local English press. Two restaurants serve German food, and two German clubs ("Alemannia" and the "German-American Club," the former with a newsletter in German), provide social interaction. On Saturdays a two-hour German radio program broadcasts music, news, and "Gemütlichkeit." The city also is host to an annual Oktoberfest, a German Christmas, and Lutheran church services in German. Charlotte has had a Saturday German language school with 120 students since the late 1970s, and since 1992 a German Immersion School, teaching about one hundred students in first-grade and the same number of children in kindergarten. Plans exist to extend the immersion program into high school (Ammon 1994, 36, Bister 1996).<sup>17</sup> It may be of interest to mention also the historical links of Charlotte in Mecklenburg County. It was named after the German princess Charlotte (the wife of George I of England) who came from a region in northern Germany now known as Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

From our comparison we can conclude that weak institutional and social support systems (as in the military Fayetteville area) are decisive when it comes to the question of long-term chances of language maintenance in a community. Although Charlotte and Fayetteville/Fort Bragg share certain characteristics, i.e., a relatively high and/or increasing number of German language speakers and German-born persons over the last one or two decades, the army community, with its high personnel turnover creates more obstacles to the establishment of a viable community and durable ethnic institutions than a commercially based community. Even in the Charlotte area, however, past and current assimilation trends threaten the survival of the German immigrant community's culture and language, particularly the relatively limited new immigration, the predominance of rather transient temporary business residents, and the continuing decline of native and immigrant-born students choosing German as a foreign language.

On the latter point, speaking a foreign language at home in immigrant families is one important source of language retention over generations. However, it remains insufficient if not, for example, complemented by student enrollment in public schools and colleges. Observations from the 1990 North Carolina Census indicated positive changes following unification and increased interest in school enrollment. But more recent trends are less encouraging. Bister (1996), for example, undertook a recent survey among students enrolled in the Germanic language program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She reported that after a brief increase in student enrollment in the wake of German unification, the number of students were again slowly eroding. Though she hinted that part of this decline may be explained by rather short-sighted political considerations to "downsize" foreign language departments at public colleges to balance budgets (Bister 1996, 4f.), there are also indications of

prevailing ignorant or even hostile attitudes against the acquisition of foreign languages and bilingualism, attitudes that were only interrupted by President Carter's recommendation to strengthen foreign language requirements in the 1970s. Another underestimated factor, the sometimes more subtle and sometimes more open "Germanophobia" in the American public may account for low ethnic identification and low interest in language retention. Only one-third of undergraduate college students in the University of North Carolina German language program with self-reported German family ties said that ancestry was a motivating factor to learn the language, i.e., 10 percent of all students interviewed. Economic motivations to learn German were somewhat higher, with 44 percent of German-language students saying they thought it would help their careers, versus 35 percent who said it would not. Another motivation to learn German, however, was the wish to be able to speak German when traveling in German-speaking countries, and to understand "friends and family" (22 percent), although the widespread knowledge of English in German-speaking countries may also deter students from learning the language thoroughly. A surprisingly large number of respondents reported a negative motivation for studying German: 40 percent in 1993 wished to avoid Spanish and French due to previous unhappy exposure.

## Conclusion

The history of German language retention in the United States and in some areas of the state of North Carolina is a good illustration of how "internal" and "external" factors on a national, regional and local "micro" levels contribute to the rise and fall of immigrant "minority" languages. From a comparative perspective I have tried to demonstrate that the "unprecedented" loss of German in the United States follows an assimilation pattern similar to the experience of other European immigrant groups, regardless of the distinctive and accelerating impact of the World Wars. German-speaking immigrants have blended very successfully into the American host society which made the maintenance of the German language or ethnocultural immigrant institutions unrewarding. This is reflected in the fact that even now, under less obvious assimilation pressures as in the past, German-born immigrants shift rapidly from German to English. Gilbert (1981, 269) reported, for example, that in 1975 only 7 percent of immigrants used German as their "usual individual language" (see similar data by Waggoner 1975).

