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# The Texas Alsatian Dialect in Medina County, Texas

## 1 Introduction: historical background

The Alsatian dialect was transported to Texas in the early 1800s, when entrepreneur Henri Castro recruited colonists from the French Alsace to comply with the Republic of Texas' stipulations for populating one of his land grants located just west of San Antonio. Castro's colonization efforts succeeded in bringing 2,134 German-speaking colonists from 1843-47 (Jordan 2004: 45-47; Weaver 1985:109) to his land grants in Texas, which resulted in the establishment of four colonies: Castroville (1844); Quihi (1845); Vandenburg (1846); D'Hanis (1847). Castroville was the first and most successful settlement and serves as the focus of this chapter, as it constitutes the largest concentration of Alsatian speakers. This chapter provides both a descriptive account of the ancestral language, *Alsatian*, and the current Alsatian language as spoken today, as well as a discussion of sociolinguistic and linguistic processes (e.g., use, shift, variation, regularization, etc.) observed and documented since 2007.

The casual observer might conclude that the colonists Castro brought to Texas were not German-speaking at all, but French. Because Alsatian is spoken within the political borders of France, it is often mistakenly assumed to be a French dialect.[1] Linguistically, Alsatian is a Low Alemannic variety which traces its roots to the *Alamanni*, one of several Germanic migratory groups or 'tribes,' whose political influence extended over areas of southern Germany, parts of Austria, Switzerland, and the Alsace (cf. Salmons 2012: 91, Krüger et al: 1983:13). The Alsatian dialect,[2] which is on the decline but still remains robust in France today with approximately 550,000 speakers (Heran 2002:4), differs measurably from the north and central German dialects in its phonology, morphosyntax, and lexicon, but shares some common syntactic,

morphological and lexical features with the west-central and southern varieties. Due to a bundle of isoglosses running west-east across the middle of the Alsace just north of Colmar, one can speak of two regional varieties of Alsatian, a southern and northern variety (Matzen 1973, Keller 1961).[3] The northern variety today has been heavily influenced by contact with Franconian dialects to the north, and is of lesser interest to this discussion, as it is the southern Alsatian regional variety of the Upper Rhine County (*Haut-Rhin Département*) and its many local varieties that were spoken by the early Castro settlers. This southern variety, or *Upper Rhenish*, also shares several features with the High Alemannic variety spoken in the southern borderlands of Alsace and Switzerland.

Erny (1999) substantiates that 93.9% of the Alsatians who immigrated to Texas from 1843 – 1869 were from the 'Upper Rhine County.' Laybourn (1986 II: 243-5) provides a list of thirty-nine Upper Rhine villages of Castroville immigrants from passenger lists, most of which are located in a radius of 25 miles to the northwest of Mulhouse (Mühlheim), France. The majority of informants in this study cited ancestral villages in this area from family genealogies. Laybourn (1986) also identifies three Castroville families from Altdorf in the Lower Rhine County (*Bas-Rhin Département*) to the north, which substantiates a small representation of the northern regional Alsatian variety brought to Castroville in its founding years.

Due to extended contact with English, other German varieties, and to a lesser degree, Spanish, a spoken form has developed over the past 175 years in the communities clustered in and around Castroville in Medina County, Texas, that differs from the transported ancestral variety and will heretofore be referred to as *Texas Alsatian*. The linguistic features of this language variety and its relation to the donor dialect(s) are described in Sections 3 (Phonology and Phonetics), 4 (Morphosyntax), and 5 (Lexicon).

It is important to first situate the Alsatian language in its historical, sociohistorical, and sociolinguistic settings of the Alsatian homeland and the Texas settlements in order to understand conditions which contributed to bilingualism, language shift, and maintenance of the ancestral language. Section 1 provides a brief look at the push-and-pull factors in nineteenth-century Central Europe and Texas that spurned emigration to Texas; it also provides a brief history of the settlement of the Castro Colonies and the religious and educational institutions the colonists brought with them. Section 2 traces the sociohistorical and sociolinguistic contexts in the establishment of Castroville, its ethnic constellations and languages in contact, and language use and shift. I then describe the methodology and data collection methods utilized from 2007-2009 and in 2016, which resulted in an informant pool of thirty-nine Texas Alsatian-speakers and forms the base for linguistic descriptions in Sections 3, 4, and 5.

## 1.1 Nineteenth-century German immigration to Texas

Economic, political, and social conditions in Central Europe and Texas in the nineteenth century were ripe for transplanting German-speaking[4] immigrants to Texas soil. Economically, as in other parts of Central Europe, Germany[5] was suffering from poor harvests and overpopulation in the first half of the century, and additional effects of industrialization in the latter half, which resulted in widespread hunger, unemployment, and impoverished living conditions. Politically and socially, strict economic policies put into effect by the German authoritarian monarchies to squelch demands for equality, freedom, and a unified Germany culminated in the Rebellion of 1848 against the ruling class. When the Rebellion failed, many of the participants joined the steady flow of emigrants from European ports to avoid incarceration, conscription, and death. In the Alsace, economic factors mainly contributed to a critical situation: its population more than doubled from 1784-1876 and land plots shrank due to inheritance laws on the division of land which could not sustain its dependents. 73% of landowners had fields smaller than twelve acres (Erny 2003: 125).

These economic, social, and political conditions affected a broad base of the German-speaking population, and pushed farmers, artisans, merchants, and academics to look outside of Europe for better living conditions and employment opportunities for themselves and their families. The lure of the new Republic of Texas with its freedoms and economic opportunities provided a prime solution. Texas had achieved independence from Mexico in 1836 and was looking for ways to boost its financial viability as a new nation and to lay claim to and protect its vast and relatively unsettled lands from Mexico and Native American tribes. Populating its lands provided a solution to both. The new Republic created incentives to attract settlers and offered free parcels of uncultivated land in return for cultivation and homesteading with certain time, acreage, and survey restrictions. A bill passed by the Texas legislature in 1841 gave the president authority to enter into settlement contracts of public lands with individual immigration agents or *empresarios*. The basic terms required the agent to settle 600 families within three years, one-third of whom had to be in Texas within one year. As incentive, the agent would be compensated with ten sections[6] of land for every 100 families or with five sections for every 100 single men (Weaver 1985: 21). Henri Castro and his partner Jassaud were awarded a contract to settle two land grants on February 15, 1842, but Castro decided to concentrate settlement efforts on the grant occupied by the Lipan and Comanche Indian tribes in what is now Medina County, Texas.

### 1.2 Establishment of the Medina County Castro Colonies

A loss in political support in Paris a few months earlier forced Castro to move his recruiting efforts away from Paris to Alsace, Baden, and Switzerland located in the highly-populated Rhine Valley area (Weaver 1985: 33). Castro had based his recruiting strategy on the view that farmers would be best-suited to settle the frontier lands, but soon discovered that they were difficult to find (and perhaps recruit) and widened his search to include other livelihoods, such as merchants and artisans. The first group of Castro's colonists set sail from Le Havre, France, in November 1842 on the *Ebro*, the first of a total of twenty-seven ships. They arrived in Galveston in January 1843 with 144 farmers and artisans from the Alsace and Lorraine—forty-two of whom were eligible to receive land—and a year ahead of the first ships of the *Adelsverein*,[7] a competing colonization society that recruited heavily from central and northern areas in Germany.

After many hardships encountered on the ocean journey and a long land trek from Port Lavaca to San Antonio, Castro and company officials escorted by six Texas Rangers arrived at the grant with only twenty-seven of the contracted settlers and twenty hired Mexican cart drivers (Weaver 1985: 50). Many had succumbed to disease (e.g., yellow fever) and lack of food and shelter at Galveston, or decided to remain there or at other places along the road to San Antonio, In San Antonio, some were recruited by the *Adelsverein* or remained there, discouraged by the extreme heat and continuous rain during the summer of 1844. Forty-eight individuals of the first Castro colony, which they named Castroville, signed the founding document on September 12, 1844 (CCHA 1983:62).[8] Among this group were thirty-three "French"—twenty-two of which were Alsatian—and ten Germans (Erny 1999: 13).

### 1.3 Settlement patterns in the Castro Colonies

The period of Texas immigration and settlement in the 19th century (~1820-90) spanned five different governments: Spain, Mexico, the Republic of Texas, the United States of America, and the Confederacy. Indigenous Indian tribes, Spanish and Mexican settlers, and more recent Anglo settlers from the southern states already occupied parts of the territory when the first wave (~1830-60) of German-speaking immigrants arrived. These German immigrants settled isolated grants on the western frontier which were still occupied by nomadic native tribes. This geographic isolation of these "Western Settlements" supported the development of relatively homogenous German *Sprachinseln* 'speech islands', whose nearest neighbors were also German-speaking communities. The Western Settlements in particular presented an

almost continuous belt of German-dominated communities along the frontier from Mason and Llano counties in the northwest to Gillespie, Kendall, and Comal counties in the southwest, and reached south to the counties of Bexar and Medina. Castro's settlements were laid out in a pattern reminiscent of the colonists' European villages, with a small town lot and larger plots of twenty to forty acres for farming.

