

Interested in Preserving Texas German?

**Do you or anyone you know (friends,
colleagues, church members, neighbors)
speak Texas German?**

If so, you may be able to help document this unique dialect before it dies out! The **Texas German Dialect Project (TGDP)** is an organization created to document and research representative Texas German speech communities in central Texas. The TGDP aims to preserve and provide information about the rich heritage of the Texas German dialect as it reflects the cultural and linguistic traditions of its residents.

For more information, contact Professor Hans C. Boas:

Professor Hans C. Boas
Department of Germanic Studies
EPS Schoch Hall 3.112
1 University Station C3300
University of Texas at Austin
Austin, TX 78712-0304

office phone 512 232 6358
cell phone 512 796 3046
fax 512 471 4025
email hcb@mail.utexas.edu

TGDP TEXAS GERMAN
DIALECT PROJECT

Dedicated to the preservation of Texas German

SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE TEXAS GERMAN DIALECT PROJECT (TGDP)

What kinds of questions do interviewers ask?

Interviewers try to ask questions that will produce casual, relaxed conversation. This usually involves questions about topics ranging from childhood games to current activities. Since our major focus is on what people are interested in as they talk, we focus on getting people to talk about their favorite topics.

Why do they need to tape record the interview?

The interviews need to be tape recorded because the interviewers are interested in many aspects of the community's language, not just in hearing one or two unusual pronunciations or a new word. We can't listen for all the different features we're interested in all at once -- and pay attention to what's being said -- without making a tape that we can go back and listen to as many times as we need to. One of our main goals is to paint as accurate a picture of the language as possible; tape and video recordings help us ensure that the descriptions we develop are based on real-life language use and not on vague impressions.

What exactly do the interviewers do with the interview?

We go through each interview in order to describe exactly how different structures pattern. We also compare different language items across different groups of speakers within a community. For example, we may look at how a particular type of sentence structure or even a single vowel is produced by older people, middle-aged people, and younger people to see how the language is changing over time. Some of the things that can be done with a tape recording are pretty amazing. For example, we can isolate a vowel in a particular word and enter it into a computerized program that measures exactly the physics of the sound waves that result in a particular production. The idea behind all the analysis is to describe honestly and exactly how Texas German works.

Who listens to the interview?

The only people who listen to the interviews are those doing language studies under Hans Boas' direction. Special permission must be granted by the interviewee if the interview is to be used by anyone else for any other purpose. Taped interviews are given coded labels and stored in a locked office to further protect the privacy of each interviewee. When parts of interviews are used for educational purposes such as academic conferences, class presentations, or for presentation over the Internet (for wider accessibility), the privacy of interviewees is guaranteed.

What good does the interview do for the community?

We are very concerned with sharing the knowledge that we get from communities with them. In fact, a critical part of our project involves working with communities to celebrate their language traditions. We do this in several ways. For example, we will write a popular account of the Texas German dialect that can be used in historical preservation efforts. We will share this with local schools, preservation societies, and museums that are concerned with preserving cultural heritage through language. Furthermore, we will put together an archival tape collection of selected descriptions, narratives, and oral histories for these institutions. And we hope eventually to set up a central location within Texas where these kinds of materials can be preserved for future generations.