One reason for this continuing fast assimilation could be the linguistic affinity of German and English (see Clyne 1992, 32, De Vries 1992, 220). In addition, the relatively good knowledge of English of many immigrants from



German-speaking countries (in Germany alone 5.5 million high school students study English) could be responsible for their fast English-language adaptation and assimilation into the United States as much as the prevailing positive attitudes of many Germans, Swiss, and Austrians toward America. Since the likelihood of a renewed, large-scale immigration from German-speaking countries is remote and the birth rate of German and European immigrants is relatively low, one can expect the number of native speakers and of mother tongue claimants continue to decline in the near future. This prognosis is supported by the fact that few signs exist that point to a renewed evaluation of bi- or multi-lingualism in the United States. No one expects that German will be reinstated in school curricula as an important first or second foreign language above the now predominant Spanish and French languages. The German language would be able to maintain some importance, however, if students with German-speaking ancestry decided to study the language. Currently only a limited interest exists among German speakers in the United States or is likely to develop in the near future.

Another cause for the lagging interest in the German language is the Germans ambiguous if not enigmatic image in the American mind. On the one hand, there is a nostalgic-romanticized or folklorist (past-oriented) attitude towards things "German." On the other hand Germany and the Germans are stained in American media, film, theater, literature, and public perception with persistent Holocaust and (Neo-) Nazi images which prevents pride in things German and, instead, supports distance, passivity, and even fatalism, an attitude Ammon has called a "national and linguistic cringe" (1994, 38).

In addition to an ambivalent image and relative lack of interest in language retention, many institutions that could support ethnic community life of German-speaking immigrants or German-Americans are slowly eroding. German broadcasting, television, movies, print media, theaters, choirs, associations, restaurants, festivals, and clubs are declining or losing their distinctly "German" character. Academic and political exchange between German-speaking countries and the United States, American and German brochures and journals that inform about German-American heritage and modern Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, and the ever-increasing tourism on both sides of the Atlantic are no substitute for a weak ethnic infrastructure and decreasing interest to learn or speak German. The increase of Oktoberfests, of classical radio channels featuring a high percentage of composers or performers born in German-speaking countries, and the increased consumption of goods "Made in Germany" are not a compensation either, since they are part of an international consumer culture often lacking a distinguished ethnic or national signature. Similarly the inclusion of German words or sentences in advertising, brochures, labels, etc., are either directed toward the increasing number of

tourists, resident aliens, or former GIs and others having lived in German-speaking countries, or such new loan-words (like "Fahrvergnügen") are rather short-lived corporate strategies to exploit national stereotypes for monetary benefit. The long-term impact of such new, fashionable, and mostly artificial loan-words, puns, and symbols on German language and ethnocultural maintenance in the United States is in my opinion rather insignificant, since there are indications that the average American reader or listener is unable to understand or even pronounce this kind of Americanized German gibberish anyhow. But the current feeble status of German and other foreign language retention warrants more investigation into "internal" and "external" factors, individual motivations to maintain language against predominant trends, and differences in language retention according to immigration status, country of origin, education, social status, gender, ethnic and religious affiliation and embeddedness in family and group networks.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The author is grateful for helpful comments and corrections by Kay Losey, Jennifer Drolet, and Caroline Childress. A draft of this paper was presented at the Annual Meeting of the "Deutsche Gesellschaft für Amerikastudien" in Würzburg, Germany, 30 May 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Fifty-eight million or 23% of all Americans claimed German ancestry in the 1990 Census. Americans of Irish descent comprised the next largest group, with 39 million, or 16% of the total United States population, followed by English-Americans (33 million, 13%).

<sup>3</sup> The first permanent settlement of German immigrants was founded in Germantown near Philadelphia in 1683.

<sup>4</sup> In terms of religious diversity, for example, Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Mennonites, Amish, Hutterites, Amanites, Moravians, and Mormons are all included in this immigrant group.

<sup>5</sup> "Internal" factors include the size, prestige, and vitality of ethnic communities/networks and the resources they command (Breton 1981); the patterns of spatial concentration, primary relations with dominant groups and elites in areas such as interpersonal contacts, residence, club memberships, and intermarriage (Marger 1991, 159), and other indicators of social and geographical mobility; the continuous feeding of ethnic and language groups by new immigration; the language's institutionalization in school curricula, church, media, cultural institutions, secular associations; and the use of language and ethnic habits in kinship relations, family, and daily life as well as its presence in festivals, holidays, memorials, street signs, and architecture (Ripley 1976, chapters 8,9, and 12; Edwards 1992, 43ff.; Allard and Landry 1992, 174; Hayden 1978, 202; Kloss 1978, 206ff.).

