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Hans C. Boas  
(Texas)

## Linguistic splits along religious lines: The role of language maintenance among Catholics and Lutherans in Texas

**Abstract:** Dieser Beitrag beschäftigt sich mit der Frage, inwieweit bedrohte Sprachen und Dialekte vom Aussterben bewahrt werden können. Die konkrete Fallstudie beschäftigt sich mit dem Texas Deutschen, welches seit mehr als 150 Jahre in Zentraltexas gesprochen wird und zu Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts vom Aussterben bedroht ist. Ein Vergleich der Sprachsituation in evangelischen und katholischen Gemeinden soll zeigen, wie die beiden Religionsgemeinschaften sich in der Bewahrung des Deutschen als Kirchensprache unterschiedlich entwickelt haben. Anhand von Interviews aus dem Texas German Dialect Archive wird auch die Rolle des Englischen besprochen, welches im Laufe des 20. Jahrhunderts aufgrund historisch-politischer Ereignisse immer mehr an Bedeutung gewonnen hat.

**Schlagworte:** Sprachkontakt, Sprachtod, Texas Deutsch, Sprache und Religion

**Keywords:** Language contact, language death, Texas German, language and religion

### 1. Introduction

Previous research on language maintenance suggests that endangered languages and dialects have a better chance of surviving when they are continuously used in religious contexts (see Grenoble and Whaley 1998). Just like other important domains such as schools, media, and public administration, religion can thus play an important role in maintaining endangered languages. This paper investigates the role of religion on language maintenance by discussing differences in language maintenance patterns between German-speaking Catholics and Lutherans in Texas between 1850 and today. The goal is to see how long these groups used German at church and to determine the various reasons for giving up German in religious contexts in favor of English.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 gives a brief overview of German immigration to Texas. Section 3 presents the organization and workflow of the Texas German Dialect Project (TGDP), whose recordings of interviews with some of the remaining speakers of Texas German (TxG), a critically endangered dialect, form the basis for our investigation. Section 4 investigates how German was used as a church language by Catholics and Lutherans

from 1850 until today, highlighting the role of English and the prestige of Standard German. Section 5 presents a summary of our findings.

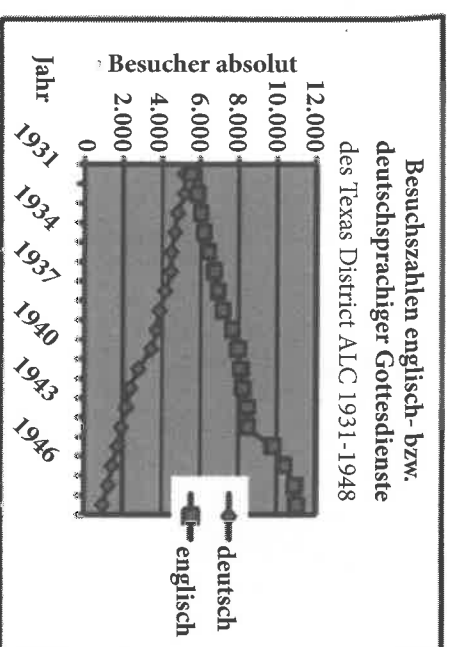
## 2. German immigration to Texas

The first large wave of German-speaking immigrants arrived in the early 1840s, and large-scale immigration continued for a number of decades thereafter (with a brief interruption during the Civil War).<sup>1</sup> The majority of German-speaking immigrants settled in what later became known as the "German belt", which encompasses the area between Gillespie and Medina Counties in the west, Bell and Williamson Counties in the north, Burleson, Washington, Austin, and Fort Bend Counties in the east, and DeWitt, Karnes, and Wilson Counties in the south.

