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WORD ORDER IN DEPENDENT CLAUSES IN TEXAS GERMAN

ABSTRACT

This article discusses word order of dependent clauses in Texas German, a German speech island on the brink of language death. The focus lies on dependent clauses that are introduced by subordinating conjunctions. The question is whether the verb placement differs from the Standard German word order, and, if such a difference can be established, whether the change is due to language internal or external factors. To answer this question, various theories from the general research on language contact are used to interpret the Texas German data, and to connect it to the larger discussion of language change in German speech islands in the US.

Keywords: Texas German, language contact, word order, dependent clause, syntactic variation, German speech islands

VERBSTELLUNG IN NEBENSÄTZEN IM TEXASDEUTSCHEN

KURZFASSUNG

Die vorliegende Arbeit untersucht die Verbstellung in Nebensätzen im Texasdeutschen, einer vom Aussterben bedrohten deutschen Sprachinsel. Dabei liegt der Fokus auf Nebensätzen, die von subordinierenden Konjunktionen eingeleitet werden. Die Frage ist, ob sich die Verbstellung von der des Standarddeutschen unterscheidet und, falls sich ein solcher Unterschied feststellen lässt, ob eine veränderte Verbstellung auf sprachinterne oder sprachexterne Gründe zurückgeführt werden kann. Zu diesem Zweck werden verschiedene Theorien aus der Sprachkontaktforschung herangezogen, um die texasdeutschen Daten zu deuten und sie in den größeren Zusammenhang des syntaktischen Standes deutscher Sprachinseln auf amerikanischem Boden zu setzen.

Schlagworte: Texasdeutsch, Sprachkontakt, Verbstellung, Nebensätze, syntaktische Variation, deutsche Sprachinseln

1. Introduction

This paper analyzes word order in dependent clauses in Texas German (hereafter TxG), in order to determine (1) whether TxG word order differs from that of Standard German and (2) if this is the case, whether it is due to language-external

factors, specifically contact with American English, or to language-internal factors. While a comparison to Standard German is necessary here, this is of course not unproblematic, as TxG is an amalgam of multiple German varieties (as is Standard German). Thus, Standard German serves here only as a frame of reference and should not be considered the donor dialect.¹ The use of Standard German as a means of reference falls in line with previous research methods used in the discussion of Texas German (compare for example EIKEL 1954). The paper is structured as follows: In this introduction, I present example data to illustrate the research question and to situate the paper in the general research frame. Section 2 gives a brief overview of some works on German word order in general and word order in dependent clauses in language contact situations in particular. I then describe the methodology used to analyze the Texas German data. Section 4 presents a data set from the corpus of the “Texas German Dialect Project” to illustrate the problem, looking at possible deviations from Standard German word order. Then I discuss possible reasons for a change in word order, focusing on language contact and grammaticalization in section 5. The final section contains the conclusion and discusses potential further study.

This paper expands on BOAS (2009), who concludes that the distribution of SOV (Subject-Object-Verb) and SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) in dependent clauses in New Braunfels German shows a mixed picture (BOAS 2009: 221). Based on the data used in his account, TxG word order cannot be conclusively classified as either SVO or SOV word order. However, BOAS (2009: 221) suggests that the mixed usage points to a move toward an SVO word order, which should be further analyzed in “a detailed item-based analysis” that investigates “the frequency for each item”. This present paper therefore gives a frequency analysis of four subordinating conjunctions to determine whether TxG shows a tendency towards SVO. Furthermore, as stated above, it also takes the next step by finding possible reasons for this change.

For Standard German, DUDEN (2006: 877) gives two possibilities for word order in dependent clauses: (1) the left sentence bracket contains the main clause that is followed by the subordinating conjunction, or (2) the subordinating conjunction occupies the initial spot and the main clause is pushed to the right sentence bracket.

¹ SALMONS and LUCHT (2006: 183) argue that TxG speakers had a considerable amount of exposure to Standard German up to date. BOAS (2009: 51–53) contends that this was not the case, pointing to multiple factors: (1) when settlers left Germany for Texas in the 19th century, written Standard German was yet not fully normalized and spoken German was still largely dialectal, (2) all the available information suggests that in 1880 only the educated middle and upper class had an active command of the standard; and (3) most settlers were craftsmen and farmers who underwent minimal schooling, hence had very limited exposure to Standard German. Further research remains necessary to resolve this debate. Moreover, the influence of the standard on TxG dwindled considerably after WW2 and today is essentially non-existent.

- (1) *Anna erkundigt sich, wie sie am schnellsten nach Köln kommt.*
 Anna finds out [for] herself, how she the fastest to Cologne gets
 ‘Anna finds out how to get to Cologne as fast as possible.’
- (2) *Bis der Bus kommt, liest Otto seine Zeitung.*
 Until the bus comes, reads Otto his newspaper
 ‘Otto will be reading his newspaper until the bus comes.’

