Case loss in Texas German

The influence of semantic and pragmatic factors

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Based on a comparison of data from Gilbert (1972) and data collected by the Texas German Dialect Project between 2001–2006 I demonstrate that dative case marking in Texas German has significantly declined over the past 40 years. Applying Trudgill's (2004) model of new-dialect formation to the data I argue that the reduction in dative case is best explained in terms of internal factors, that is, leveling processes taking place in dialect contact situations. I propose that the replacement of the dative by the accusative is triggered by at least three interlaced factors: similarity in phonological form, movement towards unmarked forms (from lexical to structural case), and similarity in semantic contexts.

1. Introduction

The loss of dative case in German-American dialects has been the subject of extensive research over the past five decades. Consider, for example, the following Texas German data.

Salmons (1994: 60) suggests that the majority of base dialects brought to Texas from Germany in the 1840s still distinguished between accusative and dative case. In contrast, present-day Texas German exhibits very little dative morphology in the determiner system. Similar trends have been observed for case marking on adjectives and pronouns in Texas German (see Eikel 1949, 1954; Gilbert 1972; Guion 1996; Fuller & Gilbert 2003) as well as in other German-American dialects such as Pennsylvania German (Louden 1994; Van Ness 1996), Wisconsin German (Lewis 1973), Michigan German (Born 1994, 2003), and Kansas Volga German (Keel 1994). In analyzing case loss in German-American dialects, these studies typically address the following questions: (1) Did any of the regional European-German donor dialects brought to North America already exhibit a reduced case system? (2) Should case loss be attributed to a process of convergence with English (i.e., external factors) or to internal developments resulting from the general Germanic drift towards two-case systems? (3) To what degree did the teaching of Standard German in German-American schools influence case loss in German-American dialects?

Table 1. Development of Texas German case marking (Salmons 1994: 60).

	Most Base Dialects			>	Texas German		
	MASC	FEM	NEUTER		MASC	FEM	NEUTER
NOM.	der	die	das		der	die	das
ACC.	den	die	das		den	die(der)	den(das)
DATIVE	dem	der	dem		den	die(der)	den(das)

In this paper I deal with each of these three questions in detail. More specifically, I analyze Gilbert's (1972) data on the Texas German case system and compare them with more recent data collected by the Texas German Dialect Project (TGDP) (Boas 2003), which re-recorded the same data originally recorded by Gilbert in the 1960s. This study is different from previous studies on German-American dialects such as Salmons (1994) in that it analyzes case loss over a time period of more than 100 years (some of Gilbert's informants were born during the last quarter of the 19th century). Comparing two data sets covering such a wide time span offers a unique perspective on case reduction because it allows us to analyze the same phenomenon from the perspective of both apparent time and real time (Bailey 2002).

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides a brief overview of the socio-historical background of the German settlements in central Texas. Section 3 discusses the origins of the German dialects brought to Texas beginning in the 1840s and analyzes the development of Texas German in the context of Trudgill's (2004) model of new-dialect formation. Section 4 offers an overview of previous analyses of case syncretism in other German-American dialects and argues that an analysis in terms of internal factors accounts best for the Texas German data. Additional evidence comes from a comparison of Texas German (henceforth TxG) with other German dialects. Section 5 provides a functional explanation of case loss in TxG, discussing a number of semantic and pragmatic factors. Finally, section 6 concludes.

2.   The socio-historical context

Organized German immigration to Texas began in the 1840s due to a large-scale immigration effort of the *Mainzer Adelsverein* ("Society of Noblemen from Mainz"). The majority of immigrants came initially from the Duchy of Nassau, while later arrivals came from the Alsace region and the areas encompassing the present-day German states of Hesse, Lower Saxony, Saxony, and Thuringia, among others (see Biesele 1930; Salmons 1983). The immigrants settled in an area that later came to be known as the German-belt, encompassing 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 (see Boas 2005).[1]

Although most German immigrants settled in the German-belt, not all settlements were exclusively German. That is, in parts of the Hill Country (Gillespie County and Kendall County) the German-born population numbered 75% and more in 1870, whereas in other areas the German-born population was only about 20% (DeWitt County) or 6% (Goliad County) (see Gilbert 1978; Boas 2005). Despite the geographic discontinuity of the German-speaking *Sprachinseln* ('language islands'), the latter part of the 19th century saw the establishment of a stable linguistic situation with German as the dominant language in virtually all public and private domains. English was typically not learned until children entered school. Among adults, English was primarily used by men in business settings when traveling outside of German-speaking areas when they had to interact with non-German speakers (Salmons 1983; Boas 2005).

This relatively stable linguistic situation began to change towards the end of World War I when English-only laws prescribed the use of English in schools (Salmons 1983; Guion 1996). As a result, Texas German children entering the first grade were confronted with a new language to which they had to adopt very quickly in order to succeed. The children's difficulties, as well as a general wave of anti-German sentiments due to World War I, led many to limit their use of TxG to the home or with friends. A considerable number of parents decided not to pass their first language on to their children because they wanted their children to succeed in school and in their professional lives (Guion 1996). According to Salmons (1983), the years between the two World Wars are best characterized in terms of a diglossic situation where English was established as a high form (H) in most public domains (schools, newspapers, work place), as TxG was the L form used primarily at home among family, friends, and neighbors. Due to World War II, German underwent another era of low prestige, which in turn led to eventual language shift in favor of English. While some parents continued to speak TxG to their children throughout the 1940s, intergenerational transmission virtually ceased during the 1950s. Demographic factors also played an important role in the language shift to English as more Texas Germans moved to larger cities to enroll in college or find jobs

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1.   Note that the first settlers still spoke their original German dialects when they arrived in Texas. The result was a diverse mix of phonological, syntactic, morphological, and lexical features that interacted and influenced each other over the next century or so. In contrast to other new world dialects (e.g., New Zealand English (Trudgill 2004) or Pennsylvania German (Raith 1992)), Texas German did not evolve into a coherent new world dialect with broad-scale leveling of linguistic features. This widespread variation is amply documented in Gilbert's (1972) pioneering *Linguistic Atlas of Texas German* as well as by more recent language documentation efforts such as the Texas German Dialect Project (see Boas (2003) and http://www.tgdp.org).

after World War II. At the same time, more English-only speakers moved into areas traditionally settled by German immigrants. At the beginning of the 21st century, the great majority of TxG speakers is 60 years and older, which means that the dialect will most likely become extinct within the next 30–40 years (Boas 2005).

The following section discusses the case systems of the donor dialects that formed the input for TxG and sheds light on the question of whether TxG evolved into a coherent new-world dialect. This is an important point because we need to know whether at some point TxG exhibited a coherent case marking that was shared among all its speakers. The results of this discussion form the basis for the analysis in section 4, where I determine the role of internal and external factors in the development of the TxG case system.