Another salient factor playing an important role in settlement patterns was religion. Castro's first colonists were mainly Catholic—indicative of France's long history of Catholicism—although subsequent efforts also brought a small percentage of Germans to his four colonies from the predominantly Lutheran northern and north-central areas of Germany. The two smaller Castro settlements of Quihi and D'Hanis illustrate this settlement pattern which reflects the religious practices of their ancestral villages.[9] Quihi, first settled by families from Alsace and East Frisia, was gradually influenced by an influx of Lutheran Germans and now has only one Lutheran church. D'Hanis, twenty-five miles to the west of Castroville, was settled by twenty-nine Alsatian families, most of whom "were of Catholic faith" (CCHA 1983: 92), and remains a predominantly Catholic community, but divided between two ethnic groups, the Alsatians and Mexicans, who each maintain a separate place of worship. Also to be mentioned here is the importance of recruiters, travelers, and communications back to the homeland, who praised (and often over-exaggerated) the abundance and beauty of the Texas homeland. This often inspired groups from the homeland to emigrate and join family and friends in the new settlement. This process known as *chain migration* created a steady flow of Alsatian immigrants to the Castro Colonies.

Given the tradition of Catholicism in Alsace, it is not surprising that when Castro organized the first ships of emigrants, he also contracted Jean Marie Odin, the Catholic bishop of Texas in Houston, to consecrate the site for the colony's first Catholic church. St. Louis Church was completed in 1846, two years after settlement. Bishop Odin was also successful in recruiting a French priest, Father Claude Dubuis, from the seminary in Lyons, France, who established a free school in the first years of the community, the parent of Castroville's parochial school. To be noted here is the establishment of Zion Lutheran church in 1858, which represents the other German-speaking element in Castroville mentioned above. Alsatian speakers today refer to these speakers as *Dietsche* 'Germans' versus their self-designation as *Elsasser* 'Alsatians', indicating the differentiation still made between the two speech communities.

One can ascertain several important factors from this historical overview, some of which will be elaborated upon in the next section: (1) we know that Castroville was predominantly an Alsatian settlement and Catholic;

(2) we can identify the donor dialect(s) of the Alsatian colonists who settled Castroville as predominantly Upper Rhenish; (3) we know the main contact languages and German dialects present during the early settlement years; (4) we can identify institutions, e.g., churches, schools, etc., which the Alsatians brought with them to their new Texas homeland.

## 2 Sociohistorical and sociolinguistic aspects

Five phases similar to Mattheier's (2003: 28) five phases in the life-cycle of a speech island become apparent in the historical, political, and economic developments of the Texas Alsatian community: (1) establishment (~1840-60); (2) stabilization (~1860-80), (3) isolation (~1880-1940), (4) modernization (~1940=80), and (5) disintegration or decline (~1980-present). It is important to link the Alsatian community's linguistic development with Castroville's lengthy period of isolation from 1880-1940 and the accompanying political decisions that heavily influenced the maintenance of the Alsatian language and culture.

### 2.1 Sociohistorical events and decisions: 1880-1940

Castroville's pattern of political decisions illustrates the continuance of local control, or *horizontalization*,[10] which insulated and preserved cultural constructs. Three interrelated political decisions between 1880 and 1900 created an economic crisis which relegated Castroville to relative obscurity: (1) rerouting of the westward-expanding railroad, (2) loss of its county seat status, and (3) disincorporation in 1897.

Medina County was created from Bexar County by an act of the Second Legislature of the State of Texas on February 12, 1848, at which time Castroville was also designated as the county seat.[11] Two year later, Castroville was incorporated and officially recognized as a local governing body. In 1880, Castroville's city council rejected a demand for an additional $100,000 bonus by the Southern Pacific Railroad and as a result, was bypassed, cutting off Castroville from any rail enterprise. In 1886, 1856 efforts to move the county seat to a more central location were resumed and succeeded in the designation of Hondo as the new county seat in 1892. This further isolated Castroville by removing it as a potential influential political and economic hub. Due largely to these developments, its economy and population expansion came almost to a standstill by 1896. In 1897, Castroville citizens petitioned the state to revoke the 1850 incorporation, which was accepted, and the county resumed governance of the town. This self-governance lasted for fifty years until 1947, when Castroville voted to re-incorporate into the county. Ahr (2003: 139) notes that this "disincorporation and a tendency among the

descendants of the pioneers to be independent, self-sufficient, and, arguably, resistant to change, explain in part why the Alsatian culture lasted." City historian Rihn (CCHA 1983: 65) writes of this period that "The culture of the early Alsatian settlers was retained both in daily and religious life. The dialect was still spoken."

## 2.2 Language and dialect contact in early Castroville

> To complicate matters further, the
> considerable confusion of languages led
> the French, German, Texan, and Mexican
> workers to establish separate camps and
> refuse to cooperate with one another.
> (Weaver 1985: 53)

At the time of immigration in the 1840s, the "frenchification" of the Alsace was by no means complete and the rural population spoke many different varieties of Alsatian (Craig 1984: 24; Vassberg 1989: 60). Castroville's first Catholic priest, Father Dubuis, writes that the colonists did not speak his language (French), but an "unqualifiable jargon" (Waugh 1934: 47-48). Erny (2003: 125) also writes that "by the end of Louis Philippe's reign (1830-48) a majority of the peasantry could neither read nor write and spoke only a dialect."

Five linguistic groups are evident from accounts and documents of the founding of Castroville: English, French, Spanish, German, and Alsatian.[12] What seems fairly straightforward, however, is more complicated than it appears. The majority of the first colonists spoke Alsatian, but also included High and Low Alemannic speakers from linguistically-related areas of Baden to the east of the Rhine and Switzerland to the south. Castro recruited other colonists from central and north-central German areas, whose varieties belong to the Central German dialect areas and are not mutually intelligible with Alemannic varieties. Castro and company employees also included a breadth of languages, with native French speakers such as himself, a German merchant from Baden, and a Scottish doctor. He also enlisted the help of native English speakers such as the Texas Rangers, Spanish-speaking Mexican workers, and native French-speaking priests who were accompanied by the Alsatian Sisters of Divine Providence. This order recruited Alsatian-speaking novitiates from the Alsace-Lorraine, who were educated in both German and French.

Questions on the influence of French or German "standard varieties" inevitably arise here for the linguist, but it is highly unlikely that French or

even a standard written German played any significant role in the Alsatian-speaking community. Findings of my 2012 study also support this absence of possible influence from written materials or prestigious spoken varieties, inasmuch as one can even speak of established standard varieties in the mid-nineteenth century (cf. Durrell 1999, Elspaß 2002): (1) all forty-three speakers polled reported they could neither read nor write Alsatian; (2) there were no German newspapers or periodicals published in Castroville from 1732-1955 (Arndt & Olson 1961: 60); (3) none of the informants in my study possessed or knew of the existence of any ancestral immigrant letters; and finally, (4) there was no evidence of any French borrowings or structures in the speech of current Texas Alsatian speakers.

## 2.3 Language use in nineteenth-century Castroville

(i) *Official languages*
    The acceptance of Texas into statehood only a year after Castroville's settlement in 1845 essentially mandated the use of English in official domains. English had served as the trade and administrative language after Texas gained independence from Mexico in 1836 (Boas 2009: 38) and was already an established *lingua franca* by Castroville's settlement in 1844. This is supported by the fact that all Castroville public records from its earliest official beginnings are in English.

(ii) *Newspapers and periodicals*
    In contrast to relatively homogenous German-speaking communities where German printed materials in German seemed to be readily available in public domains of government, press, and schools, there seem to have been no comparable publications in German from settlement time forward, although church records and private journals in French from the first priests and Castro do exist (e.g., Castro 1839 – 1846, Abbé Domenech 1858, Perrichon 1900). There were no German newspapers or periodicals published in Castroville from 1732 – 1955 (Arndt & Olson 1961: 60).[13]

(iii) *Schools*
    The Catholic tradition of parochial education with its roots in European monasteries and convents was also transplanted to Texas. As noted in §1.3, Father Dubuis established a free school in the first years of settlement, where he taught the Catechism and gave lessons in French, English and German, writing of "sixty-six pupils, not twelve of who spoke English" (Waugh 1934: 48). Father Dubuis also convinced the Sisters of Divine Providence at St. Jean-de-Bassel in the Alsace-Lorraine to send Sisters to Texas to open schools;

two Sisters accompanied him to Texas in 1866 as missionaries from the Lower Rhine. In 1868, twenty-two years after the founding of Castroville, Sister St. Andrew established the St. Louis Catholic School.[14] The school was closed in 1968 after 100 years of service to the community, but re-opened in 1986 after renewed interest in parochial education. Headed by Dutch Sister Marie Elise of the Sisters of Divine Providence until 2009, the elementary school is currently administered by a school principal, Karen Rothe. No German language course is now included in the curriculum.[15]

## 2.4 Diglossia and language shift

Trying to establish the extent of English/Alsatian bilingualism with or without *diglossia* (i.e., language alternation of a high and low variety) and its use in certain domains over one hundred and fifty years ago is virtually impossible without the aid of written documents such as letters and newspapers.