By 1860 there were nearly 20,000 German-born immigrants, mostly from northern and central Germany, living in Texas, and approximately 30,000 Texas Germans, including the American-born children of immigrants (Jordan 1966). Although German immigration to Texas eventually tapered off, the number of Texas Germans continued to increase: by 1940 there were approximately 159,000 Texas Germans (Kloss 1977). For the first several decades of German settlement in Texas, the Texas Germans were relatively isolated, thanks to a number of political and/or social factors. This isolation, coupled with serious attempts at language maintenance, allowed for the retention of TxG. There were numerous German-language church services, newspapers and other periodicals, schools, and social organizations (ranging from choirs to shooting clubs) (Jordan 1966). This situation eventually changed dramatically, starting with the passing of an English-only law for public schools in 1909 (Salmons 1983, p. 188). World War I, especially following America's entry into the war in 1917 and the resulting increase in anti-German sentiment, dealt a major blow to TxG, leading to the stigmatization of German and the beginning of its decline. World War II reinforced the stigma attached to Germany, Germans, and the German language. Institutional support for German was largely abandoned; German-language newspapers and periodicals stopped publishing altogether or switched to English as the language of publication; some German-language schools closed and German instruction was dropped in others; and German-speaking churches replaced German-language services with English-language ones (see Boas 2005). The following figures from Nicolini (2004) show how the use of German and English changed from the 1920s to the 1940s. Figure 1 illustrates how the numbers of attendees at English-speaking

church services increased in the Texas District of the American Lutheran Church from about 5,900 in 1931 to around 11,000 in 1948. At the same time, the number of attendees at German-speaking church services declines from about 5,800 to around 1,000. These numbers clearly illustrate the declining role that German played at church services during that period.

Figure 1: Number of attendees at English-speaking and German-speaking church services in the Texas District of the American Lutheran Church (ALC) (Nicolini 2004, p. 100).

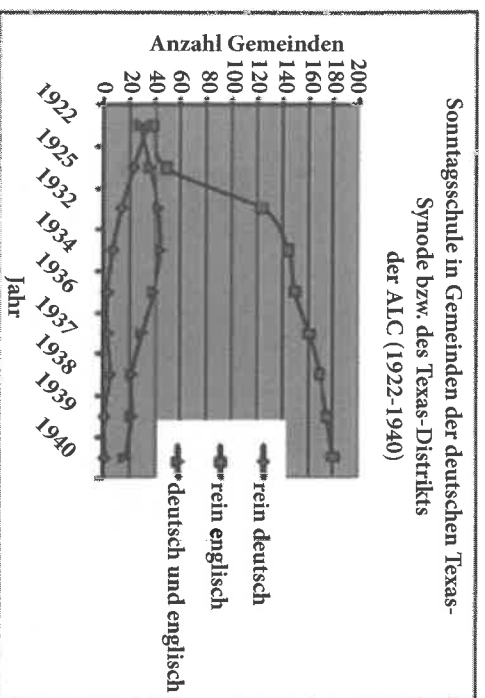


Nicolini (2004) describes a similar trend in the use of English and German at Sunday school. Figure 2 below shows the distribution of German-only, English-only, and mixed language Sunday schools in combined congregations of the German Texas-Synod and the Texas District of the American Lutheran Church. They show that in the early 1920s there were a roughly equal number of German-only and English-only Sunday schools (with English-only slightly more than German-only), slightly under 40 congregations in each category. In contrast, there were about 30 mixed language Sunday schools. These numbers changed quite drastically over the next 18 years, with no German-speaking Sunday schools left by 1940. In contrast, the number of English-only Sunday schools drastically increased from slightly fewer than 40 in 1922 to close to 180. This drastic change in numbers is not only due to the fact that many congregations decided to switch the language at Sunday schools from German to English, but it is also caused by the drastic increase in population and churches in Texas during that period. Based on oral history interviews, I show in Section 4 below that these changes did not happen evenly in all parts of Texas. Instead, there was a significant divide between rural

<sup>1</sup> This section is based on Boas et al. (2010). For a general history of Texas, see Campbell (2003).

urban areas, as well as between areas with a high concentration of German speakers vs. areas with few German speakers.