In any case, within the dependent clause, the finite verb occupies the final position in Standard German. Texas German, on the other hand, shows the following pattern:

- (3) *weil er hat Angst gehabt nach die Schule* [1-51-1-5-a]²
 because he has fear had after the school
 ‘because he was scared of school.’
- (4) *weil die haben doch nichts gehab frieher* [1-28-1-2-a]
 because they have PART nothing had earlier
 ‘because they didn’t have anything back then.’

As can be seen in this example, the finite verb moves to the second position and the clause exhibits SVO word order.

All German varieties are considered to have an underlying SOV word order while English has an SVO word order (LOUDEN 1988: 182).³ Current TxG reflects a more English-like SVO order in dependent clauses. However, whether this change of word order is due solely to English influence remains to be seen. Here I focus on three subordinating conjunctions, *weil* ‘because’, *dass* ‘that’, *ob* ‘if, whether’, and the question word *wo* ‘where’ in its usage as a subordinating conjunction.

2. Literature Overview

In this section, I first review general works on language contact and word order by THOMASON and KAUFMAN (1988), CLYNE (2003), and HARRIS/CAMPBELL (1995) as a reference frame in case that the reason for a change in word order can be linked directly to language contact. I then turn to more specific works on subordinated

² The file numbers of the “Texas German Dialect Archive” ensure the anonymity of the interviewee. They refer to the interviewer, the informant, the number of the interview with that informant, a number to identify the particular file, and a letter to indicate whether it is an audio or a combined audio and video file, in that order (BOAS 2009: 22).

³ Standard German usage depends largely on the context. GREWENDORF (1988: 21) states that V2 is used in main sentences containing important information, while Verb-Last indicates dependent clauses that offer additional, non-essential information.

clauses in German dialects that are in contact with English, discussing BENDER (1980), LOUDEN (1988, 2016), BURRIDGE (1992), and BOAS (2009).

THOMASON and KAUFMAN (1988: 12) argue that the general assumption that word order is a deep structural feature which is relatively immune to foreign influence is false: “On the contrary, word order seems to be the easiest sort of syntactic feature to borrow [...]” (THOMASON/KAUFMAN 1988: 55). They base this argument on the functional congruence of SOV or SVO word order patterns, that is, the “identification of subject and object by their position relative to each other and to the verb” (THOMASON/KAUFMAN 1988: 55). This can be seen for example in the change from SOV to SVO in Finnish under Indo-European influence.⁴ Thus, the first signs of word order change can be found on THOMASON’s and KAUFMAN’s “Borrowing Scale”⁵ in stage 3, “more intense contact”, while a complete change is more likely to appear in stage 4 (THOMASON/KAUFMAN 1988: 75). The data for these arguments is taken from other studies, such as BENDER (1980), who gives examples of changes in word order rules for the Low German dialect spoken in Nebraska, as discussed below.

CLYNE (2003) offers a terminological framework for language contact and transference. The main interest of this paper lies on CLYNE’s subcategories of syntactic and lexicosyntactic transference. CLYNE approaches language contact by outlining the terminological problems of the field. He (2003: 76) suggests ‘transference’ as the umbrella term with ‘transfer’ as an instance of transference, “where the form, feature or construction has been taken over by the speaker from another language, whatever the motives or explanation for this.”

He then goes on to describe various subcategories of transference. For syntactic transference, CLYNE (2003: 77) discusses Spanish in contact with Australian English, showing a change in word order in the usage of Adjective + Noun instead of Noun + Adjective – *la mas vieja casa* ‘the most old house’ instead of *la casa mas vieja* ‘the house most old’ – due to contact with the Adjective + Noun structure of Australian English. Lexicosyntactic transference is the combined transference of a lexeme and a syntactic structure as in the German expression:

⁴ Another classic example of this phenomenon is Amharic, a language that, on the surface structure appears as a SOV language, but shows deep structure patterns that point to a clear SVO word order. One explanation for this is the influence of the Cushitic languages on Amharic (BACH 1970).

⁵ The scale identifies the intensity of language contact and the borrowing that accompanies this contact. In stage 1, “casual contact”, only lexical items are borrowed. Stage 2, “slightly more intense contact”, shows slight structural borrowing, especially of phonological and lexical semantic features. Stage 3, “more intense contact”, increases the structural borrowing from stage 2. In stage 4, “strong cultural pressure”, major structural features are borrowed, and in stage 5, “very strong cultural pressure”, these major structural features cause significant typological disruption (THOMASON/KAUFMAN 1988: 74–75).

- (5) *einen kühlen DRINK haben*⁶
 a cool drink have
 (Homeland German: etwas Kühles trinken) (CLYNE 2003: 78)

The exact relationship between the lexical transfer and the syntactic transfer (CLYNE 2003: 80) remains unclear in this case.