The linguistic diversity present from the beginning and the use of English as a *lingua franca* in local government and commerce further complicates pinpointing the stages of shift to English within the Alsatian-speaking population in Castroville. Early diaries and public records suggest, however, that already during Castroville's establishment and stabilization (1844-80), the beginnings of bilingualism without diglossia existed between English and Alsatian.[16] Many Alsatian speakers possessed only a passive knowledge of English, while an educated element such as clergy, doctors, and public officials had a more active command of English. During the long period of Castroville's isolation (~1880-1940), the ethnic culture and language of the Alsatian community remained fairly intact as described in §2.1. Supporting this are narratives by Alsatian speakers born ~1920-30 attesting that they did not learn English until they attended school.

However, a complex interaction of factors was already beginning to push language shift in immigrant speech islands toward the end of the nineteenth century. Mattheier (2003: 24-25) points to the prevalent Anglo-American ideology already present in administrative, social, and economic structures at the beginning of the 20th century that demanded full assimilation with no room for other languages already present. The expansion of the public school system and legislative language policy that propagated an English-only ideology went hand-in-hand. In Texas, educational legislation passed in 1909 and 1918 restricted schools to English-only instruction (Moore 1980: 20). For Alsatian families, it meant the necessity for their children to learn English. The World Wars only accelerated the disintegration already in progress. To gain further insights into the path and timing of the shift

to English in Castroville, I present data from the current Alsatian-speaking community.

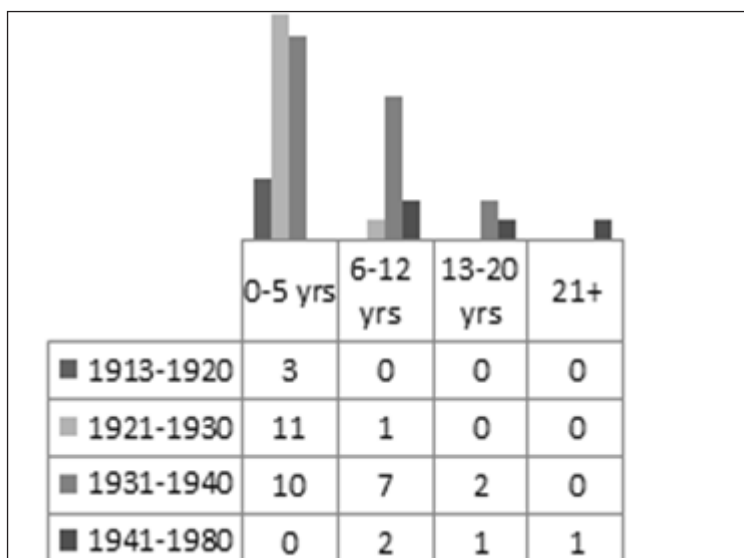## 2.5 Texas Alsatian today: Data collection and methodology

I interviewed thirty-nine Texas Alsatian speakers of varying linguistic competence in Castroville and environs from January 2007 through May 2009 and again in May 2016 for the purpose of collecting linguistic and sociolinguistic data pertinent to an analysis of language use, shift, and loss of this colonial German dialect in Medina County, Texas. For comparative purposes, I interviewed ten Texas Germans from Castroville and adjacent communities (Quihi, LaCoste, Hondo) and ten European Alsatians from the Upper and Lower Rhine counties in France. Community historians, priests, former mayors, and other residents involved in historical preservation efforts were also interviewed or completed a questionnaire.

Methods of data collection similar to those used by the Texas German Dialect Project (Boas et al. 2010) were utilized to facilitate future comparisons with German-American colonial dialects. Phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical data were obtained from informants using open-ended interview techniques and re-samplings of Gilbert's (1972) elicitation tasks, which provide a diachronic base that facilitates a real-time comparison with current data. Gilbert (1972) interviewed twenty-seven German heritage speakers in Medina County, noting Alsatian ancestry or language competency in thirteen informants. Informants 9, 19-21, 23-25, 27 consistently produced distinctive Alsatian features (see Table 5.1). Gilbert (1972: 17-18) also notes intermarriage between German and Alsatian-speaking parents/grandparents for speakers 4, 7, 8, 12, 18, where more than one variety was spoken at home. Only limited data from these re-samplings can be provided here to show phonological and morphological preservation due to necessary space restrictions.

Each informant completed a written survey eliciting biographical data as well as opinions, feelings, and beliefs toward aspects of their language. The questionnaire addressed aspects such as language use, acquisition, and fluency, the results of which are used in this section to provide an apparent-time analysis of language shift. Questions have been raised as to the reliability of self-reported data and to the limitations of categorical responses typical of written questionnaires (Milroy & Gordon 2003: 52). To help compensate for the limitations of this data collection method, many of the same survey questions were posed during the interviews and comment sections were provided throughout the questionnaire.
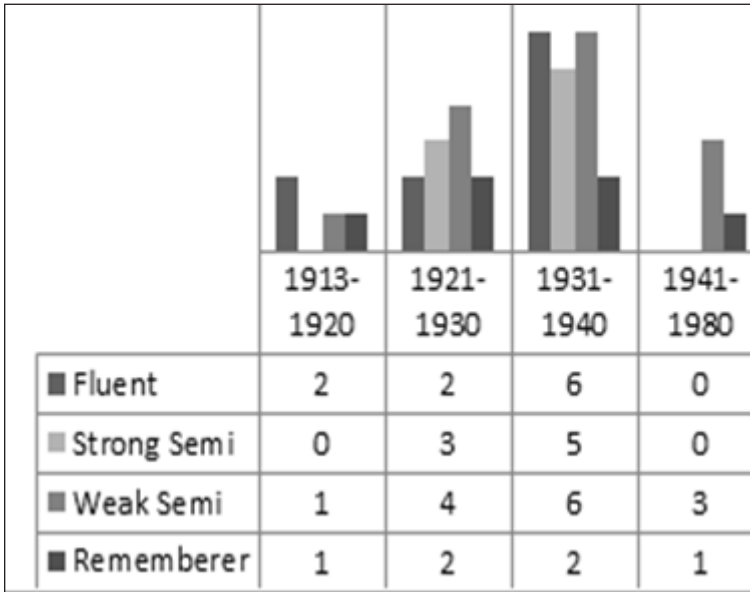
In general, informants reported a range of learning environments and reasons for learning Alsatian, which ranged from acquisition at home as a first language (0-5 years), learning from parents or grandparents in order to understand "secrets" or communicate (6-12 years), to learning it later from a spouse or family member "because they realized how important it was" (13+). Figure 2.1 arranges speaker data according to birth year and acquisition age to gain a general overview of acquisition.

**Figure 2.1:** When did you learn Alsatian?



| | 0-5 yrs | 6-12 yrs | 13-20 yrs | 21+ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ■ 1913-1920 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| ■ 1921-1930 | 11 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| ■ 1931-1940 | 10 | 7 | 2 | 0 |
| ■ 1941-1980 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 |

As shown in Figure 2.1, it was still possible to locate speakers born pre-WWI. Most speakers interviewed were born from 1921 – 1940 and are now in their 80s and 90s. The three decades spanning from 1913 – 1940 illustrate that transmission at an early age (0 – 5) was still occurring at home in some families up until approximately 1930.[17] However, the 1930s indicate an increasingly unstable environment with acquisition fluctuating between 0 – 5 and 6 – 12 years. There is a dramatic halt in childhood acquisition by 1941 which indicates a probable end to transmission during the WWII years of 1941 – 1945 (see *Appendix*). The shift to English seems to have been driven gradually by family and/or speaker decisions during the 1930s – 1940s.

**Figure 2.2**

| | 1913-1920 | 1921-1930 | 1931-1940 | 1941-1980 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ■ Fluent | 2 | 2 | 6 | 0 |
| ▦ Strong Semi | 0 | 3 | 5 | 0 |
| ■ Weak Semi | 1 | 4 | 6 | 3 |
| ■ Rememberer | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 |

This is also supported by data on participant fluency paired with their birth year shown in Figure 2.2. The relatively high number of fluent and strong-semi speakers in the 1930s shows that Alsatian continued to be spoken in the home until 1940. This reveals that age-grading is not an effective predictor of fluency in this community, as fluent speakers are spread across the age continuum. Interesting is that the two most fluent speakers born in 1939 and 1940 are the youngest of the fluent or strong semi-speaker 2012 informants.

A third compilation of data on language use in Figures 2.3 and 2.4 illustrates where, how often, and with whom the language is mainly spoken today.

**Figure 2.3:** *Where* do you speak Alsatian?

| | always | often | some-times | seldom | never |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ■ home | 1 | 2 | 9 | 10 | 5 |
| ■ social gatherings | 2 | 2 | 11 | 11 | 4 |
| ■ restaurants, shops | 0 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 14 |
| ■ work | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 13 |
| ▪ other | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 7 |

Figure 2.3 investigated the use of Alsatian in selected public and private domains. The responses indicate that Alsatian is mainly used "sometimes" to "seldom" in private domains of home and social gatherings and essentially "never" in public domains of church, restaurants, shops, and work. The higher response rate for "restaurants/shops" is influenced by one popular local restaurant and bakery. It is operated by the great-great-grandson of an early Castroville Alsatian who still speaks Alsatian fairly fluently and has been active in Castroville politics as councilman and mayor. His restaurant is a favorite destination for lunch and the men's afternoon *Kaffeeklatsch* 'coffee gossip.'