Figure 2: *Language use at Sunday schools of congregations of the German Texas-Synode and the Texas District of the American Lutheran Church (Nicolini 2004, p. 99).*



end of World War II brought additional challenges to the maintenance of German language and culture in Texas. Speakers of English moved in increasing numbers to the traditional German enclaves, and generally refused to assimilate historically to their new neighbors by learning German, leading to the large abandonment of German in the public sphere. At the same time, younger Germans left the traditional German-speaking areas for employment or education, and began to speak primarily English. Texas Germans also increasingly married partners who could not speak German, and English typically became the language of the household in such linguistically mixed marriages; children raised in households usually have at best a very limited knowledge of TxG. Finally, development of the American interstate highway system in the 1950s made once-isolated TxG communities much more accessible, making it easier for German speakers to visit or live in previously monolingual German communities, and for German-speakers to accept employment in more urban areas. Of these possibilities led to the spread of English at the expense of German. Despite these factors, in the 1960s there were still approximately 70,000 speakers of TxG. Today only an estimated 8,000–10,000 Texas Germans, primarily in the sixties or older, still speak the language of their forebearers fluently (Boas

2009), and English has become the primary language for most Texas Germans in all domains. With no signs of this shift to English being halted or reversed, fluent speakers almost exclusively above the age of 60, TxG is expected to die out within the next 30 years (Boas 2009).<sup>2</sup>

### 3. Methodology

In addition to more recent smaller-scale studies like Salmons (1983) and Guion (1996), a large-scale study has been under way since 2001, when I founded the Texas German Dialect Project ([www.tgdp.org](http://www.tgdp.org)). Besides re-recording translations of word and sentence lists based on Eikel (1954) and Gilbert (1972), members of the TGDP have conducted open-ended sociolinguistic interviews with more than 450 of the approximately 6000 remaining speakers of Texas German (all of whom are 60 years or older). The recorded interviews are transcribed and translated, and subsequently uploaded, together with the relevant metadata for each speaker and interview, to the TGDA, where they can be accessed over the Internet at <http://www.tgdp.org> (for details, see Boas (2006) and Boas et al. (2010)). The transcripts of the open-ended sociolinguistic interviews can be searched on-line with the help of a concordance tool, which allows users to search for particular keywords and their relevant contexts. The data for this paper come from the open-ended sociolinguistic interviews stored in the TGDA. In addition, I rely on data from the biographical questionnaires (see Boas et al. 2010) to determine how much English and German was spoken at church during the speakers' lives.

## 4. German as a church language among Catholics and Lutherans in Texas

### 4.1 The early period: 1845 – 1917

New Braunfels (halfway between present-day San Antonio and Austin) was the first town founded in Texas by the *Adelsverein* immigrants in 1845. The distribution of German-speaking Catholics and Lutherans was roughly one third to two thirds, as the immigrants came from areas where both religions were prevalent (Biesele 1930). The lack of infrastructure in Texas during the early years necessitated cooperation between adherents of both faiths, including a shared Easter service under a tree in 1845, and the building of the so-called "Vereinskirche"

<sup>2</sup> See Nicolini (2004) for a considerably more optimistic outlook on the possible fate of TxG.

in Fredericksburg in 1847. The “Vereinskirche” served a dual mission. First, as a church for Catholics and Lutherans, who held church services at different times. Second, to serve as a school building in which the children received an education. As was the case in most frontier settlements during the early years, the clergy were also the teachers instructing the children at school (Biesele 1930, Nicolini 2004).

The shared space arrangements changed quickly in the early 1850s when Catholics and Lutherans built their own churches, sent calls for missionaries to Germany, and opened German-speaking Sunday schools (see Nicolini (2004) for more information on Methodists, Mormons, and other religions). While Catholics continued as a coherent group, Lutherans began to splinter into different groups, largely because of differences in opinion of specific religious matters (see Nicolini 2004). What is important, however, is that throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, almost all Lutheran churches with a majority of German-speaking members continued to use (Standard) German at church (as well in Sunday schools).<sup>3</sup> In contrast, the Catholic congregations in German-speaking areas would use Latin for the service, and German for the sermon and prayers as the following report from speaker 45 (interviewed by the TGDP) shows:

My friends were all mostly Catholic. And one had to go to church always on Sundays, and every morning. That was the convention in those days. Every morning! From about seven to seven thirty, and then we went to school. The church was here and the school was here, across the street. Well, first to church and then school. Sometimes I was rather late to church, but I had to go nonetheless. That was different than it is today. Twelve years we went there. Now the school is only eight years, and then they go to public school. They have mini-mass, just a priest and one or two helpers. There were also usually one or two church-related assignments in school, which were given by nuns. They were all so good and wonderful. I believe the people who went there all learned well, and it didn't hurt them at all to have gone there. It has changed since then, I don't remember when. The service was in Latin, but the sermon and some of the other prayers were in German. Then

it completely went to English—that was hard. 1945 they stopped the German, I would say. Probably had a lot to do with the wars, but I don't know. (1–45-1-10)<sup>4</sup>