3.   New dialect formation and development of the TxG case system

3.1   Determining the range of donor dialects

Determining the range of donor dialects that formed the input for TxG from the 1840s onwards is a difficult task. One major problem is that we do not have exact information about the geographic origins of the German immigrants. Previous research by Jordan (2004) suggests that census data can be used to identify the origin of German-born immigrants. In what follows, I first summarize Jordan's data and results. Then, I argue that they are not sufficiently fine-grained to serve as a reliable basis for identifying the donor dialects brought to Texas by the German-speaking immigrants.

Jordan (2004) discusses the origins of German settlers in Austin County (to the east of Austin) as well as three typical Hill Country counties (Gillespie, Mason, and Llano), which lie to the west of Austin. Based on census data from 1860 and 1870, Jordan argues that German-born farmers in Austin County came predominantly from northern Germany, whereas those living in the Hill Country were primarily born in west-central Germany. His results are summarized in Table 2.

Although the trend described by Jordan is supported by the census data, it is not clear that these data are very useful when it comes to identifying the donor dialects spoken by German immigrants coming to Texas, because the census data do not list the exact geographic origins such as specific towns or villages. Consider, for example, the Duchy of Nassau, which is claimed by 22% of German-born Hill Country immigrants as their place of birth. Nassau was formed in 1806 out of a number of smaller states to the north of Frankfurt/Main and included at least three major dialects, namely Rhine Franconian (*Rheinfränkisch*), Mosel Franconian (*Moselfränkisch*), and Central Hessian (*Zentralhessisch*) (see Wiesinger 1983). These major dialect areas can be further subdivided into more fine-grained areas, down to cities and even villages that are in close proximity to each other (see Wolf 1983: 1116–1118).

Table 2. Origin of German-born farmers with the number of inhabitants greater than 1% (Jordan 2004: 64, 123).

Austin county (1870 census)	Gillespie, Llano, and Mason counties (1860 census)
Mecklenburg – 15%	Nassau – 22%
Oldenburg – 6%	Hannover – 15%
Saxony – 5%	Hesse – 7%
Anhalt – 5%	Brunswick – 7%
Baden – 2%	Württemberg – 6%
Württemberg – 2%	Saxony – 4%
Lippe-Detmold – 2%	Baden – 1%
Hesse – 2%	Bavaria – 1%
Bavaria – 1%	Mecklenburg – 1%
Brunswick – 1%	Unspecified Prussia – 36%
Saxe-Meiningen – 1%	
Saxe-Weimar – 1%	
Hamburg – 1%	
Unspecified Prussia – 54%	

These dialectal differences have a direct bearing on the types of case-marking systems brought to Texas. Consider, for example, Shrier's (1965) analysis of case systems in German dialects which investigates the distribution of nominative, accusative, and dative marking. Shrier distinguishes between two broad categories of case syncretism in German dialects: (1) dialects in which the nominative and accusative form a single case vis-à-vis the dative; (2) dialects in which the accusative and dative form a single case vis-à-vis the nominative (see also Lipold 1983; Maak 1983, and Panzer 1983).[2]

Returning to the case marking systems found in the Nassau area, we find three different patterns of case syncretism. In the southernmost area we find isoglosses characterizing the local dialects as belonging to the more conservative areas. Figure 1, taken from Shrier (1965), illustrates the distribution of cases in this area. Southeast diagonal hatching represents the core area of N/A/D strength, which is most resistant

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2. Note that Shrier's analysis relies on data "collected from individual dialect grammars and monographs" (1965: 421). Unfortunately, she does not list her sources and as such it is not entirely clear when the data that formed the basis for her analysis were compiled. A comparison of her isoglosses with those found in the *Digitaler Wenkeratlas* (http://www.diwa.info), which provides digital versions of German dialect maps from the last quarter of the 19th century, suggests that Shrier's sources in large part reflect the distribution of cases in 19th century Germany.
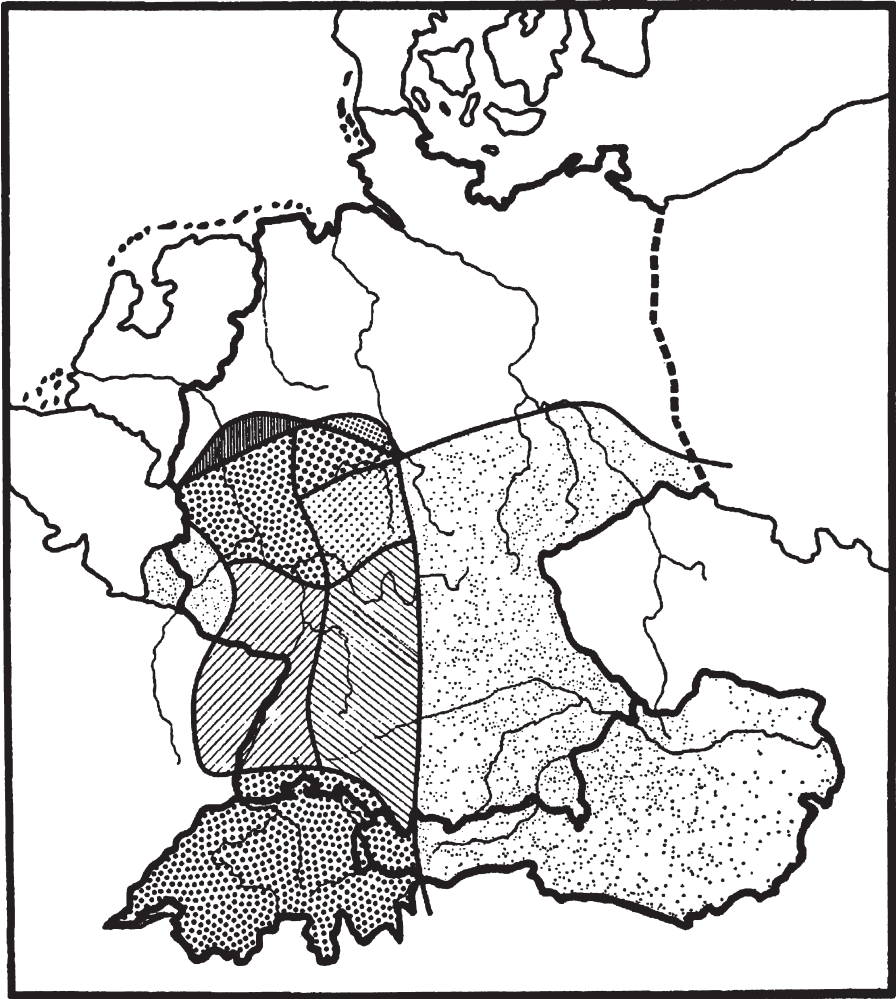
Figure 1. Strength of N/A/D differentiation.

to morphological change and which is the center of the dialect territory where the three way distinction is maintained in all five parts of speech (both pronouns, both articles, and adjective). Note, however, that other Nassau area dialects are less conservative than the southernmost varieties (southeast diagonal hatching). For example, the middle section of the Nassau area (medium dotting) and the northern section of the Nassau area (coarse dotting) in Figure 1 exhibit significantly more case syncretism in their 1st and 3rd singular pronouns.