Finally, CLYNE describes the difference between syntactic transference and convergence. He gives the following examples:

- (6) Standard German:
Wir sind in Tarrington zur Schule gegangen.
 We AUX+be in Tarrington to.the school go+PAST.PT
- (7) Syntactic Transference:
Wir haben zu Schule gegangen in Tarrington.
 We AUX+have to school go+PAST.PT in Tarrington
- (8) Convergence:
Wir haben gegangen zu Schule in Tarrington.
 We have gone to school in Tarrington
 ‘We went to school in Tarrington.’

Example (7) shows a partial approximation of the syntactic structure of a language, here German, to the contact language, here Australian English. (8), on the other hand, depicts an assimilation of the structure used in the contact language.

Finally, HARRIS and CAMPBELL (1995) describe three mechanisms of syntactic change: reanalysis, extension, and borrowing. Reanalysis modifies the underlying structure of a syntactic construction but not the surface structure. HARRIS and CAMPBELL (1995: 62), citing EBERT (1976), give the example of the German infinitival construction *um zu* ‘in order to’ + infinitive as shown in (9):

- (9) *Er ging aus um Wasser zu holen.*
 he went out for water to fetch.
 Originally: ‘He went out for water to fetch it.’
 Reanalysis: ‘He went out in order to fetch water.’

The nominal *Wasser* was originally governed by the locative preposition *um*, but was eventually reanalyzed as the logical object of the infinitive; *um* thus lost its locative meaning and “came to be understood as the introducing morpheme for the structure” (HARRIS/CAMPBELL 1995: 62). Note, however, as CAMPBELL argues in later work, that word order cannot be changed directly by reanalysis,

⁶ This example is slightly problematic, as “drink” is actually used in German for ‘alcoholic beverage’ (usually a mixed drink with liquor). However, DUDEN (<<http://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Drink>>) also specifically states that it is an English loan word, which means that CLYNE’s analysis still holds true. The question of the degree of integration of this loan into the German vocabulary remains.

as it is a surface structure phenomenon (CAMPBELL 2013: 274). Extension describes the opposite change, that is, a change of the surface structure but not of the underlying structure by generalizing a rule (HARRIS/CAMPBELL 1995: 97). Usually, extension requires reanalysis before a new syntactic feature can extend to formerly not possible constructions. Here, HARRIS and CAMPBELL (1995: 98) give the example of Estonian reported speech, in which former participle endings in subordinate clauses were reanalyzed to reported speech forms. The new morpho-syntactic marker then later extended also to main clauses.

For language contact and syntactic borrowing, HARRIS and CAMPBELL (1995: 120) state that it is “perhaps the most neglected and abused area of syntactic change”, with views ranging from the impossibility of syntactic borrowing to the overuse of borrowing as an explanation for all unexplained syntactic peculiarities. Language contact is defined as one speaker being somewhat familiar with two or more languages, and is as such a situation, not a change itself (HARRIS/CAMPBELL 1995: 122). This situation, however, can lead to borrowing in which a grammatical pattern is adapted into the borrowing language through the influence of the donor language. These grammatical borrowings do not need to be compatible with the native grammatical rules, as an example from American Finnish shows (HARRIS/CAMPBELL 1995: 125):

- (10) *tämä oli ensimmäinen kerta mei-llē mennä tā-llā laiva-lla*
 this was first time us-For to.go this-On ship-On
 ‘This was the first time for us to go on this ship.’

In this case, American Finish borrowed an infinitival complement of a noun with subject raising from American English. This word order is impossible in Standard Finish.

Since this paper investigates the possibility of grammaticalization as a possible explanation for the word order change in question, HARRIS’ and CAMPBELL’S (1995: 20) account of the matter is also briefly addressed here. The phenomenon of grammaticalization is defined as language change in which “an original independent word with independent meaning (*mot autonome*) develops into an auxiliary word (*mot accessoire*) and ends up as a grammatical marker (*élément grammatical*). This process is characterized by a concurrent weakening of both the meaning and the form of the word in question.” An example would be English *will*, which changed from the full lexeme *want* to a future auxiliary (CAMPBELL 2013: 281). This process is usually seen as continuous and unidirectional (lexical > syntactic > morphological) (CAMPBELL/JANDA 2001: 95), though JANDA (2001: 270) points out that there are many counter-examples that do not conform with the hypothesis of continuity or unidirectionality of language change. For this present investigation, it has to be kept in mind that most scholars (for example JANDA 2001, JOSEPH 2001, etc.) agree that it is not a mechanism on its own but

rather an epiphenomenon that relies on other mechanisms, especially reanalysis (CAMPBELL 2013: 284).