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century was an important period for the use of German in Texas churches for four major reasons. First, Standard German was well established as the prestige variety in the public domain in German-speaking communities across central Texas. It was used in churches, in schools, and in newspapers (Salmons 1983, Boas 2009). Of course, this varied from community to community, depending not only on the ethnic mix of the population, but also on whether the community was in a rural setting or an urban one. While the population of some Texas Hill Country settlements like Fredericksburg and New Braunfels was 96 % German-speaking, other towns such as La Grange and Weimar only had about a third of the population speaking German.

Second, a law passed by the Texas legislature in 1905 required the use of English as the instructional language in public schools (Heinen 1982, Boas 2009). However, as Blanton (2004) notes, many local authorities ignored this requirement for many years, especially in cases where the overwhelming majority of the community spoke only German. The State of Texas could not find any easy way to enforce these laws since in many cases the members of the school boards were exclusively German-speaking. More importantly, this school law was not relevant to parochial schools, which were typically run by nuns, who spoke German to their students.

Third, after reaching a peak in the 1880s and 1890s, immigration of German-speaking immigrants dropped significantly in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while the numbers of first- and second-generation native-borns increased significantly (Wilson 1977). At the same time, more and more German-speaking Texans became exposed to English through schooling and contact with English speakers. This development led to a growing demand for the inclusion of English in churches, in particular in areas where the majority of the population spoke English as their first language (Nicolini 2004, Boas 2009).

Fourth, the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century already saw a subtle switch from German to English as church language. One major factor in this was religious affiliation. Some Catholic churches switched to English (while still holding on to Latin for the service itself), because many members in their congregations did not speak German. Instead, they came from a Czech-, Spanish-, or Polish-speaking background.

3 It is important to note that the language used for official occasions at church was Standard German, which was the high prestige language in the Texas German community, as

opposed to Texas German (a collection of various immigrant dialects in contact with each other, and in the process of accommodation during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries), which was the low-prestige language variety used in informal situations. Space constraints prohibit a detailed discussion of these matters, but see Nicolini (2004), Salmons and Lucht (2006), and Boas (2005 / 2009) for more information.

4 Numbers following excerpts from the interviews are unique numbers of interview sections stored in the online Texas German Dialect Archive at [http://www.tgdp.org]. Users can access the archive, listen to the original recording of the interview in Texas German, and read the transcript and English word-by-word translation.

switch to English was thus necessary to keep the operation of these congregations able. Another major factor was the rural vs. urban divide. In order to attract other non-German-speaking Catholics, many churches decided to switch to English, especially in larger towns and cities (see Nicolini 2004 for details).

## 2. Times of crisis and decline: 1917–1950

The entry of the U.S. into World War I in 1917 triggered a wave of anti-German hysteria. German-Americans changed their names to English-sounding names (Schmidt to Smith, Miller to Miller, etc.) and stopped speaking German in public. A 1918 law “introduced the regulation that all teachers in public free schools would teach in English only and should use only English text books” (Kloss 1998, 228). The results of this school law are remembered by one TGDSP speaker from Redericksburg as follows:

We were all German, and none of us could speak English. For three years we learned German when I was in school. Then it came to an end. We also learned the old German writing. I wish I had upheld that, so that I could know the ABC's for reading and writing. We would still speak German at school, but first of all we had to speak English. There'd be trouble if the teacher heard us speaking German instead of English. There was more trouble during the First World War. The Germans around here weren't well regarded by the others. (1–21–1–5)

In addition to affecting the language of school instruction, anti-German sentiments spread throughout the public sphere. Officially licensed committees at the county level, called “council of defense,” were charged with supporting the war effort in any possible way, including ideological proclamations about language and culture. One such example is the Goliad County Council of Defense, which published the following proclamation in 1917:

It is strongly urged by the Council of National Defense and we concur in that suggestion that the English language be made the means of communication in all public matters and in all private conversation, except where it would work a hardship on those who are unable to speak the English language. We recommend that this be brought about, not by force, but by a proper educational campaign in which it should follow as a matter of spontaneous, patriotic duty that the people would speak the English language. Patriotic citizens of German descent will readily appreciate the delicacy of the situation which makes it necessary that the English language be used in this country upon all occasions and by all people except in those instances of a private nature where they are unable to speak the English language.