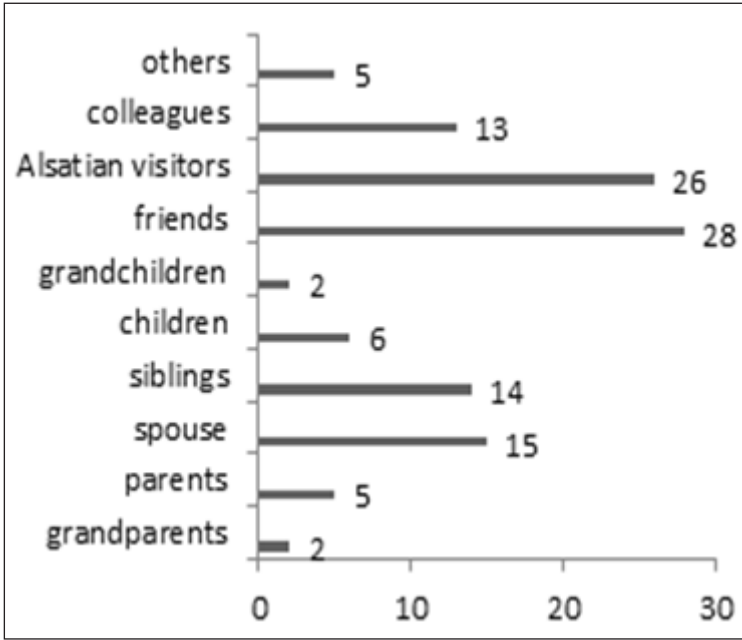**Figure 2.4:** *With whom* do you speak Alsatian now?



Figure 2.4 shows that Alsatian is moving out of the home and family domain and into the domain of friends, such as the European Alsatian visitors, and colleagues. Alsatian is rarely spoken with the younger generations, which is indicative of the break in transmission shown in Figure 2.2 and underscores that the language shift to English is complete. The most frequent conversation partners are friends and Alsatian visitors by a significant margin, which is elaborated in §2.6.

Figures 2.1-4 illustrating the use of Texas Alsatian today indicate a language in crisis:

(1) no transmission to the next generation, (2) infrequent use by heritage speakers, and (3) its use restricted to private domains of home, family (older siblings or spouses), and friends.

## 2.6 Contact with the Alsatian homeland

The use of Alsatian in the Castroville community was positively affected by the initiation of an exchange with the Upper Rhine city of Eguisheim, south of Colmar. In 1975, a church leader and Texas Alsatian community member initiated a trip to the "Old Country" in the spirit of visiting the villages of their ancestors. The group of twenty-five travelers was welcomed with such interest and enthusiasm that they extended an invitation to

the French Alsatians to visit Castroville. These language partners quickly established friendships, which many informants today place within a family construct, calling their Alsatian friends "extended family." Only a few months later, a group of over three hundred French Alsatians arrived in Castroville, which set a chain of events into motion that still defines the Castroville community and has been instrumental in the maintenance and revitalization of Texas Alsatian.

Castroville community leader Mayor Tschirhart captured the rapport between the long-separated communities in his 1976 farewell speech after the community's second trip to the Alsace. The following excerpt is taken from a handwritten original and constitutes a rare written example of Texas Alsatian as perceived by the speaker:

> *Farewell. As komet immer a ziet wo mir sheite mien, und sheite isch immer a bittere word, awer alles guetes müest oui zum a and komme. Das war yo so a wunderbare gelegenheit fer dei reise mit zu mache zu dam grosse Elsase. Das muest unbadinked ienst fo da greastch erin erung say fo unserum lawanslaufe. Mit drenne in da ouige und a schware hartz mien mir die liawe lit do im Elsase wider ferlo awer fergasse, nie, nie mol. . . So wan mir noch amol saga, VIVA LA FRANCE VIVA LA ALSASE, VIVA LA AMERICKA, VIVA LA TEXAS, VIVA LA KLEINE ALSASE.*

> 'The time always comes when we must part, and "parting" is always a bitter word, but everything good must also come to an end. This was such a wonderful opportunity to take part in the trip to the 'big' (French) Alsace.[18] This must be without a doubt one of the greatest memories of our entire life. With tears in our eyes and a heavy heart, we must leave you dear people here in the Alsace again, but forget you, never, ever. . . So we want to say once again, long live France, long live the Alsace, long live America, long live Texas, long live the Little Alsace'

## 3 Phonetics and phonology of Texas Alsatian

To preface a phonetic description of Texas Alsatian (hereafter TxAls), it is helpful to view a representative speaker sample as shown in Example (3.1).

(3.1) TxAls #254

> "Myettr hàt Wäsche inna g'numma un g'biigelt fir d'Lit, fer a Laawa màcha un mir hàn ihr myessa haalfa und denn noch speetr han i a Ongl kàà und simlick guet abg'see und ar hàt g'see wie sini Tant isch krank g'woora un ar hat k'saijt, mir solla ruuwakumma un wohna mit deena"

> [myətr hɑt vɛʃə ɪna gnʊma un gbi:glt fɪr dlit, fɛr a la:va mɔ:xə un mir hɑ:n ɪr myəsə ha:lfa ʊn dɛn nox ʃpe:tr hɑn i a ongl kɑ: ʊn sɪ:mlɪk gyət ɑbgse: un ar hɑt kse: vi sini tɑnt iʃ krank kvo:ra ʊn ar hɑt ksaɪt, mɛr solla rʊ:vakʊma ʊn vo:na mɪt de:nə]

> 'mother took in laundry and ironed for people to make a living and we had to help her and then a little later I had an uncle who made a good living and he saw how his aunt became ill and he said we should come over and live with them'

To be mentioned here again is the broad range of variation across speakers as also noted by TxAls #238 during an interview:

> "I think you're gonna find that you have something here that's not as Alsatian as apple pie because it's too many different versions of it…even though we can communicate with those people, it's still not the same."

This is not surprising, given the rural setting and relative isolation of local family ranches, but makes the task of providing an accurate phonetic inventory of TxAls difficult at best. The following description is an attempt at a representative picture of its phonetic system:

   a. Vocalic phonemes, (:) indicates that a phoneme can occur both long and short
      (i) front vowels  / i(:), ɪ, e(:), ɛ(:), a / and rounded vowels / y(:), ʏ /;
      (ii) central unstressed vowel  / ə /;
      (iii) back vowels / o(:), ɔ(:), ɑ / and rounded vowels / u(:), ʊ(:) /;
      (iv) diphthongs / iə, yə, ɛɪ, aɪ, oɪ, oʊ /.

Both tense and lax vowels in open and closed syllables are lengthened in TxAls. Table 3.1 shows examples of minimal pairs for some of the vocalic phonemes which also indicate a phonemic difference between long and short. [19]

**Table 3.1:** Minimal pairs for TxAls vowels

| Phonemes | TxAls | English |
|---|---|---|
| /i/ ~ /i:/ | mi ~ mi: | my ~ mine |
| /ə/ ~ /ɔ:/ | məl ~ mɔ:le | time ~ paint |
| /ɛ/ ~ /ɛ:/ | mɛr ~ mɛ:r | we ~ more |
| /ʊ/ ~ /ʊ:/ | ʊr ~ ʊ:r | (prefix) ~ ear |
| /e:/ ~ /ɔ:/ | e:βr ~ ɔ:βr | over ~ but |
| /a/ ~ /ɔ:/ | ka ~ kɔ: | that ~ paint |
| /a:/ ~ /ə/ | la:sɑ ~ lɔsɑ | read ~ leave |
| /a/ ~ /o:/ | har ~ ho:r, | from ~ hair |
| /o/ ~ /ə/ | rot ~ rɔt | red ~ rat |
| /i:/ ~ /i:ə/ | li:b ~ li:əb | body ~ nice |
| /ʏ/ ~ /yə/ | mʏs ~ myəs | mouse ~ must |

    b. Consonantal phonemes:
        (i) voiceless plosives with fortis/lenis distinctions / p, t, k, b, d, g /;[20]
        (ii) fricatives / β, f, v, z, s, ʃ, ç, x, h /;
        (iii) nasals / m, n, ŋ /
        (iv) affricates / pf, ks, ts, tʃ, dʒ /
        (v) liquids /l, r/ and allophones [ɾ, occasionally ɽ].

## 3.1 Texas Alsatian vowels

    TxAls has several distinctive vocalic features that mirror the Upper Rhenish (hereafter UR) donor dialect(s) such as both long and short vowels in stressed and unstressed positions.[21] These features also distinguish TxAls from standard-near Texas German (TxG) dialects in contact.[22] Comparison with TxG forms also emphasizes the preservation of UR donor dialect features despite intense contact situations (Thomason 2001) with TxG. Five of these are highlighted in Example (3.2) and seem to pose comprehensibility issues between Texas Alsatians and fellow TxG speakers, much like the comprehensibility between European Alsatians and Standard German speakers. The vocalic features described in (3.2) still occur in UR today and can generally be linked historically with the retention of Middle High German features.