I now turn to specific works about syntactic change in German language islands. BENDER (1980) investigates the interference of English on a Low German dialect spoken in Nebraska, using data from tape recordings of third-generation speakers of the dialect (BENDER 1980: 78). He states that the most common interference is the borrowing of lexical items and “loan translations”, such as the colloquial use of *with* (BENDER 1980: 81):

- (11) Vi heb mit uhs Vewandten veziht.
 We have with our relatives visit.
 ‘We visited with our relatives.’

This colloquial phrasing is not part of the German donor dialect but rather has been borrowed from English. Syntactic interference is visible in infinitive clauses (BENDER 1980: 83). In the dialect in Nebraska, *to* stands at the beginning of the infinitive clause (as in English) while the infinitive stays at the end of the clause (as in German):

- (12) Dat nimp mehe mahly to dat doon.
 That takes more men to that do.
 ‘It takes more men to do that.’

BENDER (1980: 84) shows that, while the basic structure and phonology of Nebraska Low German remain intact, both initial changes in the morphological system and further developed changes in the lexical inventory are due to contact with English. These outcomes show at least a partial agreement with THOMASON’S and KAUFMAN’S (1988) borrowing scale, in that lexical items are the first features to be borrowed. However, the scale also assumes that phonological features are more susceptible to borrowing than morphological features, which seems not to be the case in BENDER’S (1980) data.

LOUDEN (1988: 181) disagrees with THOMASON’S and KAUFMAN’S (1988) assumption of a particular susceptibility of word order in language contact situations, arguing that the minor syntactic changes that have occurred in Pennsylvania German result from generalizations within the dialect and not from contact with American English. LOUDEN (1988) identifies four features of Standard German word order that support an underlying SOV word order pattern and applies them to Pennsylvania German:

- I. The finite verb appears in final position in embedded clauses (1988: 184).⁷
- II. Infinitives appear in final position in infinitival complement constructions (1988: 185).

⁷ This feature includes dependent clauses after conjunctions, complementizers and question words (LOUDEN 1988: 184).

- III. The verbal prefix appears in final position in main clauses with separable prefix verbs (1988: 185).
- IV. Separable prefix verbs remain attached in final position in dependent clauses (1988: 186).

LOUDEN (1988: 188) contends that Pennsylvania German fulfils all four categories and therefore that Pennsylvania German shows the same underlying SOV word order pattern as Standard German. In later work, LOUDEN (2016: 35) gives the following example:

- (13) *Mir sin net datt niwwer gange, weil as sie uns gheese ghadde*
 We are not there over gone, because as they us told had
hen, mir sin gange, bikahs mir hen sie surprise welle.
 have, we are gone, because we have they surprise want
 ‘We didn’t go over there because they invited us, we went because we wanted to surprise them.’

As can be seen in the first half of the sentence, the subordinating conjunction *weil* is followed by a standard SOV word order. Regarding the second half of the sentence which exhibits lexical transference and could therefore, following CLYNE (2003), be analyzed as a trigger for syntactic transference, LOUDEN (2016: 35) states

Since *bikahs* introduces Pennsylvania Dutch clauses in which the verb appears early, as in English, some observers have been tempted to assume that borrowing *bikahs* is altering the basic word order patterns of Pennsylvania Dutch. This is not the case. [...] In earlier Pennsylvania Dutch, *weil* introduced both main and dependent clauses, as it still does in colloquial spoken German in Europe today.

He thus contends that the borrowed lexeme *bikahs* (engl. ‘because’, germ. ‘weil’) does not trigger the syntactic change, but rather that the syntactic change of word order is not related to this borrowing, as it also appears with *weil* (a native German word).

BURRIDGE (1992: 199) approaches the topic from a diachronic point of view, and agrees with LOUDEN’s proposal of underlying SOV word order in Pennsylvania German. In her view, the developments of word order in Pennsylvania German show “the tail end of one very significant change which has occurred in Germanic; namely, the gradual grammaticalization of word order” (BURRIDGE 1992: 235). She sees any changes with respect to word order as an internal development, not as an external development through language contact. This would mean that the syntactic change is inherent to Texas German as a dialect of German, and that contact with American English has nothing to do with it.

Drawing on MEILLET (1912), BURRIDGE (1992: 235) states that word order shows the general tendency to develop from a pragmatic word order to a grammatical and syntactic one. She points out (1992: 236) that German in general

shows two typological drifts: (1) towards a greater subject-prominence,⁸ and (2) towards a more uniform SVO syntax. The general tendency for German shows that the SVO word order is used to convey new and non-topical information, specifically in main clauses, imperatives and so on, while the SOV word order conveys “unsurprising, presupposed or topical material” (BURRIDGE 1992: 237) in subordinate clauses.