The dialects of the Nassau area demonstrate considerable variation in case marking. Similar variation between the dialects of the Nassau area is attested for

other morpho-syntactic phenomena as well as at the phonological and lexical level (see Boas 2007 for more details). Thus, without knowing the exact geographic origin of the immigrants leaving the Nassau area we are unable to determine precisely which case systems were brought to Texas. As such, Salmons' (1994) summary of the case systems of the base dialects discussed above (see Table 1) is only a rough estimate. Another unknown is the number of immigrants using a particular case system. As shown in the following section, the strength of the input of a particular linguistic feature to a dialect mixture is important for determining the outcome of new-dialect formation.

The problem of identifying the settlers' exact geographic origin and their dialects is not limited to the Nassau area. Jordan's (2004) category "unspecified Prussia" (see Table 2) is claimed by 36% of Hill Country German settlers as their place of origin. Within that area, we find an even greater variety of dialects, such as Westphalian (*Westfälisch*), Eastphalian (*Ostfälisch*), different varieties of Pomeranian (*Pommersch*), Silesian (*Schlesisch*), and Thuringian (*Thüringisch*), among others. However, without knowing the exact town or village of origin, it is difficult to establish the exact nature of the dialect input that formed the basis for TxG. Without this information it is tricky to establish accurate numbers for an explanation of the TxG dialect mixture based on Trudgill's (2004) model of new-dialect formation.

3.2   Trudgill's model of new dialect formation

Despite the problems with identifying the exact geographic origins of the settlers I suggest that it is still possible to arrive at a coarse-grained understanding of the nature of the dialect input based on apparent time data. To achieve this goal, I apply Trudgill's (2004) model of new-dialect formation, which allows us to systematically analyze data on dialect contact and dialect mixing.

Based on New Zealand English data, Trudgill (2004) proposes that when different dialects are in contact in a colonial setting, different variants are leveled out, and, eventually, a new dialect is formed that is different from all input varieties. The process of new-dialect formation takes place over distinct sequential stages, each corresponding approximately to a life-time of a generation of speakers. Trudgill's first stage in the formation of New Zealand English involves immigration of speakers of various English dialects to New Zealand until about 1860. During the long journey and the initial years of the new settlements speakers of different dialects came into contact. As a result of accommodation of speakers to one another in face-to-face interactions, rudimentary dialect leveling and interdialect development took place, according to Trudgill (2004: 83–99). At the same time, new interdialectal forms develop, which were not present in any of the input varieties contributing to the mixture.

The second stage of new-dialect formation involves extreme variability (Trudgill 2004: 100–112). During this phase, which lasted until about 1900 in the case of New Zealand English, the immigrants' children had access to a multitude of linguistic models that resulted from the interdialect mixing in the previous generation. Being exposed to many different linguistic options leads to linguistic "diffuseness" (LePage & Tabouret-Keller 1985), i.e., children select different variants from various dialects to form a new mixture. One of the results of this rather atypical language acquisition situation is *intra*-individual variability, where speakers are likely to fluctuate considerably in their own speech, exhibiting a different type of linguistic behavior than people raised in more homogenous speech communities (Trudgill 2004: 106). Another result characteristic of Trudgill's second stage is *inter*-individual variability, which refers to different speech patterns of speakers from the same location (Trudgill 2004: 107–108). Interestingly, there is relatively little implicational predictability, i.e., most of the variability is seemingly random, leading Trudgill (2004: 108) to the conclusion that what occurred was a form of variable acquisition, not accommodation. However, the inter-speaker variability of the second stage appears to be less pronounced than the variability assumed to exist among speakers during the first stage. Trudgill (2004: 109) explains this difference in terms of apparent leveling taking place among mainstream regional English features that were sufficiently common that they must have survived the initial contact stage.

The first two stages summarized so far are commonly known as koinéization (Trudgill 1986; Siegel 1987; Britain 1997). It is only after Trudgill's third stage, which is characterized by *focusing*, that one may talk about a stable and coherent outcome of new-dialect formation, i.e., a crystallized variety with surprisingly little regional variation. This last stage of new-dialect formation in New Zealand, which took place among speakers born around 1890; involves another phase of leveling of linguistic features, i.e., accommodation between speakers in face-to-face interaction (Trudgill 2004: 113–114). During the third stage, it is usually the majority variants that survive the final leveling, while minority variants are typically leveled. Trudgill explains this development by looking at the role of children at stage three, who are exposed to a somewhat more stable social environment and a more restricted set of variants to choose from (as opposed to children at stage two). In other words, these children "simply selected, in most cases, the variants that were most common" (Trudgill 2004: 115). In the following section I apply Trudgill's concept of new-dialect formation to the data in Gilbert's (1972) *Linguistic Atlas of Texas German* to determine whether TxG can be characterized as a coherent new-world dialect.

3.3   Historical Texas German data

Gilbert's (1972) *Atlas* is based on field recordings conducted throughout the 1960s. To get an inventory of a broad variety of linguistic features, Gilbert and his associates

conducted a total of 286 interviews in a 31-county area across central Texas. Based on the questionnaire used for Gilbert's (1963) study of TxG in Gillespie and Kendall Counties, informants were asked to translate words, phrases, and sentences from English into TxG. The interviews were recorded and augmented with field notes. Finally, the data were transferred to a total of 148 maps, each map showing the geographic distribution of a particular morpho-syntactic, phonological, and lexical feature. Each map lists in the top right an English title identical to the English word, phrase, or sentence posed by the field workers to the informants for translation into German. Directly underneath the English is a High German translation with the portion under study underlined (Gilbert 1972: 7). Each map provides numbered interview points and linguistic symbols. A legend that lists lead-forms with individual symbols identifies the geographical distribution of the linguistic variants. For example, the Standard German translation of the English sentence *The picture hangs over the bed* would require the use of the dative case following the preposition *über* ('over') as in *Das Bild hängt über dem Bett*. Since the dative has been lost in many contexts in TxG, most of Gilbert's informants used the accusative instead of the dative. The distribution of case is indicated on the map by individual symbols.