(3.2) TxAls/UR distinctive vocalic features vs. Texas German (TxG)

    a. TxAls/UR [a, ɑ] in contexts where TxG [ɛ] occurs:
        i.    TxAls/UR [ʃa:r]        TxG [ʃɛ:rə] 'scissors'
        ii.   TxAls/UR[fɑn(:)ʃr]    TxG [fɛnstə:] 'window'

b. TxAls/UR rounded vowel [y(:)] where TxG diphthong [aʊ] occurs:
    i.    TxAls/UR [hy(:)s]          TxG [haʊs] 'house'
    ii.   TxAls/UR [kry(:)t]        TxG [kraʊt] 'cabbage'

c. TxAls/UR front vowel [i(:)] where TxG diphthong [aɪ] occurs:
    i.    TxAls/UR [i:s]            TxG [aɪs] 'ice'
    ii.   TxAls/UR [mi:]           TxG [maɪn] 'my'

d. TxAls diphthong [oɪ] where TxG [aʊ] occurs:
    i.    TxAls/UR [oɪ]           TxG [aʊx] 'also'
    ii.   TxAls/UR [boɪm]        TxG [baʊm] 'tree'

e. TxAls/UR rising diphthongs [i:e, y:e] where TxG [i:, ʊ] occurs:
    i.    TxAls/UR [sies, syəs]    TxG [zi:s] 'sweet'
    ii.   TxAls/UR [myetər]     TxG [mʊtɐʁ] 'mother'

Table 3.2 shows an example of TxAls phonological variants for Example 3.2.

**Table 3.2:**         TxAls plural formation Map 61 "two windows"
                  UR [ɑ] Fanschteř (vs TxG/SG [ɛ] Fenster)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| fɑ(:)nʃt(ə)ř (UR) | 20 | 202, 234, 236, 237, 238, 239, 243, 247, 248, 249a, 249b, 249d, 250, 251, 252a, 252b, 253, 254, 256, 257 |
| fɑnʃtřɑ | 1 | 255 |
| fɑ:nʃtřs | 1 | 235 |
| fenʃtəř | 3 | 241, (236), 242, 249c |
| fɛnstər (SG) | 0 | |
| Unknown | 2 | |

Roesch (2012) TxAls resampling of Gilbert (1972)

## 3.2 TxAls consonants

TxAls also has several consonantal features which can be traced to the UR donor dialect(s) and which distinguish it from standard-near TxG dialects in contact. Example (3.3) shows representative responses which reflect the most frequent variant produced by speakers.

(3.3) TxAls/UR distinctive consonantal features vs. Texas German (TxG)
    a. TxAls/UR apical trill or tap [r, ɾ] where TxG [ʀ, ɾ, ʈ] or glide [ɐ] occurs:
        i.    TxAls/UR [kry:t]    TxG [kʀaʊt] 'cabbage' REPLACE
        ii.   TxAls [gɛʃtərt]     TxG [gɛstəɐn] 'yesterday'

b. TxAls/UR [v, β] where TxG [b] occurs intervocalically:
    i.    TxAls/UR [o:və]        TxG [abɛnt] 'evening
    ii.   TxAls/UR [ɑ:βər]       TxG [abəɽ] 'but'
c. TxAls/UR [s] where TxG [z] occurs initially:
    a.   TxAls/UR [si:h]        TxG [zi:h] 'look'
    b.   TxAls/UR [si]          TxG [zaɪn] 'his'
d. TxAls/UR [ʃ] where TxG [s] occurs before [t] and [p]:
    a.   TxAls/UR [ɪʃ]          TxG [ɪs(t)] 'is'
    b.   TxAls/UR [ho:aboɑʃt]   TxG [haʀbʊɐst] 'hairbrush'
e. TxAls/UR [x] where TxG [ç] occurs:
    a.   TxAls/UR [mɛlx]      TxG [mɪlç] 'milk'
    b.   TxAls/UR [ɛx]        TxG [ɪç]

TxAls speakers produce the apical trill or tap systematically with little variation, as is the case with most of the other consonantal features. Both vocalic and consonantal features described above can be traced back to the UR donor dialects as a representative sample from an ALS speaker in Example (3.4) illustrates.

(3.4)    *Ech han scho a Ding bkumma…s Marie scho un ich hàn a, a Taafela bekumma will mir immr so Lit hàn mir zwei…s Mariela isch schlaier g'sei as ech, sie hàt a COUPE Bier ufg'macht, so ebbes dann fer alli wu kumma, weisch dü… isch doch das gliecha*

    'I also got a thing like that…Marie and I already got a, a plaque because we two always have people…Marie was cleverer than me, she opened a *coupe* of beer or something like that for everyone who came, you know—it's all the same'

### 3.3 Phonological phenomena in TxAls

Phonological phenomena in TxAls consist of relatively conservative changes when compared with current UR donor dialect(s), such as differences in plosive fortis and lenis distinctions, the occurrence of [z] instead of [s] word-initially, [ç] word-finally, diphthongization of lengthened vowels. There are a variety of possibilities to account for these phenomena: (1) the many UR donor varieties which exhibit only minimal differences; (2) shifting speakers and "imperfect" learning (Winford 2003: 56); (3) intermarriage between speakers of Alsatian and standard-near TxG varieties; (4) (phonic) transference (Clyne 2003: 78);[23] (5) reverse transference from English into TxAls due to infrequency of use; and (6) the rare occurrence of speakers with formal education in German, as is the case for Speaker #241.

The variation shown in Table 3.2 also provides the opportunity to illustrate how biographical and sociolinguistic data on individual speakers can more accurately account for mixed forms in TxAls, such as *Fenschteř*, *Fanschtřa*, and *Faanschters*:

>(1) *Fenschteř*:
>>a. TxAls #241, a fluent speaker and educator with college training in Standard German, responds with mixed form *Fenschteř* (SG [ɛ], UR [ʃ]
>>b. TxAls #236 is a semi-speaker, who reports that both TxAls and TxG were spoken in the home
>>c. TxAls #242 is a weak semi-speaker, a TxG speaker who learned TxAls from her spouse
>>d. TxAls #249c is a weak semi-speaker, and the second eldest of five sisters who learned Alsatian in the home, but speaks only "a little bit"
>
>(2) *Fanschtřa*:
>>TxAls #255 is a strong semi-speaker, who learned Alsatian from his father (#254), a fluent speaker. Here he hyperextends with the most common UR plural ending *a*
>
>(3) *Faanschters*:
>>TxAls #235 is a fluent speaker, but an Irish girl who learned Alsatian at age 16; she responds with the English plural suffix *–s* where UR Ø-ending should occur, as she does with other plurals.

The most noticeable phenomena occurring in TxAls versus the UR donor dialect(s) have been (1) an extension of the UR vowel system to include [o:] and [u:], (2) a systematic vowel lengthening of all vowels in both open and closed syllables and (3) a further diphthongization of these lengthened vowels in open syllables, particularly [o:] > [o:ʊ], [e:] > [e:i], and [i:] > [i:j], as shown in Example (3.4).

(3.4) Vowel lengthening in open and closed syllables

|   | UR | | TxAls | | Gloss |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. | [fɑnʃtř] > | | [fɑ:nʃtř] | | 'window' |
| b. | [diɑ] | > | [di:ə] | > [di:ja] | 'the.fem.' |
| c. | [kse] | > | [kse:] | > [kse:i] | 'been' |
| d. | [do] | > | [do:] | > [do:u] | 'here' |
| e. | [dʊnʃɪk]> | | [dʊ:nʃɪk] | | 'Thursday' |

Prosodic features such as accent, tone, and nasalization have been noted

to be especially prone to diffusion (a process by which linguistic changes gradually spread) in language contact situations (e.g., Matisoff 2006, Epps 2006). Both UR and certain Texas accents have a prosodic feature of vowel lengthening in common, which might account for this structure exaggeration. Several European Alsatians also remarked on a "drawl" in the speech of the Texas Alsatians when asked about the Alsatian spoken in Castroville.[24] Supporting this is the unequal bilingualism of most current TxAls speakers: English is now their dominant language.

## 4 The morphosyntactic features of Texas Alsatian

This section describes morphosyntactic features of the TxAls noun, pronoun, and determiners (case, gender, and number), and the TxAls verb (tense, mood, and aspect). In general, TxAls mirrors the features of the ancestral (and current) UR donor dialects unless otherwise noted.

### 4.1 The TxAls noun and its determiners: Case, number and gender

The TxAls nominal case system is characterized by a merger of the nominative and accusative forms as in the UR donor dialects. (This contrasts with standard-near TxG dialects, which are characterized by an accusative-dative merger.) As in UR donor dialects, the dative and genitive cases are expressed by periphrastic constructions using prepositions. The TxAls pronominal and determiner systems, however, show an incomplete merger of the nominative and accusative forms.