According to BURRIDGE (1992: 237), these general developments can also be seen in Pennsylvania German, for example it still shows a greater flexibility in word order than English to mark pragmatic information. However, she also states that “any informal count of word order patterns will quickly show that the percentage figures for SVX⁹ sentences are extremely high in the language” (BURRIDGE 1992: 238). Consider the following example of additional information added through a prepositional phrase and its relation to a separable-prefix-verb:

(14) *Ich schteh als uff in de fünf Uhr.* (BURRIDGE 1992: 219)

I get usually up in the five o'clock.

‘I usually get up at five o'clock.’

While (14) still shows the remnants of prefix separation, in that *uff* and *schteh* are separated, the prefix is not in final position anymore, as it would be in the standard language. The prepositional phrase is extraposed out of the verb frame and exhibits a more English-like word order.

As for TxG, in line with LOUDEN’s arguments, BOAS (2009: 224) also disagrees with THOMASON’s and KAUFMAN’s conclusion. He investigates the underlying word order of TxG, specifically New Braunfels German, for the underlying word order, using LOUDEN’s four features. While feature 2, the position of the infinitive in infinitival complement constructions, feature 3, the position of the prefixes of separable prefix verbs, and feature 4, the position of prefixed verbs in dependent clauses, all point to an underlying SOV word order in Texas German (BOAS 2009: 222), the first feature, the placement of the finite verb in dependent clauses with subordinating conjunctions, displays a mixed picture (BOAS 2009: 220).

BOAS (2009: 220–221) gives examples of three subordinating conjunctions, *weil* ‘because’, *bis* ‘until’, and *dass* ‘that’, and two question words, *wo* ‘where’ and *wie* ‘how’. While *weil* follows an SVO pattern, for example “[...] weil mein Vater hat gern Hersch geschossen.” / ‘Because my father liked to shoot deer’ (BOAS 2009: 220), *bis* shows a strict SOV pattern, as in

⁸ The syntactic ordering of subject, verb, and object becomes more fixed as the subject is the center of content (in comparison to topic-prominent languages like Japanese). For further information, see LI/THOMPSON (1976).

⁹ BURRIDGE uses X to represent any other possible content of a sentence. Instead of SOV and SVO, she writes SXV and SVX.

- (15) [...] *bis mir geheirat ham*
 [...] until we married got
 [...] ‘until we got married’ (BOAS 2009: 220).

The conjunction *dass*, on the other hand, appears with both word order patterns, as in the following examples:

- (16) [...] *dass ich nach College gehe.*
 [...] that I to College go
 [...] ‘that I go to College.’
- (17) [...] *dass Weihnachtsmann war fertig.*
 [...] that Santa Claus was done
 [...] ‘that Santa Clause was done.’ (BOAS 2009: 221)

The question words show a clear SOV pattern:

- (18) [...] *wo mir gewohnt haben.*
 [...] where we lived have.
 [...] ‘where we lived’.

In general, word order in dependent clauses exhibits a very mixed pattern. As mentioned above, BOAS (2009: 221) states that the data does not allow for a conclusive classification of TxG as SVO or SOV, and that a detailed item-based analysis is necessary to investigate frequency and context of each item. Taking LOUDEN’s other criteria into account, Texas German fits three of the four criteria, and BOAS (2009: 223) concludes that “it thus seems safe to assume that Texas German displays a German-type SOV pattern.” Furthermore, BOAS (2009: 224) agrees with LOUDEN that word order is more resistant to change than other syntactic areas since the results of both studies show similar outcomes, which shows a tendency for German speech islands in contact with American English.

3. Methodology

Here, I focus on three subordinating conjunctions, *weil* ‘because’, *dass* ‘that’, *ob* ‘if, whether’, and the question word *wo* ‘where’. I compare the Texas German data to American English and the German varieties of the homeland, including Standard German, in order to see whether the variation in the usage can be identified as dialectal behavior within the German language, or if the language contact with English led to a syntactic transference. I first collected example sentences for each conjunction from the “Texas German Dialect Archive”¹⁰ according to the following criteria: (1) I wanted to avoid multiple sentences by the same

¹⁰ As noted above, the data at hand was taken from the archive of the “Texas German Dialect Project”. Founded in 2001 at the University of Texas at Austin (<tgdp.org/about>), the project attempts

speaker, which could be idiolectal and thus not reflect more general patterns of TxG word order; (2) the sentences are from different towns and areas to avoid regionalisms, hence some are from the initial data collections in New Braunfels, but others from recent collections in more remote areas and small settlements, such as Wall, Texas; and (3) sentences in which the word order was unclear, for example if the speaker started a new sentence without finishing the dependent clause, were discarded.¹¹ I then looked at each conjunction separately to examine the context and the form of usage and show the distribution of SVO and SOV word order for every conjunction. Finally, I investigated possible reasons for a change in word order by comparing the findings with typical word order patterns of other contact languages and also of German dialects in general.