Applying Trudgill's (2004) model to Gilbert's (1972) data necessitates a more fine-grained analysis than just comparing the use of cases. To this end, it is useful to take a look at Salmons' (1994: 61) summary of dative versus accusative use in TxG in Table 3, which provides a detailed summary of Gilbert's *Atlas* data split up by region and age group. Salmons shows that the use of the dative case is highest among the oldest age group (64%) born before 1899. The younger groups show a significant reduction in the use of the dative: the younger group, born between 1900 and 1911, used 55.1% of datives, while the youngest group, born after 1912, used only used 28.5% datives. Numbers for dative forms are listed first, followed by numbers for accusative forms. Both refer to syntactic environments in which the dative is expected in Standard German. The two-letter abbreviations stand for geographical areas: NW (Northwest), WC (west central), SW (Southwest), and NE (Northeast).

Table 3. DAT vs. ACC for StdGm dative, Regional/Age stratification (Salmons 1994: 61).[3]

Date of birth	NW	WC	SW	NE	Total	Percentage
–1899	10–13	43–29	52–16	29–16	134–74	(64%)
1900–1911	21–17	22–15	21–11	17–23	81–66	(55.1%)
1912–	16–60	4–30	20–21	9–21	49–123	(28.5%)

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3.   Salmons does not explicitly mention the number of speakers that are represented by each cell.

While the age stratification clearly shows a decline in the use of the dative case, the data appear to suggest that there was already a considerable degree in variation in case usage among the generation born before 1899. In my view, this variability is a reflection of the various case marking systems of the donor dialects brought to Texas by the first wave of settlers.[4] In other words, the variety in case marking systems suggests that the three case system used by speakers who were born before 1899 has its source in some of the donor dialects brought to Texas.

More specifically, I propose that speakers born before the turn of the century should be classified as the children of the first generation of Texas-born German speakers, which were exposed to the variable case marking systems of the original settlers (with some rudimentary leveling). The children of the first immigrants would generally fall into the first stage of Trudgill's (2004) model of new-dialect formation. Speakers born from 1880 until about the first decade of the 20th century would thus have participated in the second stage of new-dialect formation, which is characterized by variability and some more leveling. In fact, Salmons' observations support my proposal, as he claims that "[t]hose born until the turn of the century tend to maintain the distinction, though some lose the distinction either variably or, occasionally, categorically" (1994: 62). The type of variability described by Salmons is one of the defining features of Trudgill's second stage of new-dialect formation. Speakers born in the 1920s and later would belong to Trudgill's third stage of new-dialect formation, i.e., focusing. During this phase, most of the remaining dative distinctions would have been leveled out.

In sum, the data on case usage from Gilbert's *Atlas* demonstrates three important points. First, there already existed a considerable amount of variability in case use among the first generation of Texas-born German speakers. This variability is in fact expected considering Trudgill's (2004) model of new-dialect formation.[5] The available evidence suggests that the various donor dialects brought to Texas are the most likely source. Second, subsequent generations of TxG speakers used the dative less and less

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4. One problem with analyzing Salmons' data is that his breakdown of the data by date of birth does not match up well with what we might presume Trudgill's stages to be. I assume that the first major wave of German immigrants to Texas lasted from the 1840s until the beginning of the Civil War. Note that it is difficult to establish exact dates for each generation since some of the first settlers came to Texas in their 20s, while others were considerably older and were already married with children. As such, there is an overlap in generational membership between children coming to Texas as immigrants with their parents and children born in Texas during the 1850s and 1860s.

5. Although Trudgill's model is based on phonological data, it also apparently can be used to describe dialect leveling at the morpho-syntactic level. For critical remarks about Trudgill's model, see Gordon et al. (2004) and Gordon (2005).

(see Berend & Jedig 1991 and Rosenberg 1994, 2003 for similar reports on case usage in German dialects spoken in Russia and Brazil). Third, and perhaps most significant, Gilbert's (1972) data demonstrate that there is no coherent use of dative case marking among the third and fourth generation of native-born TxG speakers (see Table 3 above). This suggests that TxG did not go through all of Trudgill's three stages of new-dialect formation with respect to its case-marking properties.[6] This means that TxG stopped short of what would be the final stage of Trudgill's model of new-dialect formation, i.e., focusing.

3.4   Comparison of historical data with present-day Texas German data

I now compare Gilbert's (1972) data with present-day data on TxG to determine whether any significant changes have taken place in the case marking systems of TxG over the past 40 years. The present-day TxG data come from field interviews of the Texas German Dialect Project (TGDP) at The University of Texas at Austin (see Boas 2003). From 2001–2006, the TGDP conducted interviews with 200 speakers of TxG. Three types of data were collected: (1) Re-recording of historical data. Taking the original elicitation lists from Gilbert (1972) and Eikel (1954), informants were asked to translate English words, phrases, and sentences into TxG. The re-recording of the historical data follows the same method applied by Gilbert and Eikel and thus allows for a direct comparison in real time. In addition, it constitutes a controlled data set. (2) Open-ended sociolinguistic interviews. Based on an eight page questionnaire with questions about the origins of ancestors, childhood activities, the community, religion, education, living conditions, tourism, government, and current activities (among other things), field workers initiate conversations in German with TxG speakers. The goal of these questions is to produce casual, relaxed conversation in which informants are given the chance to respond freely in TxG without being asked to produce specific linguistic structures as with the word and sentence list translation task. (3) Biographical questionnaire in English (very few Texas Germans write German). The written questionnaire covers information about age, date of birth, level of education, domains of language use (Texas German and English), and language attitudes (subjective reactions), among other things. Field workers typically sit across from the informants and discuss the individual questions in English in order to help informants fill out the questionnaire. The data were not collected in any particular order.

All interviews are recorded on MiniDisc, and subsequently transferred to the project's main work station and edited for further processing. Then, students transcribe the

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6.   This point is supported by phonological data showing inconsistent use of a number of vowels and consonants among TxG speakers of different generations. See Boas (2007) for details.

interviews and translate them into English. Finally, the audio clips and their accompanying transcriptions and translations are stored in an on-line multimedia archive, the Texas German Dialect Archive (TGDA) (http://www.tgdp.org), which is freely available to the public (see Boas 2006 for a detailed description of the project's workflow).

A brief glance at the data in Gilbert's (1972) *Atlas* shows considerable linguistic variation across the 31-county large German-belt, similar to the one observed in Figure 1 above. To delimit the scope of my analysis of case loss in TxG I focused on only one particular region, namely New Braunfels and its surrounding communities in Comal County, halfway between San Antonio and Austin. I selected New Braunfels because it is one of the oldest German speaking settlements in Texas, receiving settlers from different areas in Germany. Its founding in 1845 and its subsequent development are well documented (Biesele 1930; Haas 1968; Fey 1994), and there are three previous studies describing the local variety of TxG spoken there (Clardy 1954; Eikel 1954, and Gilbert 1972). Gilbert's data for the New Braunfels area are based on interviews with eleven informants and provides the most detailed information on a wide range of linguistic features. In what follows, I compare the case marking system of Gilbert's informants with that of the 52 informants interviewed by the TGDP in the New Braunfels area from 2001–2006. The real-time evidence spans a 40-year time span and provides an interesting addition to the apparent-time data discussed in the previous section (see Bailey 2002 for advantages and disadvantages of real-time and apparent-time data).