The TxAls noun does not show case as a result of (1) the loss of final *–n* in masculine nouns, and (2) periphrastic constructions using prepositions for dative and genitive functions. Both are features of UR donor dialect(s). TxAls generally distinguishes between three grammatical genders as in UR: masculine, feminine, and neuter. The indefinite and definite articles and demonstratives 'this' and 'that' are exhibited in Table 4.1. (see also §4.4).

**Table 4.1:** TxAls determiner forms

|  | indefinite 'a' | definite 'the' | | demonstrative 'this' | | demonstratives 'that'      'those' | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  | NOM/ ACC | DAT | NOM/ ACC | DAT | NOM/ ACC | DAT |
| masc. | [ɑ] | [dr, d] | ['m] | [dɑ] | [dɑm] | [salr] | [saləm] |
| fem. | [ɑ] | [d] | [dr] | [di:ə] | [dɛrə] | [salɑ] | [salr] |
| neuter | [ɑ] | [s] | ['m] | [dɔ:s] | [dɑm] | [sal] | [saləm |
| plural |  | [d, di, diə] |  | [di:ə] | [de:nə] | [salɑ, sali] | [salɑ] |

The TxAls noun is marked only for number. The plural article is *d'*. The noun diminutive is *–le* [lə] or *–la* [la]. There are four main types of plural formation which are identical to the UR donor dialect(s).

(1) Without ending or mutation (Ø):   [fɑnʃtr] > [fɑnʃtr]   'windows'
(2) Stem-vowel mutation:   [kɔpf] >  [kɛpf]   'heads'
(3) Addition of *–e* [ɑ, ə]:   [gaɪs] >  [gaɪsɑ]   'goats'
(4) Addition of *–eř* [ər]:   [kɪnt] >  [kɪndr]   'children.'

## 4.2 The TxAls pronominal system

The TxAls pronominal system shows an incomplete merger of the nominative and accusative forms. TxAls stressed and unstressed pronoun forms are shown in Table 4.2.

## 4.3 The TxAls verb: Tense, mood, voice

TxAls exhibits the following verb tenses: present indicative, a compound past tense, and a future tense expressed utilizing temporal adverbials with present tense forms. Speakers make use of grammatical mood using modal auxiliaries and to a limited degree, past subjunctive forms, and frequently produce passive constructions without difficulty. The TxAls infinitive ends in [ɑ] ~ [ə]. The TxAls past participle (p.p.) formation distinguishes between three verb classes: strong, weak, and preterite-present. The past participle is characterized by prefix *ge-, g', or k*, as in the p.p. of haben 'have,' *k'haa*, with the exception of verbs beginning with [g] or [k], as in *kumma* 'to come' or *gaa* 'to give.' The past participle ending in *-t* characterizes the weak and preterite-present verbs and the ending *–a* the strong verbs. There are also monosyllabic verbs in TxAls as in UR: [ga:] 'to give,' [ge:] 'to go,' [ha:] 'to have,' [sa:] 'to see,' and [se] 'to be.'

TxAls uses five modal auxiliaries: *deřfa, duřfa* 'to be allowed to,' *müessa, mien* 'to have to,' *solla* 'to be supposed to,' *kenna* 'to be able to,' and *wella, wulla* 'to want.' According to Werlen (1985: 9) the most frequently occurring modals as in other German varieties are *müessa* and *kenna*. In the present tense, the nonfinite modal occupies second position and the finite main verb stands at the end of the clause, as in the UR donor dialect(s). The present perfect uses the temporal auxiliary *han* with a double infinitive at the end of the clause in which the modal precedes the dependent infinitive as shown in Example (4.1). There is no modal past participle.

Table 4.2: TxAls pronouns

| | 1st person 'I, me' | | | 2nd person 'you' | | | 3rd person 'he, him' | | | 'she, her' | | 'it' | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SING | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Nom | ɪç | ɛç | i | dyː | dy | de | ɑːr | ər | siː | sɪ | es | aːs ɪns | as | s |
| Acc | mɪxmɪç | mɛx mɛç | mi | dɪx dɪç | dɛx dɛç | di | iːn | in | siː | sɪ | sə | aːs ɪns | as | s |
| Dat | miːr | mɛr | mr | dɪr | dɛr | dr | im | m | r | ər | r | ɪm | m | |
| PLURAL 'we' | | | | 'you' | | | 'they' | | | | | | | |
| Nom | miːr | mɛr | mr | iːr | ər | r | siː | sɪ | sə | | | | | |
| Acc | ons | | | aɪx, aɪç, oɪs | | | siː | sɪ | es | | | | | |
| Dat | ons | | | aɪx, aɪç, oɪs | | | iːnə | | | | | | | |

(4.1)  a. #234:  *Ař hàt nitt kenna tanza*
  'He couldn't dance'
  b. #254:  *Mir̆ <u>hàn</u> ir̆ <u>müessa</u> <u>halfa</u>.*
  'We had to help her'
  c. #239:  *Àwř mir̆ <u>hàn</u> <u>müen</u> alles <u>màcha</u>.*
  'But we had to do everything'
  d. #254:  *Ař <u>hàt</u> nitt <u>wulla</u> <u>zahla</u>.*
  'He didn't want to pay'

(i) *Tense*: In the present tense, strong and weak verbs distinguish between three forms in the singular, *–ø, -sch, –t*: *i(ch) màch, dü màsch, ar màcht* 'to make, do'. There is only one plural ending, *–a*. The plural forms of the irregular verbs *see* 'to be' and *han* 'to have' are an exception and do not take this *–a* ending, *mir sin* 'we are,' *mir han* 'we have.' Weak verbs and most strong verbs maintain the same stem vowel in the present as in the infinitive: *i schlàf, dü schlàfsch, ar schlàft* 'I sleep, you sleep, he sleeps'.

As in most Upper German varieties like UR, TxAls uses the present perfect compound tenses for expressing the past. The present perfect is formed by means of temporal auxiliaries *see* 'be' and *han* 'haben' with a past participle. There is also vowel gradation in past participle forms of strong verbs as throughout German varieties as shown in Table 4.3. The future is expressed with the present tense and temporal adverbials such as *morga* 'tomorrow', or *nachschta Wucha* 'next week'.

**Table 4.3:** TxAls present perfect verb forms

| TxAls/UR | INFINITIVE | PAST PARTICIPLE | | Gloss |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| WEAK | heera, hera | g'heert | [kʰeːrt] | 'to hear' |
| | màcha | g'màcht | [gmɔxt] | 'to do, make' |
| | saija | gsaijt | [ksaɪjt] | 'to say' |
| STRONG | assa | gassa | [ġasə] | 'to eat' |
| | finda | g'funda | [gfʊndə] | 'to find' |
| | hàlfa | g'hulfa | [kʰʊlfə] | 'to help' |
| | schriiwa | g'schriiwa | [gʃřiːvə] | 'to write' |

(ii) *Mood*: Due to the context of narratives relating past events, there were rarely statements made which required the subjunctive. Only the most fluent TxAls speakers were able to produce subjunctive forms elicited in Eikel (1954) translations, as in Example (4.2).

(4.2) TxAls subjunctive forms
 a. #239: Eikel 2.10:  'I wouldn't be satisfied with only eleven'
                        *Ich war nitt z'fred wenn ich n …wenn ich nur elfi het.*
 b. #202:  Eikel 4.7:  'If I were a farmer I'd plant more cotton.'
                        *Wenn ich a Büer war, tat ich mehr Bäumwull pflanze*

   (iii) *Voice*: The passive voice is formed with the UR auxiliary verb *woořa*, (SG *werden*) and a past participle and stands in stark contrast to the auxiliary 'to be' used to express the passive in English. Although this presents a stumbling block to second language learners of German, there is no evidence of the English auxiliary in the TxAls passive as in Example (4.3).

(4.3) TxAls present perfect passive constructions
 a.  #240: *D' meischti hàn alli Ànglisch un es isch gàř z'halba veřgassa woořa.*
             'Most spoke all English and it was completely or half forgotten'
 b.  #234: *Wu'ř vergřàv woořa isch, sin alli di ältscht davořna gsatzt mit dř Wàg.*
             'When he was buried, all the eldest (sisters) sat up front on the wagon'

Example (4.3b) also provides an example of the sole relative pronoun in TxAls *wu* 'who, that'.

## 4.4 Other morphosyntactic phenomena in TxAls

   My data analyses comparing already-reduced UR definite articles marking gender *d'r* (masc.nom/acc.), *d'* (fem.nom/acc.) and *'s* (neut.nom/acc.) indicate a regularization to one common article *d'* in progress. Conversely, there is a high occurrence of dative case markings for the definite and demonstrative article indicating retention of the UR NA/D opposition in the nominal system.[25]  Interesting is the high percentage (84%) of dative forms produced after the two-way prepositions *auf/an* before masculine noun *Booda* 'floor' in dative contexts of location as exhibited in Example (4.4).