4. Analysis

In this section, general observations, deviations, and special instances of word order are discussed. Table 1 illustrates the distribution of SVO and SOV following each conjunction measured in percentage of all relevant tokens.

Conjunction	Relevant Tokens	Verb Second	Verb Final
<i>weil</i>	421	327 (77.7%)	94 (22.3%)
<i>dass</i>	657	205 (31.2%)	452 (68.8%)
<i>ob</i>	110	7 (6.4%)	103 (93.6%)
<i>wo</i>	1572	44 (2.8%)	1534 (97.2%)

Tab. 1: Token and frequency distribution of data

The conjunction *weil* elicits mostly an SVO word order pattern, with three out of four sentences displaying V2. *weil* is therefore used as a coordinating conjunction followed by the word order that would also be expected in a regular statement in Standard German (i. e. SVO, not SOV). Consider the following examples:

- (19) *weil mir haben in Buda gewohnt* [1-34-1-22-a]
 because we have in Buda lived
 ‘because we lived in Buda.’
 StG: ‘weil wir in Buda gewohnt haben.’

to record as many Texas German speakers as possible before the inevitable death of the dialect, and give accessibility to the recordings for various scholarly and communal purposes (Boas et al. 2010).

¹¹ In such cases, it is unclear if the speaker ended the dependent clause because they did not know how to formulate it correctly, or because their train of thought switched to a different topic.

- (20) *weil ich hab gearbeitet fir mein Bruder.* [1-21-1-10-a]
 because I have worked for my brother
 ‘because I have worked for my brother.’
 StG: ‘weil ich für meinen Bruder gearbeitet habe.’

In (19), the speaker uses the word order of the Standard German present perfect tense with the participle in last position and the finite auxiliary in second position. In a dependent clause initiated by a subordinating conjunction such as *weil* in Standard German, the finite auxiliary would move to the end of the sentence (i. e. *weil wir in Buda gewohnt haben*, literally ‘because we in Buda lived have’). In this instance, though, the speaker used the word order of a regular statement without altering the word order according to the subordination. (20) also uses the present perfect tense but more closely resembles Standard English word order. This example shows an even clearer picture of V2 word order with the participle following the auxiliary and the additional information added through a preposition to the end of the sentence. In general, in Texas German, *weil* shows the tendency to be used with V2 word order.

The conjunction *dass*, which is also a subordinating conjunction in Standard German, does not follow this pattern, as only 30% of the examples use the SVO word order seen with *weil*:

- (21) *dass die konnten ein bisschen mehr Englisch verstehen.* [1-2-2-9-a]
 that they could a bit[dim.] more English understand[Inf.]
 ‘that they were able to understand a little bit more English.’
 StG: ‘dass die ein bisschen mehr Englisch verstehen konnten.’

However, the majority of the examples display the SOV word order expected in Standard German, for example:

- (22) *dass ich nicht auf mein Ferd war.* [1-33-1-4-a]
 that I not on my horse was
 ‘that I was not on my horse.’
 StG: ‘dass ich nicht auf meinem Pferd war.’

The third conjunction, *ob*, also points more towards an SOV word order, as expected from Standard German. Very few examples show V2 after the conjunction and most of those are unclear, such as (23):¹²

- (23) *ob wir – wir waren keine Engels.* [1-21-1-6-a]
 if we – we were no angels
 ‘if we were no angels.’

A pause like this could indicate that there is in fact an issue with word order after the conjunction and that the speaker has to think of how to continue in a

¹² Unclear sentences were not included into the token count.

grammatically ‘correct’ form. However, it could also point to a restart pattern of regular speech behavior – the speaker thought of something else and abandoned the last sentence to start a new one.

The question word *wo*, here used as a subordinating conjunction, shows the same pattern as *ob*. The word order after the conjunction follows the Standard German SOV word order in almost all examples. Very few examples show a different word order:

(24) *wo war ich jung, ja.* [12-174-1-16]
 when was I young, yes
 ‘when I was young, yes.’
 StG: ‘als ich jung war, ja.’

(25) *wo ich fufzehn Jahr alt war.* [1-106-1-1-a]
 when I fifteen years old was
 ‘when I was fifteen years old.’
 StG: ‘als ich fünfzehn Jahre alt war.’

(24), though, is also atypical for the Standard English SVO pattern – perhaps the speaker misspoke due to nervousness in the unfamiliar interview situation. In any case, this example does not show a definite word order in either direction and is therefore inconclusive. Also of interest here is the semantic change found in the word *wo*, for example in (25).¹³ Instead of ‘where’ it is used to mean ‘when’ (*als* in Standard German), i. e. as a subordinating conjunction that is used to initiate a dependent clause that describes a single event in the past.¹⁴

In general, it can be stated that not all subordinating conjunctions deviate from the Standard German SOV word order. Out of the investigated conjunctions, only *weil* shows a strong tendency to V2 while *dass* appears in 30% of the cases with this word order. It now needs to be investigated why these conjunctions show this tendency.