The first data set captures case marking in prepositional phrases headed by *über* ('over'), *unter* ('under'), *neben* ('next to), *in* ('in'), and *auf* ('on'), see (1a)–(1e). Note that the use of dative case following the prepositions in these sentences reflects the case marking of Standard German (which has a four case system), in line with Gilbert's method of description, which illustrates case use in TxG from the perspective of the standard variety.

(1)　a.　*Es liegt dort unten auf dem Boden.*　　(Gilbert 1972: Map 57)
　　　　'It's lying down there on the floor.'

　　b.　*Das Bild hängt über dem Bett.*　　(Gilbert 1972: Map 51)
　　　　'The picture hangs over the bed.'

　　c.　*Er sitzt unter dem Baum.*　　(Gilbert 1972: Map 53)
　　　　'He's sitting under the tree.'

　　d.　*Er sitzt neben dem Baum.*　　(Gilbert 1972: Map 55)
　　　　'He's sitting beside the tree.'

　　e.　*Er ist schon im Zimmer.*　　(Gilbert 1972: Map 59)
　　　　'He is already in the room.'

Table 4 summarizes the use of the dative case by the 52 New Braunfels area informants when translating the sentences in (1a)–(1e) into TxG. The table compares the

Table 4. Use of dative case in TxG (dative expected in Standard German).

	Gilbert (1972)	**TGDP (2006)**
auf	80%	5%
über	13%	0%
unter	20%	7%
neben	27%	3%
im	13%	5%

data collected by Gilbert in the 1960s with the data collected by the TGDP from 2001–2006. There is a slight difference in age between the speakers interviewed by Gilbert and those interviewed by the TGDP. While the TGDP speakers range in age from 62 to 95, Gilbert's speakers range in age from their mid-30s to their 80s. Note that from the perspective of Standard German, all five prepositions require the use of the dative case as in (1a)–(1e).

The data in Table 4 demonstrate three important points. The first point concerns the reduced use of dative case in Gilbert's data. By the 1960s there was already a considerable degree of contexts in which informants preferred accusative over dative following these prepositions. Except for *auf* ('on'), which 80% of Gilbert's informants used with a dative, all other prepositions triggered the use of accusative case in the majority of cases. The second point is that Gilbert's data demonstrate an item-based distribution of case loss. In other words, not all prepositions in Gilbert's data exhibit the same degree of case loss, which suggests that some prepositions may be more resistant to losing their dative case assignment functions than others. The third point concerns the development of case loss in the present-day data. Compared with Gilbert's data, the TGDP data show an acceleration of dative case loss, leading to the almost exclusive use of accusative in contexts where one would typically expect the dative in Standard German. In addition, the previously attested variation in case loss appears to have been leveled out over the past forty years. Whereas Gilbert reports dative case usage ranging from 13% to 80%, the TGDP data reveal a much smaller difference in variation, ranging only from 0% to 7%. Before turning to the role of internal and external factors in the loss of the dative case, let us take a look at case loss in the TxG pronoun system.

Previous studies on German *Sprachinseln* by Huffines (1989), Van Ness (1994), and Rosenberg (2005), among others, have shown that pronominal systems are typically more resistant to case syncretism than full lexical nouns. To see whether this difference also holds for TxG, I summarize Gilbert's (1972) data for case assignment to pronouns and compare them with the data recently re-recorded by the TGDP. Gilbert's original sentences are given in (2a)–(2e), the comparison of the historical data with present-day data is given in Table 5. Note that, as in the data set in (1),

Table 5. Use of dative case in TxG (dative expected in Standard German).

	Gilbert (1972)	**TGDP (2006)**
ihnen/denen	79%	52%
mir	54%	27%
ihr	93%	40%
ihr	87%	29%
mir	27%	12%

the dative marking on the pronouns is described from the perspective of Standard German (following Gilbert's methodology).

(2)   a.   *Das Bild gehört ihnen/denen.*   (Gilbert 1972: Map 35)
           'The picture belongs to them.'

      b.   *Er kam mit mir.*   (Gilbert 1972: Map 30)
           'He came with me.'

      c.   *Wir gingen mit ihr.*   (Gilbert 1972: Map 34)
           'We went with her.'

      d.   *Gib ihr zwei Stück!*   (Gilbert 1972: Map 33)
           'Give her two pieces.'

      e.   *Er hilft mir jetzt.*   (Gilbert 1972: Map 31)
           'He's helping me now.'

A comparison of the data in Table 5 with those in Table 4 clearly shows a higher retention of dative case marking among pronouns than among referential noun phrases governed by prepositions, i.e., up to 79% of Gilbert's New Braunfels area speakers employed the dative in the relevant context. Besides this difference, dative case marking has been significantly reduced in the TGDP data. While Gilbert's informants used from 27% to 79% dative case marking on pronouns, only 12% to 52% of TGDP informants continue to use the dative in the relevant contexts. As such, the case marking on pronouns has followed a path parallel to that of the referential noun phrases discussed above, continuing a trend already observed by Eikel (1954), Gilbert (1965), and Fuller & Gilbert (2003). However, in TxG pronouns the dative case is generally better preserved in comparison with referential noun phrases. With this overview of the data in hand I now turn to the question of whether the loss of dative case is best explained in terms of internal or external factors.

4.   The role of internal and external factors in case loss

Whether case loss in German *Sprachinseln* is triggered by internal or external factors is perhaps one of the most studied questions in German dialectology, covering a wide

spectrum of language contact situations in the United States (Louden 1988; Huffines 1994; Salmons 1994; Guion 1996; Born 2003; Fuller & Gilbert 2003; Wagener 2003), the former Soviet Union (Jedig 1966; Berend & Jedig 1991), Brazil (Altenhofen 1996; Damke 1997), Namibia (Riehl 2004), and Australia (Clyne 2003), among others. Studies such as Eikel (1949), Elliott (1972), and McGraw (1973) propose that case loss is triggered because of contact with another language that already exhibits a reduced case system. In this view, case loss proceeds on a generational basis, with younger generations having more and more contact with the contact language, eventually leading to case loss. As Eikel (1949: 281) puts it: "Older people use the dative more freely than does the present generation. (…) New Braunfels German has been forced to follow the English pattern of syntax."