(4.4) Two-way prepositions *auf*, *an* (Roesch 2012: 138-9),
       a. UR *Es liigt dert am/uufm Booda* 'it's lying there on the floor'

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Dative (UR): | [am bo:də, uf:m bo:də] | 84% |
| Common case: | [an, u:f dr bo:də] | 0% |
| Reduced form: | [d] | 16% |

b. UR *Mach's an d'r Booda! Mach's uuf d'Booda!* 'put it on the floor'

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Common case (UR): | [an dr bo:də, u:f dr bo:də] | 36% |
| Dative forms: | [am, u:fm] | 32% |
| Reduced form: | [d] | 32% |

A resampling of the pronominal system which still maintains a three-way case distinction (N/A/D) in UR also showed a significant retention of pronoun forms with this same paradigm. However, there is some loss of the pronoun *ihr*.nom.pl. Example (4.5) shows TxAls variants produced for Gilbert's (1972) "You were both here yesterday:"

Example (4.5): TxAls plural pronoun [ir] 'you,' UR *Iř sin baida geschteřt do gseh*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| a. you.2pers.nom/acc.pl: | i(:)r | 71% |
| b. we.1pers.nom/acc.pl: | mi:r, mɛr | 19% |
| c. you.2pers-he.3pers.nom.sing: | dy, ař | 10% |

The opportunity for addressing other speakers in the plural is greatly reduced in this endangered state of TxAls; i.e., the conversational context has been reduced to conversations between two people and requires only the 2pers.sing form *dü*.

A development in TxAls which suggests structural transference from the speakers' dominant language (English) is the placement of time adverbials in ENG phrase-final position instead of UR placement after the finite verb. My 2012 resampling of Gilbert's (1972) phrase in Example (4.5) "You were both here yesterday" also showed a syntactic shift indicative of English placement: nineteen of the twenty-four respondents placed the time adverbial *geschtert* 'yesterday' in ENG final position.

## 5 The lexicon of Texas Alsatian

This section focuses on traceable lexical items of TxAls to the UR donor dialect(s), which also differentiate this variety from standard-near TxG varieties in contact. Language contact phenomena that can affect the lexical inventory such as borrowing, code-switching, and convergence are also examined.

There are readily apparent lexical differences between European Alsatian (ALS) and Standard German, which are reflected in TxAls and standard-near TxG varieties, respectively. For example, TxAls speakers use *lüega* 'to look' and *keeija* 'to fall' in contrast to TxG *sehen* or *gucken* 'see, look' and *fallen*

'to fall.' Table 5.1 gives a few examples of these differences between TxAls and TxG varieties: (see §2.5 on Alsatian speakers included in Gilbert's 1972 survey).

**Table 5.1:** Lexical variation in TxAls

| | Gilbert (1972): 27 | | Roesch (2009): 27 |
|---|---|---|---|
| a. | "falls" TxG *fellt* | | TxAls *–ke:it* |
| | -ke:t (UR), am ke:ja | 0 | 22 |
| | -falt, -fɛlt (SG), am falən | 25 | 0 |
| | | | |
| b. | "a girl" TxG *Mädche(n)* | | TxAls *Maidla* |
| | maidlə (UR): | 11 | 27 |
| | metçən (SG), me:tʃən, etc.: | 8 | 0 |
| | metçə,  me:tʃə, etc.: | 3 | 0 |
| | | | |
| c. | "a horse" TxG *Pferd* | | TxAls *Ross* |
| | rɔs (UR) | 11 | 25 |
| | pfɛ(:)rt (SG), fɛ(:)rt, peɑt | 15 | 0 |

Roesch 2012 Resampling of Gilbert's (1972) translation tasks

## 5.1 Lexical borrowing

It is not surprising to find a one-way directionality in borrowing in TxAls, i.e., words are borrowed from the dominant language, English, into the recipient language, TxAls, but not vice-versa. There was no occurrence of the reverse during interview sessions. Supporting this directionality and a correlation to the power and prestige of the source language is also the rare borrowing of any Spanish words into TxAls. The only Spanish word encountered occurred during the Gilbert (1972) translation task for English "pumpkin," which was usually translated as *galawasa* (Span *calabasa*). Borrowing into TxAls is mainly limited to single-item occurrences of English nouns and verbs, and occurs mainly in semi-fluent speakers who use TxAls too infrequently to recall the Alsatian word.

(i) *Nouns*

Borrowed nouns largely represent cultural borrowings from English (Myers-Scotton 2006: 212), i.e., items for which there was no adequate Alsatian word in the homeland, as in words pertaining to the immigrants' new environment such as Johnson grass, pasture, tank, and creek [krɪk].

These cultural borrowings also include technological innovations which took place after immigration, such as TxAls [kara] 'car,' [bʊ:gi] 'buggy,' or [ti:r, taijər] 'tire' as in Example (5.1).

(5.1) TxAls cultural borrowings from English

    a. #202:    *mir hàn hett morga 's* JOHNSON GRASS *g'brieselt*
        'we sprayed the Johnson grass this morning'

    b. #254 :    *un dr* PICKUP *isch a sidis un d'* tir *isch kapütt un i bin nitt üssagflooga, i bin am* STEERING WHEEL *verbooga*'
        'and the pickup is on its side and the tire is ruined and I wasn't thrown out, I was wrapped around the steering wheel'

    c. #238:    *d Esel hàt a Horboascht kàà—sall wiss ich—fer d MANE kemma, un dann hàn si a SPRINGLOADED Schaar kàà*
        'the donkey had a hairbrush—that I know—for combing the mane, and then they had springloaded scissors'

ii. *Verbs and adverbs*

There are also examples of verbs borrowed into TxAls as shown in Example (5.2), although fluent community leaders have expressed disapproval for using English lexical items in their discourse. Many TxAls speakers also integrate borrowed English lexical items phonologically and structurally. Fluent speaker #202 often quotes a TxAls speaker (with a shake of the head) who integrates English verbs into his sentences, as shown in Example (5.2a).

(5.2) TxAls borrowed verbs

    a. C.G.:    *hett morga hàn ech durch's Fansteř k'*vatcht *un's hàt* blenty *geragent un das* like *ich*
        UR: hett morga hàn ech durch's Fansteř g'lüegt un's hàt viel geragent un das hàn ich gàrn
        'this morning I looked out the window and it was raining a lot and I like that'

    b. #235:    *i hàn's* enjoyed
        UR: Ech han's g'niasa
        'I enjoyed it'

    c. #249d:    *i hàn Elsàssisch geřeeda, sie hàn in Ànglisch ge*ànsert
        UR: ich hàn Elsàssisch g'řett, un sie hàn's in Ànglisch g'saijt
        'I spoke Alsatian, and they answered in English'

The English adverb "plenty" in (5.2a) is used by TxAls speakers, so much so that it has almost replaced the TxAls lexical item *viel* 'a lot'. Many informants noted that "plenty" was usually used instead of *viel*, but they were careful not to use it in the translation tasks. It seems certain prescriptive (and purist) efforts by fluent speakers have emphasized that *viel* is the *Alsatian* word and should be used instead of the English "plenty."

iii. *Discourse markers*

Pragmatic elements such as English discourse markers "well" and "you know" occur only sporadically in the conversation of TxAls speakers." There is still ample evidence of Alsatian modal particles in TxAls, which most likely accounts for the low frequency of English discourse markers. In a case with two couples of a "mixed" marriage, i.e., where one spoke the standard-near TxG variety and the other TxAls, there was a noticeable absence of English discourse markers in the discourse of TxAls speakers versus TxG speakers.

In reviewing the types of borrowing that occur in TxAls and comparing these with the stages described by Thomason (2001), it appears that the extent of lexical borrowing did not progress past the first stage, i.e. past borrowing nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. These borrowed items were predominantly cultural borrowings of content morphemes.

## 5.2 Code-switching

Given that the majority of the TxAls-speaking community (1) can no longer be considered sufficiently fluent in both English and TxAls to spontaneously switch between the two codes (most are formerly-fluent speakers who rarely use Alsatian), and given that (2) the use of TxAls is extremely limited in scope (mainly to the informal domains of home and friends), discussing socio-psychological motivations (strategies) for code-switching is fairly moot, and analyzing grammatical constraints on such a small scale is not informative.[26]

## 5.3 Borrowing in Texas Alsatian and European Alsatian

This section examines lexical items shared between contact varieties, in particular between TxAls and TxG varieties, but also between the UR donor dialect(s) and TxAls. Interesting in both TxAls and TxG are certain loan translations and innovations which are shared across these varieties. Haugen (1953) offers a classification of lexical contact phenomena ranging generally from pure loanwords to loanblends to creations, with various intermediate stages. The examples such as *křick* and *buggy* already introduced represent

"pure loanwords" (Winford 2003: 43). There are also examples of creations TxAls and TxG have in common, such as *Stinkkatz* 'stink cat' (skunk) or *Eichkatz* 'oak cat' (squirrel). Other common loanwords found in both TxAls and TxG such as *Gallerie* 'porch' or *Patatas* 'sweet potato' provide some lexical evidence favoring the hypothesis of the beginning formation of a TxG koiné (Boas 2009, Gilbert 1980: 229).