5. Possible Explanations

As discussed above, HARRIS and CAMPBELL (1995) mention three mechanisms for syntactic change: (1) reanalysis, when the underlying structure of a syntactic

¹³ These tokens were included, even when the semantic use of “wo” differed from Standard German.

¹⁴ BOAS/PIERCE/BROWN (2014) give an account of the many functions of *wo* in relative clauses in Texas German, where it is used instead of *wo*-compounds, dative relative pronouns, and time expressions. The authors conclude (2014: 607) that *wo* fulfills a greater range of functions in present-day Texas German than in Standard German. This seems to be due to the origin of the donor dialects, the contact with English, as well as the changing linguistic and social contexts of Texas German (gradual language death). This increased usage of *wo* also accounts for the high token count in comparison to the conjunctions investigated in this paper.

construction, but not the surface manifestation changes; (2) extension, when the surface manifestation changes but there is no immediate modification of the underlying structure; and (3) language contact. They state (1995: 20) that grammaticalization cases can be explained by other mechanisms. CAMPBELL adds in a later work (2013: 284) that most scholars agree that grammaticalization is not a mechanism of change, but that it relies on the other mechanisms, primarily on reanalysis. This has to be kept in mind when discussing the developments in Texas German in the light of language contact on the one hand and grammaticalization on the other.

a) Language Contact

The following section discusses the possibility of language contact as the main reason for the word order change after certain subordinating conjunctions. As shown above, syntactic patterns such as word order are widely considered to be fairly resistant to transference and borrowing. Nonetheless, no feature is unborrowable. THOMASON (2001: 63) states: “What can be adopted by one language from another? The short answer is anything. [...] This does not mean that no universally valid constraints will ever be proposed; but [...] I think it is unlikely that any substantive linguistic constraints will turn out to be valid.” Even though syntactic patterns are more resistant to transference than phonological patterns, a syntactic transference can still happen, and in fact does happen relatively often.

Since the beginning of the slow language death of Texas German in the first half of the 20th century, the influence of English has grown. According to BOAS (2009: 187), a reduction of the case system can already be seen in the data collected by EIKEL in the 1950’s. Furthermore, it has been argued that language contact contributed significantly to language change in Texas German, for example in the loss of front rounded vowels (PIERCE/BOAS/ROESCH 2015), the growing number of English loan words (BOAS/PIERCE 2011), and the collapse of the case system (BOAS 2009).¹⁵

But is language contact the cause for the change in word order discussed here? If the moving of the finite verb to second position after *weil* is due to language contact and borrowing, it should not exist in German dialects without this contact. However, this is not the case. DUDEN (<[http://www.duden.de/suchen/sprachwissen/%22Satzbau%22](http://www.duden.de/suchen/sprachwissen/%22Satzbau%22>)>) states that, while it is considered “wrong” and colloquial, *weil* is widely used as a coordinating conjunction in all German vernaculars in spoken language, such as in the following example:

¹⁵ For case and front rounded vowels, the contact situation reinforces other ongoing factors, and is such only one reason for the change in these features. See BOAS (2009: 175) on case and PIERCE/BOAS/ROESCH (2015: 129) on front rounded vowels.

- (26) Ich komme erst jetzt, weil ich hab noch gearbeitet.
 I come just now, because I have still worked.
 ‘I just now arrive (late), because I was working.’
 (SALMONS 2012: 323)

SALMONS (2012: 323) states that this pattern is commonly seen as a phenomenon of spoken language, but that it also occurs often in written genres close to the spoken language, such as personal letters. However, SALMONS (2012) also points to FREYWALD’S (2010) quantitative study of *weil*, in which she shows that only 10% of all occurrences exhibit a V2 pattern. This demonstrates that, while the feature is definitely noticeable, it is not the predominant form in homeland German dialects. Thus, it could be presumed that the contact situation could indeed be responsible for a spreading of an already existing feature.

The conjunction *dass* cannot be explained the same way. On the one side, FREYWALD (2008: 250) states that certain cases of *dass* + V2 can be found in the spoken language of modern Standard German. Though her corpus investigation yields less than 1% of V2 after *dass* within her corpus, she argues (FREYWALD 2008: 251) that this does not reflect the linguistic reality of all registers and language situations¹⁶ and has to be seen as an independent structural type of the German language (FREYWALD 2008: 278).¹⁷ On the other hand, I found that 31.2% of all sentences after *dass* appear with V2. Thus, language contact as a cause for word order change cannot be ruled out here, especially because the conjunction draws close semantic resemblance to its English counterpart ‘that’. This closeness could serve as a trigger for syntactic transference (CLYNE 2003).

b) Grammaticalization

As mentioned above, BURRIDGE (1992: 236) showed that German has the tendency to an V2 word order due to a change from a pragmatic towards a syntactic word order, which she determines to be grammaticalization.¹⁸ According to GREWENDORF (1988: 21) the V-final word order is only used in subordinated dependent clauses, while all main statements and important information is conveyed through V2 word order patterns. Additionally, as stated above, certain subordinators like *weil* have the tendency to entail a V2 word order in spoken language. Thus, it is not difficult to see how word order can change also with other subordinating conjunctions. For TxG, BOAS (2009: 218) illustrated that several changes of the case system in Texas German are due to the gradual language death of the dialect

¹⁶ There does not appear to be a regional and therefore dialectal preference for V2 after *dass* (FREYWALD 2008: 252).