<sup>6</sup> "External" conditions are legal, political, cultural and economical links, support systems, and opportunities in the countries of origin. See also Edwards (1992) typology of minority language situations.

<sup>7</sup> By 1923, thirty-four states prohibited the use of languages other than English in primary schools.



<sup>8</sup> The increase of census respondents claiming German ancestry from 49 million in 1980 to 58 million in 1990 is a phenomenon that still awaits explanation. Possibly the increased image and visibility of Germany during and after unification and a more differentiated historical understanding of former German or Austro-Hungarian territories with ethnic German populations (e.g., in Sudetenland, Alsace-Lorraine, Siebenbürgen, etc.), has contributed to such changes in self-categorizing and ethnic re-definition. Similar trends exist for Italians and Mexicans (here at cost of "Spanish" ethnic self-labeling). Perhaps the increased willingness of those with assumed German, Italian, Japanese, and Mexican ancestry to identify publicly with their origins is only a compensation for the extraordinary decline of these former "war-alien" nations in status and public image, reflecting a "normalization" of public attitudes and growing self-consciousness of hyphenated Americans to accept and even proudly display their assumed ethnic origin.

<sup>9</sup> The census questions regarding language differ for 1970 and 1980/1990. "Mother tongue" in the 1970 census referred to the language spoken in the respondent's home as a child. If both English and another mother tongue were reported, preference was given to the language other than English. The data on mother tongue do not necessarily reflect a person's current language skills or language use since the vast majority of persons reporting a mother tongue other than English certainly had to learn to speak English during their presence in America. However, in the 1980/1990 census the question focused on current language use. It asked if a household member above age five, reported speaking a language other than English at home. Because the 1970 question did not deliberately ask for the current language spoken at home, the 1970 census findings have to be cautiously interpreted, especially when compared with 1980/1990 census data.

<sup>10</sup> See Kloss (1978, 209ff.) for a similar list of language maintenance factors.

<sup>11</sup> Seven and a half percent of North Carolinians, the second largest immigrant group after persons originating from the U.K. (13%), claimed some degree of German ancestry in the 1990 census, up from 5% in the 1980 census.

<sup>12</sup> An exception are refugees attempting to transplant progressive traditions from Germany into the United States, e.g., the circle that formed the now famous Black Mountain College, and a number of art historians, scholars, and scientists at institutions of higher education (see Landsberger and Schweitzer 1996).

<sup>13</sup> According to North Carolina Department of Commerce reports, German companies invested more than \$1.3 billion in manufacturing plants in North Carolina between 1978 and 1992, creating over 11,000 jobs. Only California, New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey employed more workers in German-owned companies (*Durham Herald Sun*, 23 September 1993).

<sup>14</sup> The number of non-immigrants (tourists, business-people, scientists, and other persons with temporary residence status) visiting the U.S. from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland more than doubled from 0.995 million in 1981 to 1.592 million in 1990 and 2.639 million in 1996 (see 1996 *Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*, 128).

<sup>15</sup> To measure language retention with some accuracy, one should adjust for immigration, emigration, birth-rates, and deaths. I only took into account new immigration that data being the most reliable, important, and easily available. This presented a more realistic, though not perfect, picture of how languages fared among native-born and admitted immigrants between 1980 and 1990.

<sup>16</sup> More recently Espenshade and Fu (1997, 290ff.) differentiated from a sociological viewpoint between "pre-immigration" cultural and linguistic factors and individual traits and "post-immigration" characteristics that reflect skills, opportunities, commitments, and experiences of foreign-born persons after immigration. They found that experience and formal education increases English language proficiency although persons "who live in families or linguistically segregated neighborhoods where only their mother tongue is spoken, who marry someone from the same non-English-speaking country, or who participate relatively infrequently in the paid labor force have fewer opportunities and incentives to learn English" (302).

<sup>17</sup> North Carolina has only two other "immersion" schools for French and Spanish. Except for the German language program in the Wiley International Magnet School in Raleigh, German is

not taught in primary schools as is Spanish and French (Bister 1996). Relatively few (junior) high schools offer German as a foreign language, either because of lack of qualified teachers or lack of interest of parents and students.

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