It is evident that the Alsatian exchange has replenished the lexical inventory of TxAls to some extent, especially with regard to English words borrowed and integrated long ago. For example, #249a remarked that she learned the Alsatian word *Dorf* for "village" from her visits to the Alsace. Her father had always referred to D'Hanis as a "depot" [di:po:] and she had assumed this was the Alsatian word for "town". #251 reports that the Alsatian word *Wàga* for "car" (TxAls *cara*) was learned during visits to the Alsace and #202 relates his discovery of the UR word *Reifa* for "tire" (TxAls *taijər*) during one of his visits. The frequently utilized adverb *blenty* has even been borrowed back into the discourse of visiting European Alsatians and transported back to the European homeland.

## 6 Conclusions

Texas Alsatian speakers have maintained distinctive lexical, phonological, and morphosyntactic features of their ancestral language for up to six generations. This constitutes an unusual example of a language undergoing death with minimal change, i.e., without considerable structural and semantic loss (cf. also Nützel 2009). This Texas Alsatian variety mainly owes its longevity to a long history of prestige as the founders of Castroville and a tight social network of Texas Alsatians loyal to their culture and language. Similar attitudes of self-reliance on the part of Texas Alsatian speakers which enabled the maintenance of their language over this length of time also resulted in failing to recruit institutional support. Instead of soliciting regional and state support, the community focused on lateral ties with the Alsace. This served to revitalize the current community of speakers, but did not create a next generation of speakers. The break in transmission within families, strong pressures for the immigrant to assimilate, and the willingness to fully integrate into American society in the first half of the 20th century began a process which is now doubly accelerated by a shrinking and aging speaker population. Unfortunately, this variety rooted in the Upper Rhenish varieties brought to Texas by the immigrants Henri Castro recruited in 1842 will disappear within the next few decades—a colonial German variety that has survived in Medina County, Texas, over a period of almost two hundred years.

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## Appendix

### TxAls Participant Profile

| TGDP # | Age-graded # | Birth Yr | Age 2008 | Age TxAls Learned | Self-reported fluency | Assessed | Religion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 235 | **1** | 1913 † | 95 | 13 – 20 | fluently | FLUENT | Catholic |
| 254 | **2** | 1914 † | 94 | 0 – 5 | fluently | FLUENT | Catholic |
| B.E. | 3 | 1917 | 91 | 0 – 5 | little bit | Rememberer | Catholic |
| 4 | 4 | 1920 | 88 | 0 – 5 | fair | Weak-semi | Catholic |
| 256 | **5** | 1921 † | 87 | 0 – 5 | pretty well | Strong-semi | Catholic |
| 248 | **6** | 1922 † | 86 | 0 – 5 | fluently | Strong-semi | Catholic |
| 249d 208 | **7** 8 | 1923 | 85 | 0 – 5 0 – 5 | pretty well little bit | Rememberer Rememberer | Catholic Catholic |
| D.E. | 9 | 1924 | 84 | 0 – 5 | little bit | Weak-semi | Catholic |
| 241 | **10** | 1925 | 83 | 0 – 5 | fluently | Strong-semi | Catholic |
| 239 | **11** | 1926 | 82 | 0 – 5 | fluently | FLUENT | Catholic |
| Z.V. | i. | | | n/a; survey only | no Alsatian | Non-speaker | Catholic |
| 242 249c | **12** **13** | 1927 | 81 | 0 – 5 0 – 5 | fair little bit | Weak-semi Weak-semi | Catholic Catholic |
| 247 | **14** | 1928 | 80 | 0 – 5 | pretty well | FLUENT | Catholic |
| 250 B.C. | **15** 16 | 1930 | 78 | 0 – 5 6 – 12 | little bit little bit | Weak-semi Rememberer | Catholic Catholic |
| 252a T.R. | **17** ii. | 1931 | 77 | 6 – 12 n/a; survey only | fair no Alsatian | Weak-semi Non-speaker | Catholic Catholic |
| 234 249b | **18** **19** | 1932 | 76 | 0 – 5 0 – 5 | pretty well little bit | FLUENT Weak-semi | Catholic Catholic |
| 240 243 251 T.B. | **20** **21** **22** 23 | 1933 | 75 | 0 – 5 6 – 12 6 – 12 13 - 20 | pretty well little bit fluently pretty well | Strong-semi Rememberer FLUENT Strong-semi | Catholic Catholic Catholic Catholic |
| 252b T.A. F.C. | **24** 25 iii. | 1934 | 74 | 0 – 5 13 – 20 n/a; survey only | pretty well pretty well no Alsatian | FLUENT Strong-semi Non-speaker | Catholic Catholic Catholic |
| 249a 253 236 257 | **26** **27** **28** **29** | 1936 | 72 | 0 – 5 (D'Hanis) 0 – 5 6 – 12 6 – 12 | little bit pretty well fair pretty well | Weak-semi Weak-semi Weak-semi Strong-semi | Catholic Catholic Catholic Catholic |
| H.P. | 30 | 1938 | 70 | 6 – 12 | fair | Weak-semi | Catholic |
| 202 237 255 K.R. | **31** **32** **33** 34 | 1939 | 69 | 0 – 5 0 – 5 0 – 5 6 – 12 | fluently pretty well pretty well little bit | FLUENT FLUENT Strong-semi Rememberer | Catholic Catholic Catholic Catholic |
| 238 | **35** | 1940 | 68 | 0 – 5 | fluently | FLUENT | Catholic |

| | | 1941 | | | | | |
|------|-----|---------|----|----------------------|---------------|--------------|----------|
| B.D. | iv. | 1942 | 66 | n/a; survey only | no Alsatian | Non-speaker | Catholic |
| | | 1943-45 | | | | | |
| E.B. | 36 | 1946 | 62 | 6 – 12 | little bit | Rememberer | Catholic |
| W.M. | 37 | 1948 | 60 | 6 – 12 | little bit | Weak-semi | Catholic |
| T.C. | 38 | 1959 | 49 | 36 – 50 | little bit | Weak-semi | Catholic |
| 233 | **39** | 1979 | 29 | 13 – 20 | little bit | Weak-semi | Catholic |

## Notes

[1] For example, the 2000 U.S. Census categorizes Alsatian under the French language.

[2] The difference between language and dialect revolves around mutual intelligibility, i.e., if two language varieties are not mutually intelligible it is termed a language, but if mutually intelligible, they are considered dialects.

[3] Matzen (1973: 110) notes there are as many varieties of Alsatian as there are "speakers, villages, or cities."

[4] The term "German-speaking" transcends political borders and includes German dialects spoken in current political entities such as Austria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Poland, and Switzerland.

[5] At the time of the main wave of immigration from German-speaking areas (1830-1860), Germany was still a loose confederation of states and principalities and was not unified as a nation until 1871.

[6] One section = 1 square mile or 640 acres (260 hectares)

[7] The Society for the Protection of German Immigrants to Texas, commonly known as the Adelsverein ("nobles' society") is credited with bringing the main wave of German immigrants to Texas from 1844-1846 with 7,380 immigrants versus Castro's 2,134.

[8] CCHA = Castro Colonies Heritage Association

[9] Even in modern Germany today, villages remain predominantly Catholic or Protestant (evangelisch), a remnant of the turbulent religious wars ignited by the Reformation.

[10] Local or regional political, social, and economic control versus verticalization, which is characterized by state or national control (Salmons 2005: 129).

[11] Texas achieved statehood in 1845.

[12] Alsatian is designated separately here as a language due to the limited intelligibility between Alsatian and most other German varieties.

[13] With the exception of one lone "Lost German Paper" published by Ed. Meyer in May 1915.

[14] Sister St. Andrew (Feltin) of this order from the Bas-Rhin, Alsace, established the well-known St. Joseph's school in San Antonio in 1875. Information on Sisters of Divine Providence is taken from Callahan (1955), CCHA (1985), and Langford (2007).

[15] For a discussion of parochial education, cf. Roesch (2012), Chapter 2.

[16] Other studies on Texas German communities describe similar diglossic situations (Boas 2009: 43ff.); Salmons 1983: 190).

[17] The eldest speaker born in 1913 (age group 13-20) was not included, as she was raised in an English-speaking Irish Catholic family, who learned Alsatian from her spouse at age 16, and does not represent transmission in the usual sense.

[18] Castroville is designated as the "Little Alsace" among Alsatians.

[19] These examples do not represent the extent of speaker variation present in TxAls today.

[20] cf. also Waterman (1991:191) the complexity of distribution patterns for the labial, alveolar, and velar stops in the various Alemannic dialects

[21] Philippe and Botherel-Witz (1989: 316) also describe vowel lengthening as a phonemic difference in Colmar Upper Alsatian to the north.

[22] Examples for TxG are taken from Gilbert (1972) and Boas (2009).

[23] Transference is defined by Clyne as where a "form, feature or construction has been taken over by the speaker from another language, whatever the motives or explanation" (2003: 76-78). Most of the current TxAls speakers learned Alsatian first and their second language, English, when they attended first grade (see Appendix).

[24] One native Alsatian noted that when he first met #202, he noticed was Schleppendes 'a dragging' about his speech that "sounded like Willie Nelson."

[25] Boas (2009a: 209) also notes a tendency in New Braunfels TxG to maintain the opposing N/AD characteristic of TxG standard-near donor dialects.

[26] cf. Roesch (2012) for a discussion on TxAls code-switching.

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