¹⁷ I personally do not see evidence for internally motivated V2 after *dass* in homeland German based on the 0.34% frequency that FREYWALD (2008: 278) finds.

¹⁸ See HOPPER/TRAUGOTT (2003) for extensive discussion of grammaticalization.

and also due to language contact in the past five decades. If we consider a general underlying tendency for a word order change in German, the further leveling of the case system might have sped up the process. This is, for instance, one of the standard handbook explanations for the fixing of English word order. The collapse of the TxG case system has created a need for new ways to express grammatical relations, which could be another plausible explanation for the sudden change of word order after *dass* that has taken place since the mid-20th century.

The argument for grammaticalization as an explanation for word order change in German language islands must be treated carefully, however. As mentioned above, many scholars (JANDA 2001, JOSEPH 2001) argue that grammaticalization is an epiphenomenon rather than a language change phenomenon on its own, and I tend to agree on that stance. V2 in dependent clauses can be interpreted in a similar way. After an initial reanalysis of the word order in this pattern after some conjugations, possibly *weil*, the restructured word order is extended to other conjugations. This process is further sped up by the language contact situation. Thus, what could be seen as a change according to grammaticalization alone, is possibly a change due to a variety of other factors that culminate into something that is called grammaticalization. JANDA (2001: 304) advocates an inclusion of sociolinguistic factors into the study of grammaticalization as an epiphenomenon of other language change phenomena. The field has, according to JANDA, so far limited itself predominantly to psycholinguistic and discourse-based studies and thus is missing out on other sources, in particular, grammaticalization across generations, which could also account for BURRIDGE'S (1992) investigation. The current TxG situation speaks for this account. As the dialect faces imminent language death and English has become the dominant language, fluency declined for almost all speakers because they stopped using the language in most domains. PIERCE/BOAS/ROESCH (2015: 129) point out that this situation causes speakers to abandon marked linguistic structures and opt for structures closer to English. This “linguistic meltdown” (PIERCE/BOAS/ROESCH 2015: 129) is a common phenomenon for languages that face imminent death.¹⁹

6. Conclusion

In sum, TxG word order does not change after all subordinating conjunctions. Dependent clauses that are initiated by the conjunction *ob* and the question word *wo*, which show a clear SOV word order pattern. However, *wo* has undergone semantic change by taking over the function and meaning of the temporal con-

¹⁹ For further reference on the linguistic consequences of language death, see also NETTLE and ROMAINE (2000) and TRUDGILL (2011). The term “linguistic meltdown” was apparently first used by NETTLE and ROMAINE (2000: ix).

junction *als*. *Dass* shows a change in roughly 30% of the cases. Only clauses with *weil* exhibit an SVO word order in the majority of the cases.

Where the word order changes, a mixture of possible factors contributing to the change is the most likely explanation. For the word order change after *weil*, it could be shown that similar changes are perceivable in all homeland German dialects, even though it is not the predominant word order there. It is likely that this pattern was already in use for some donor dialects when the German settlers arrived in Texas. However, internal diachronic language developments due to case loss cannot be considered the only contributing factor. At the same time, language contact has increased and sped up the change but can also not be identified as the only reason for the deviation. It is more likely that a combination of both factors as well as the current state of TxG contributed to the rapid spreading of the V2 word order after *weil*.

The partial word order change after *dass* cannot be accounted for in the same way. In TxG, 31% of the cases show a change from SOV to SVO while such a usage could only minimally be found in the homeland German dialects. It could be argued that the underlying internal structure promotes a change towards V2, but since the donor dialects did not show such a change on the surface structure, it is unlikely that internal factors are the main cause. *Dass* might be especially vulnerable to lexico-syntactic transference because of its close semantic resemblance to English *that*. It is likely that language contact plays a bigger role in word order change after *dass* than after *weil*. Furthermore, language death is again promoting a rapid change towards V2, although it currently is unclear why *weil* and *dass* show this, but other conjunctions do not. As mentioned by BOAS (2009: 221), it would be necessary to conduct an item based analysis, also to account for regional and idiolectal differences, in addition to the frequency analysis of this paper.²⁰

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