

"Koiné Failure or Stable Variation: the distribution of sibilant pronunciation in Texas German"

Relatively recent advances in the ability to collect and categorize large amounts of linguistic data provide new opportunities for understanding the mechanisms of language variation and shift. Investigation into Texas German, an endangered but widespread linguistic enclave in the United States, is particularly useful for the investigation of **koinéization**, the process by which related dialects brought together into a new area mix together to create a new dialect. In particular, it allows us to address the question of whether the presence of variation can be taken as evidence against the convergence of a group of dialects into a koiné.

Boas (2009) concludes that modern-day varieties of Texas German show some features of new dialect formation, but the process is incomplete. The continued presence of intra- and interspeaker variation suggest that the koinéization process was halted halfway. However, we need to consider that a fully-fledged new dialect may exhibit stable variation. We can make claims about dialect convergence by investigating the factors associated with variation: if it is well-correlated with the geographic features of particular communities, this suggests that the process of dialect formation is incomplete. Dialect features, which ultimately stem from immigration patterns and donor dialects, will spread throughout the community during the process of koinéization.

The locus of investigation for this study is one of the phonological variants described by Gilbert (1972) and Boas (2009): sibilant production in *rst*-clusters (as /s/ or /ʃ/). My goal is two-fold: first, by aggregating the data from over 500 interviews I will give breadth to the overall picture of variant patterns in Texas German, which have previously focused on smaller communities. Secondly, I will investigate the factors that correlate with this variation, and in particular I look at the geographic distribution of variation to see whether data from a particular variant (in this case the pronunciation of sibilants in *rst*-clusters) can tell us about the dialect leveling process. Using statistical tools developed for the ArcGIS mapping software, I argue that the distribution of this variant provides evidence in favor of dialect convergence in Texas German.