Other studies such as Keel (1994) and Rosenberg (2003, 2005) emphasize the role of internal factors. For example, Rosenberg (2005) takes a comparative approach to analyzing case loss by focusing on German *Sprachinseln* that are in contact with different languages, namely Portuguese, Russian, and English in order to determine differences and similarities in case loss patterns. Comparing the historical background of the German *Sprachinsel* in Rio Grande do Sul in southern Brazil with those scattered throughout Russia, Rosenberg points out five parallels: (1) both countries have a German-speaking population of more than one million speakers; (2) the majority of German settlements in both countries date back to the 19th century (or earlier); (3) there was considerable discrimination against the German language and culture during World War II; (4) settlers lived in small isolated colonies scattered throughout the two countries; (5) the original settlers came from various locations throughout Germany, speaking different dialects. As such, the input dialects in each location had similar features (Rosenberg 2005: 228).

In light of the data on the different contact situations, Rosenberg (2005) argues against attributing case loss to external influences. His comparison between the *Sprachinseln* in Brazil and Russia, which both exhibit comparable degrees of case loss, and which have a very similar historical background, shows that the loss of the dative should not be attributed to external factors. Rosenberg argues that on the view favoring external factors the German varieties spoken throughout Russia should not exhibit any case loss since Russian has a considerably more complex case system than any German variety. In other words, there is no evidence of the contact language providing a simpler case system that could serve as the model for the reduced German system. This observation leads Rosenberg to focus on internal factors as a possible explanation for case loss in German *Sprachinseln* (2005: 229).

Perhaps even more interesting is case loss among the Amish and Mennonites, who speak Pennsylvania German. Rosenberg compares the differences in case loss patterns between sectarian and non-sectarian Amish and Mennonite groups (see also Louden 1998; Van Ness 1996). Interestingly, case reduction is strongest among members of sectarian groups, who use German in most parts of their lives. In

contrast, members of non-sectarian groups, who have intensive language contact with English, show a significantly smaller degree of case reduction (Rosenberg 2005: 229). Rosenberg points out that if external factors were indeed playing a role in case loss, we would expect members of the non-sectarian groups to have markedly less dative morphology because of their intense contact with English. However, the fact that sectarian speakers (who have significantly less contact with English) show a higher degree of case loss suggests that external factors did not play any significant role in this development. In other words, more contact with English should result in more loss of dative case, not its maintenance.

Given these arguments against external factors, several authors have suggested that case loss should be accounted for in terms of internal factors (Gilbert 1965; Salmons 1994; Van Ness 1996; Rosenberg 2003). For example, Rosenberg points out that the reduction of noun inflection in German dialects is even more radical than in the standard. This development is not only restricted to German dialects, but can be observed among most Germanic languages, according to Rosenberg. On this view, case loss is due to a "long term development from synthetic to analytic structure" (2005: 208). In other Germanic language such as English and mainland Scandinavian, this process has progressed at a much faster pace than in German dialects, leading to the almost complete loss of morphological case, according to Rosenberg. This observation leads him to suggest that the reduction of noun inflection among German language island varieties proceeds at a much faster pace than in Standard German or other German dialects, an idea already proposed by Clyne's (1991: 179) analysis of German *Sprachinseln* in Australia.

With respect to case loss in TxG, an explanation in terms of internal factors appears to fit the general pattern of case loss in other German *Sprachinseln*. Consider, for example, the range of donor dialects brought to Texas. As shown in section 3, the dialects differed from each other in their case marking systems to begin with. Thus, the original settlers and their offspring were engaged in continuous face-to-face interaction involving different case marking systems, which eventually led to case loss similar to that observed among the many *Sprachinseln* in Russia (Schirmunski 1962; Berend & Jedig 1991). Applying Trudgill's (2004) model of new-dialect formation to the TxG data in Tables 3–5 we can observe a generational pattern of case loss. Recall Trudgill's claim that during the first and second stages of new-dialect formation linguistic features are first leveled and then increase in variability, before there is further leveling and subsequent focusing during the third stage. The data in Tables 3–5 clearly show a generational pattern of case loss that matches up with Trudgill's three stages of new-dialect formation. On this view, the trend towards a reduced case system may not only be attributed to internal typological tendencies of Germanic languages towards reduced case systems (cf. Sapir's 1921 notion of drift). In addition, Trudgill's model allows us to describe this development of the interaction of different case systems in a

dialect contact situation, eventually leading to leveling of morphological case. The further loss of case we see between the 1960s (when Gilbert recorded his data) and today can be attributed to a continuation of trends already in place well before the 1960s. In sum, the data thus strongly suggest that case loss in TxG is due to internal factors.

However, the data do not shed light on the role of external factors in this development. First, consider the role of English. While Eikel (1949) maintains that contact with English ultimately led to case loss in TxG, this appears highly unlikely for the following reasons: (1) Previous research demonstrates that non-sectarian speakers of Pennsylvania German, who are in constant contact with English speakers, exhibit a lower degree of case loss that sectarian speakers, who have much less interaction with English speakers (see Rosenberg 2005); (2) The generational pattern of case loss described by Salmons (1994) based on Gilbert's (1972) data in Table 3 above shows that TxG already exhibited a significant loss of dative before the end of the 19th century. However, at that time the great majority of rural German settlements throughout the Hill Country existed in relative isolation. It was not until the 1920s that a reliable network of roads was built throughout central Texas, allowing the rural population uninterrupted access to larger towns and cities (Biesele 1930; Boas 2005). Because of this geographic isolation, there was relatively little contact between speakers of TxG and English, in particular throughout the Hill Country, until after World War I. Thus, contact with English is very unlikely to have played a role in triggering case loss in TxG until the first quarter of the 20th century.

Another external factor that may have played a role in case maintenance in TxG is the influence of Standard German. For example, Salmons and Lucht (2006) attribute the relatively high degree of dative marking in the speech of speakers born before roughly 1880 to the fact that Standard German played an important role in the lives of Texas Germans. Based on their review of statistics and reported use of Standard German in schools, churches, and the press, they argue – together with Salmons (1994) – that Standard German was influential in promoting the use of dative case among speakers of Texas Germans. Until the early 20th century, there was variable case marking, and speakers born after 1912 do not exhibit regular use of dative morphology even in formal speech. Salmons suggests that the loss of dative goes hand in hand with discontinuation of Standard German in schools. Pointing to English only laws enacted in 1884 and 1909, he proposes that once Standard German was no longer taught in schools, TxG speakers lost their systematic distinction between dative and accusative. While the observations regarding the important role of Standard German in the schools are certainly correct, I suggest that the use of Standard German in Texas is overestimated. In particular, I maintain that the level of active control of Standard German was far less among the German settlers and their descendants than claimed by Salmons (1994) and Salmons and Lucht (2006). As such, Standard German had very little, if no influence on the case system of TxG. Consider the following points raised by Boas (2007).

1.   The development of Standard German. Standard German spread at the expense of regional dialects in Germany took a period of about 500 years, spanning the invention of the printing press, Luther's translation of the Bible into Eastern Middle German, the gradual acceptance of Luther's German in the Catholic south, political unification in 1871, and public education in the twentieth century. A written standard that was broadly accepted throughout the various German states had not evolved until the end of the 17th century, and even then this new variety was quite limited in its distribution. For example, Elspass (2002: 44–45) points out that well into the 19th century access to the evolving written standard was restricted to the educated middle and upper classes. As such, people from the lower and lower middle classes did not have access to the written standard until the first half of the 19th century when the majority of German people became literate.