These developments had drastic effects on the Texas German community, including the use of German in the public, in churches, in newspapers, in social

organizations, and in schools. While many Catholic congregations, especially in cities and in areas with mixed ethnic populations, had already switched to English prior to the war, the continued use of German by Lutherans throughout and after World War I caused controversy. For most Lutherans, using the German language at church had religious significance since it was the language into which Martin Luther had translated the bible (Nicolini 2004). Thus, many Lutherans believed that they could only have a connection to the church and God through German, and not English. Because of this direct link between language and religion, Lutheranism more generally became a principle target of nativist hostility during World War I. For example, the Comal County Council of Defense noted in July 1918 that “the Lutheran preacher is being closely watched, and we almost had him; and we’re going to get him yet.” Similarly, members of the Bosque County Council of Defense proclaimed the following in June 1918:

German preachers caused more trouble by their actions and suggestions than anybody else. (...) People are naturally suspicious of anything German, the mere fact of holding any kind of services in German arouses suspicion which is not good.

This anti-German sentiment held by most Americans of Anglo descent (and hence English speaking) was so strong that many Lutheran congregations were afraid of using German at church. However, a switch to English would have meant for many elderly Lutherans that they could not understand church services anymore because their command of English was often nonexistent. Faced with this dilemma, many Lutheran congregations sought special permission to use German at church, so that they would not be regarded as un-American. One such example is a special request from the congregation of St. John's Lutheran church to the Bell County Council of Defense in June 1918:

Permission asked to consider allowing German language services because the non-English speaking members will be without any and all spiritual edification. A ban on German will create hardships of mothers and fathers who have given their sons gladly for our country and deprive them of the consolidation of God's word in the language they best know and understand. The Evangelical Lutheran Church has nothing to do with the German government.

Despite the fact that most German-speaking Texans were American patriots supportive of the war effort, using German in sermons was often regarded as a sign of support for the enemy (Nicolini 2004). Thus, even though German-speaking soldiers from Texas fought for the U.S. in World War I, it was seen as suspicious to hold a sermon in German at the burial of one of these soldiers. One case that

tands out is a proclamation of the Victoria Council of Defense in July 1918, which condemned the use of German at such a sermon:

Who kept these people from reading, speaking, and talking English, and who kept them from attending a church where the English language was preached, prayed, and spoken? An American soldier was buried by their pastor in Victoria, Texas, and the funeral rites were conducted in German, and a German sermon was preached over his body. (...) It is the German mind, the German heart, and the German tongue, of which we disapprove ... We are fighting Germany, German soldiers, German methods, German ideas and everything conceivably German.

To summarize, the general anti-German sentiment first manifested itself in the public sphere, especially via English-only laws for public schools. During and after the war it also manifested itself in the pressure on German-speaking Lutheran congregations (as well as those Catholic congregations that had not yet switched to English) to discontinue the use of German at church. In the decades following the war, most churches that had not already switched to English during the war, discontinued church services in German in favor of English. In some cases, especially in cities and in areas where German speakers were in the minority, congregations decided to switch abruptly from German-only to English-only church services. In other cases, especially in rural areas and in areas with a high percentage of German speakers, this development was more gradual. It would typically start out with only one English church service per month and three German church services, going to two English and two German church services, and three English and one German church service. At the end of this process, which in some cases took only a few years and in other cases twenty or more years, there would only be occasional church services in German on special occasions such as Easter or Christmas (Nicolini 2004). One TGD speaker from Crawford recounts how the strong anti-German sentiment led to the gradual discontinuation of German church services:

I can't say exactly how it happened back during the First World War. There were some American people who were so angry because some people were speaking German. Not in all places, but in Pottsville, Predien, and such places, they said everybody better speak English from now on – we're at war, and it's not American, and so on: 'You are not allowed to speak German anymore.' Man, they brought that out... Many got so angry that they parted from each other, or they acted as interlopers between Americans and Germans. But here in Hamilton County, so many people were German. And then people said, 'Well, you can't have German in the Church or in the school anymore,' but we were all German except for one family, who didn't go to our church. Eventually we had three weeks of German services in church, one in English. Then we had two weeks in German, two in English, and then three weeks in English and one in German. Then more English people

came into our community, you see. And then finally we only had German services four times a year, and now it's just once a year at Christmas. (1–64-1-13)

Another TGD speaker from Doss, west of Fredericksburg, recalls the move from German to English and its effects on language maintenance as follows:

We were Lutheran. My oldest brother and my oldest sister – when they went to confirmation, they had to learn it in German. But when we went, it was all in English. It was totally different. Because of that, I never learned how to read or write German. I can read it when it's written in the English typeset, but not in the German type. Church was always in German. And then, little by little, one time they would have service in German, one time in English, one time in German, once in English. Our preacher – earlier – was always from Germany, and they could preach really well in German. Later on, they could not do that anymore – they could speak German. Not well enough to preach in front of a bunch of people. I think that the war – World War II – brought that on to a great degree. Because when I was going to school, German was forbidden. It just forced people to talk English. Of course, we still spoke it at home. I wish I had more time, and had more chances, to speak the German. I know I've forgotten a lot of things. These last few days I've thought about German a lot. And a lot of words I haven't spoken in maybe forty years, I think, came back all at once! (1–55-1-9)

Another interesting point about the use of English and German in different domains during the early 1930s concerns the use of the two languages at church and at school. One TGD speaker, from Freyburg (north of Schulenburg), recounts how her pastor also taught school in the early 1930s, and that there was a strict separation between which language was used for which purpose:

The church school was a Lutheran school. We had a pastor for a schoolteacher. First it was Pastor [name], but he died. He was riding a horse and it threw him off and he broke his neck. I can still remember that very well, where it happened and everything. Then we had Pastor [name] for the high school, the community school. The pastor taught us in English, but he could also speak German. He always preached in German. The whole church was all in German. I knew the Our Father and everything in German. The Pastor never preached in English in the church, but we had to speak English in school, because it was the Second World War then. You know, there was a lot of hatred against Germans then, even though we were in the United States. (1–7-1-7)<sup>5</sup>

While the period between the two world wars was characterized by a relative calm regarding sentiments against German speakers in Texas, World War II brought on another loss of prestige for German. For example, while there were still a significant number of “all German” and “more German” church services in Missouri

<sup>5</sup> The names of the pastors are not included for privacy reasons.

Synod Lutheran churches before World War II, the use of German was basically discontinued after World War II, as Figure 3 below shows.

Figure 3: Language use for Missouri Synod Lutherans, 1909–1955 (Salmons & Lucht, 2006, p. 169)

Year	All German	More German	50/50	More English	All English	Span / Span-Eng	Total Texas congregations
1909	97	28	13	10	18		113
1919	32	28	13	10	18		101
1922	3405	9217	1427	2273	675		132
1925	39	31	21	9	32		132
1925	4834	8346	2222	2253	1467		134
1928	27	23	25	24	35		134
1928	3256	8429	3961	3952	1499		138
1932	10	30	34	26	38		143
1932	2270	8254	5447	4938	2227		142
1935	7	21	36	30	49		142
1935	1063	7002	6295	6946	3677		154
1940	4	27	35	26	50		154
1940	540	8848	7539	4560	3859		164
1945	2	10	37	24	81		205
1945	619	4421	7623	5605	11762		226
1950			37			8	164
1955			27			11	205
			17			10	226

Based on data from the Statistical Yearbook of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Salmons and Lucht (2006) calculate language use in churches belonging to the Missouri Synod. The numbers of the first line represent congregations, while the italicized numbers on the second line reflect total membership. The numbers up to 1940 show a drastic drop of German language use right after World War I, then a slow decline during the interwar years, and finally a complete switch to English in 1945 (except the ones where Spanish is still used). This statistical trend is also supported by a TGDP speaker from Spring Branch, north of San Antonio, who recounts the abrupt end to German church services in the late 1940s.