Even then, there were significant regional differences, with regions in central Prussia exhibiting comparatively high literacy rates, while Catholic and rural areas in the east, the far west and the south had to deal with widespread illiteracy (Ludwig 1998; Durrell 1999; Elspass 2002). Based on an extensive analysis of private letters written by members of the lower and lower middle classes during the 19th century, Elspass shows that there were still "more non-standard norms of usage (Milroy & Milroy 1985: 25) rather than just the norm of the standard variety" (Elspass 2002: 50). The analysis of the letters leads him to conclude that the existence of unofficially 'non-standard' forms is to be attributed to the persistence of regional norms of usage among the letter writers. In his view, written standardization was still under way during the mid 19th century. Elspass's analysis explains why it was not until the early 20th century that a unified German orthography was adopted: it was not until 1902 that Konrad Duden's orthography (first published in 1880) was adopted as a uniform standard throughout Germany, Austria, and Switzerland (Wells 1985: 351–353). Commenting on the introduction of the new orthography, Wells (1985: 348) points out that inconsistencies and alternatives persisted for a considerable time, as they did in morphology and syntax.

While the early 20th century saw the emergence of a coherent written standard, it took even longer for a spoken standard to evolve into a variety that was used throughout Germany (largely among the urban, well-educated middle and upper classes). The first broad-scale work aimed at codifying a spoken standard of German, Viëtor's *Die Aussprache des Schriftdeutschen* ('The Pronunciation of Written German') was not published in Germany until 1885. As such, it was no earlier than the mid-20th century that a form of Standard German became the mother tongue of greater parts of the German population (Durrell 1999; Elspass 2002). Similarly, it was not until the advances of radio and television in the 1950s and 1960s that Germans themselves were constantly exposed to the spoken standard. König (1989) shows that even in the later part of the

20th century there existed among Germans with a high school degree a wide spectrum of pronunciation that deviated significantly from the pronunciation advocated by Siebs (1969). This leads Besch (2003: 24) to conclude that even at the end of the 20th century there was widespread variation in spoken Standard German. These facts make it very unlikely that those who knew written Standard German in Texas pronounced it in a uniform way before the end of the 19th century (as was certainly the case for Germany).

2.   The importance of Standard German in Texas. During the late 19th and early 20th century in Texas only a small group of German settlers had an active control of Standard German. Unfortunately we have no exact information about the size of the educated middle and upper classes. An exception were the settlements known as "Latin Settlements" such as Sisterdale, which were founded by highly educated Germans who were political refugees fleeing persecution after the failed revolution of 1848. Based on accounts describing the importance of literary circles in these settlements, it is likely that the majority of settlers there insisted on continued use of Standard German for some functions (see, e.g., Biesele 1930: 171–173). Based on all available information, only the educated middle and upper classes had an active command of Standard German because they either acquired it natively (their parents coming from a similar background), or they learned it in school and subsequently attended university where an active command of the standard was an integral part of education. For example, in New Braunfels members of the educated middle and upper class held various important public positions that promoted the use of Standard German. Ferdinand Lindheimer, the first editor of the *Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung* from 1852 to 1872 received his education at a Frankfurt *Gymnasium* and attended a preparatory school in Berlin. He then attended the University of Wiesbaden, the University of Jena, and the University of Bonn (Sasse Ragsdale 2005). In sum, the available information suggests that some form of Standard German was primarily used by the members of the educated middle and upper classes in domains that exposed the rest of the population to the standard to some degree.

3.   Limited exposure to Standard German. Recall that the majority of German settlers were farmers and craftsmen who had typically received only a limited education in Germany (usually 4–6 years of schooling). These facts suggest that most had at best a passive knowledge of the written standard when coming to Texas. The situation was not much different for their children growing up between 1850 and 1890. The majority of students did not attend school year round, but went to rural country schools (Cf. Rahe 1999: 46). Many of these one-room country schools hosted four to eight grades, where the same teacher typically taught all the children. Up until the beginning of the 20th century, most children only received an elementary education, as Gold (1945: 83) points out. Furthermore, it was often

neither feasible nor practical for students to attend classes year-round as Rahe (1999) points out:

> When the crops needed to be harvested, every member of the family went to work and the children were too busy for book learning. While the teacher was highly respected, school attendance was in many cases impractical. (…) The children in the rural areas grew up as hard-working responsible individuals with years of on-the job training in farming and ranching; however, they had limited formal education and exposure to the outside world. (Rahe 1999: 47)

It is not clear to what degree teachers themselves were proficient in Standard German. Discussing the use of Standard German by elementary school teachers in 19th century Germany, Elspass (2002: 50) shows that it is not certain what knowledge elementary school teachers had of the standard variety. It would be more accurate to say that they taught a form of German that they regarded as the standard. This leads Elspass to suggest that non-standard norms of usage in written language seem to have been at least partly reinforced by teachers in elementary schools who were not aware of the official standard variety of felt insecure about its correct use themselves (Elspass 2002: 60–61). Considering these facts regarding the role of Standard German in elementary school education in 19th century Germany, it appears likely that the situation in Texas was similar, if not even more divergent. The limited attendance at rural schools suggests that most children acquired an active knowledge of Standard German only to a certain degree. That is, they may well have understood the standard and were able to produce it at some level during their school years. However, once they left school it is very likely that they lost most active control of the standard after a few years and were only exposed to it at church and by reading newspapers, thereby maintaining passive knowledge of the standard. As such, I propose that Salmons & Lucht's (2006) claim that "active control of Standard German was commonplace" should be regarded with some caution. Instead, it is more likely that the majority of Texas Germans continued to actively use some form of German dialects in their daily lives. In other words, it was only the educated middle and upper classes that had active control of some version of standardized written German. In sum, I have argued that the loss of dative case should be attributed primarily to internal factors instead of external factors such as the influence of English and Standard German. The following section discusses to what extent case loss in TxG can be attributed to internal semantic and pragmatic factors.

5. Towards a functional explanation of case loss in Texas German

The loss of case morphology in the history of a given language has been analyzed in numerous studies (e.g., Allen 1995; Blake 2001; Kulikov 2007; Barðdal & Kulikov 2007;

Harbert 2007). One of the common ways in which case is lost is that two different cases merge. This development leads to case polysemy where one and the same form expresses two or sometimes even more case functions. This process is typically referred to as case syncretism. To explain case syncretism Heine and Kutova (2005: 148) propose the following possible causes:

(3)   Possible causes of case syncretism (Heine & Kutova 2005: 148)

    a.   Owing to phonetic processes, different case forms become formally indistinguishable.

    b.   One case category C_1 extends its functional domain and takes over the function of another category C_2, eventually replacing the latter.

    c.   One of the case markers disappears and its functions are taken over by the other case marker.

In discussing the three possible causes of case syncretism, Heine and Kutova (2005: 149) point out that the three causes are not necessarily alternatives. Instead, they may work together as a part of a general process. On this view, case syncretism can be regarded as a combination of morphological, syntactic, and semantic processes. In what follows, I briefly address each of these processes to determine the mechanisms leading to case syncretism in TxG. I begin with a discussion of case assignment following prepositions.

Recall from Table 1 above that the majority of base dialects brought to Texas from Germany in the 1840s still distinguished between accusative and dative case. At that time, the difference in form between the accusative masculine determiner *den* and its dative counterpart *dem* was relatively minimal: the accusative-marked determiner ended in a voiced alveolar nasal while the dative-marked determiner ended in a voiced bilabial nasal. This minimal difference in form signaled functional differences in that it distinguished between grammatical functions such as direct and indirect object. At the same time, it served to distinguish between semantic roles such as Patient, Recipient, Path, Location, and Goal. Due to the minimal difference in form between the two case marked determiners it appears likely that at some point they became formally indistinguishable in certain discourse contexts (in particular in fast speech), thereby leading to an overlap in meaning. Thus, the accusative marker extended its functional domain to that of the dative, eventually replacing the dative altogether.

An explanation based primarily on phonological factors is ultimately neither satisfactory nor adequate since it leaves two important questions unanswered: (1) Why did the accusative extend its functional domain over that of the dative and not the other way around? (2) How do we account for the changes in case marking on feminine and neuter determiners?

Regarding the first question we need to consider some significant differences between accusative and dative. In German, accusative (and nominative) are so-called

structural cases that are assigned in specific phrase-structure configurations. In contrast, dative is a lexical case that requires a specific lexical licenser such as a verb or a preposition that assigns dative case as a lexical property (see Haider 1993 for details). There are also semantic differences between structural and lexical cases. Nominative and accusative are compatible with a wide arrange of semantic roles, while the dative is not. The latter is typically associated with the semantic roles of Recipient or Beneficiary. When it comes to locations, the dative is used to indicate a stationary Location. As such, the dative is morpho-syntactically and semantically the marked option, while the two structural cases nominative and accusative are the unmarked option in German. Following Wurzel's (1989) suggestion that unmarked forms and constructions are preferred by speakers, I propose that the loss of dative marking on masculine determiners is also triggered by the trend towards unmarked forms. Thus, the loss of lexical case (the dative) can be attributed to the observation that morphological change moves towards naturalness, in this case towards unmarked structures such as structural (accusative) case marking.

The overlapping semantics of accusative and dative may also play an important role in this development. Recall that the prepositions in (1) govern two cases in the base dialects of TxG. When they are used in a sentence in which the prepositional object is in motion, they govern accusative case (cf. *Leg es auf den Boden* 'Put it on the floor'). When they are used to indicate a stationary location, they govern dative case (cf. *Es liegt auf dem Boden* 'It is lying on the floor'). The difference between using the dative and accusative is then simply a matter of indicating motion versus non-motion (see Langacker 1991: 402–403). At the same time, this semantic difference is also often expressed by the phonological form of the main verb, which exhibits a vowel alternation depending on whether motion is involved or not: *legen* ('to put down') vs. *liegen* ('to lie'), *setzen* ('to sit down') vs. *sitzen* ('to sit'), etc. This suggests that the information encoded by the case opposition between accusative and dative is not only overlapping, but also largely superfluous in these contexts. Given that languages have a tendency to avoid synonymous grammatical forms (see Goldberg 1995: 67) it should thus come as no surprise that the case distinctions disappear. In summary, I propose that the replacement of the dative by the accusative is triggered by at least three interlaced factors: similarity in phonological form, movement towards unmarked forms (from lexical to structural case), and similarity in semantic contexts.

I now turn to the second question posed above, namely the question of what factors triggered case syncretism among determiners marking feminine and neuter nouns (see Table 1 above). Clearly, similarity in phonological form does not appear to play a significant role in this development as the differences between accusative and dative are more pronounced in the feminine paradigm (cf. *die* (ACC) vs. *der* (DAT)) and the neuter paradigm (cf. *das* (ACC) vs. *dem* (DAT)) than in the masculine paradigm (cf. *den* (ACC) vs. *dem* (DAT)) discussed in the previous paragraphs. I suggest that the

loss of dative marking in the feminine and neuter paradigm was triggered by the trend to prefer unmarked over marked forms. Following the trend exhibited by the masculine paradigm, the feminine and neuter paradigms gave up lexical case marking for structural case marking. This development was in all likelihood supported by the fact that the forms of the nominative and accusative feminine and neuter determiners were already identical in form. Following Bybee's (1995) and Barðdal's (2007) proposal that high type frequency constructions are also semantically more open and less restricted, I thus cautiously suggest that the most frequently used cases (nominative and accusative) were generalized at the expense of the less frequently used dative. Since as yet we do not have a sufficiently large data pool available that could be used as empirical evidence to help us arrive at a definite answer, I would like to emphasize the tentative nature of my proposals outlined in this section.

6. Summary and conclusions

Based on a comparison of data from Gilbert (1972) and data collected by the Texas German Dialect Project over the past five years I have argued that there exists no uniform TxG dialect. Instead, TxG should be regarded as a convenient cover term for different new-world varieties of German spoken in Texas. With respect to case syncretism I have shown that dative case marking in TxG has significantly declined since Gilbert collected his data in the 1960s. I proposed that the trend towards a two-case system described by earlier studies such as Gilbert (1965, 1972) and Salmons (1983, 1994) already began during the first decades of German settlement in Texas, when speakers of different German dialects came into contact with each other. Applying Trudgill's (2004) model of new-dialect formation to the TxG data I then argued that the reduction in dative case is best explained in terms of internal factors, that is, leveling processes taking place in dialect contact situations. On this view, case loss in TxG is similar to case loss in other German *Sprachinseln* such as in Brazil and Russia. Finally, I suggested that the replacement of the dative by the accusative is triggered by at least three interlaced factors: similarity in phonological form, movement towards unmarked forms (from lexical to structural case), and similarity in semantic contexts.

Obviously, further research is required to investigate why some dative forms are lost earliest or retained longest (see Rosenberg 2003). Closely related to this issue is the question of external factors. While internal factors certainly are the strongest factors in triggering case syncretism, it may be impossible to rule out the secondary influence of local external factors. The goals of the present paper have been more modest: to demonstrate how real-time data can be used for an analysis of case loss in TxG, and to highlight the importance of considering syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and phonological factors for arriving at a unified account of case syncretism.

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