Then the Blanco and Bulverde churches joined together, and for me it was more convenient to go to Bulverde than Blanco, so I went there, and I'm still a member at the Lutheran church to this day. Same church all of us in this corner belong to. When the first church was down there, then everything was in German; and the women sat on one side and the men sat on the other side. And when one of our friends was engaged with a young man, she went in to church and sat down right next to him. She was the first woman who dared that. And then all the other women also started sitting with their husbands; on average,

you know. In my memory, we didn't have a German-speaking minister. Since 1949 or 1948. It's all been just English since then. But at that old church, there was German – the old Church down by Cibolo everything was in German. The first minutes- the first writings from the church, you know, they were all in German. (1–51-1-10)

### 4.3 The end of regular German church services

Based on the data from Salmons and Lucht (2006), it is safe to say that today German is not used in Lutheran churches in Texas any more. There are some exceptions, such as the occasional German Christmas service at St. Martin's Lutheran Church in Austin. Another Lutheran church in Houston offers regular church services in German, but these are mostly attended by recent immigrants from Germany or by expats who spend a few years in Houston before returning to Europe. Based on all available information, there is also no regular German church service in Texas Catholic churches any more. The death of German as a church language in Texas also becomes apparent when looking at biographical data collected by the TGDP.

Figure 4: Reports of German spoken at Church (Boas 2009, p. 65)

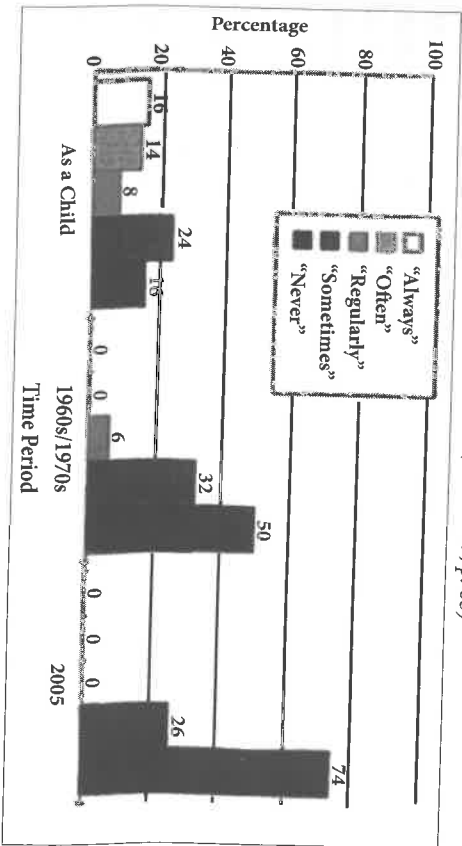


Figure 4 shows the percentages of speakers (total number: 52, a mix of Catholics and Lutherans) reporting the use of German at church when they were children, in the 1960s, and in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. The distribution of answers for “always,” “often,” “regularly,” “sometimes,” and “never” shows a drastic decline in the use of German at church. During childhood, 16 % of speakers reported to have always heard German at church, 14 % heard it often, and 8 % sometimes. These numbers

opped to 0 % by the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thus, it is safe to say that at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, German is not used in Texas churches any more.

## Conclusions

German as a living language is dying out in Texas, whether it is the non-standard variety commonly known as Texas German, or whether it is the standard variety that was once widely used in Texas churches, schools, and newspapers. This paper has argued that many Catholic churches in Texas started making the switch to English already before World War I, while Lutheran churches made this switch during World War I, largely because of anti-German sentiments. For Lutherans, being German at church was closely tied to religious and cultural identity, which explains why it survived considerably longer in Lutheran churches. Other factors contributing to the decline of German in Texas include greater mobility, which allowed many Texas Germans to move to larger urban areas, where English was the majority language. At the same time, more and more English-only speaking Texans moved into areas that were once exclusively German speaking. Once these new arrivals joined local churches, their lack of understanding of German also contributed to more church services being offered in English. Finally, intermarriage also played a significant role. In mixed-language households, most parents decided to give up German in favor of English, the dominant language, which was more prestigious. All these factors contributed to the decline of German in Texas in general, and in formerly German-only speaking churches in particular.

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