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2 **On the variability of Texas German *wo*** 3 4 **as a complementizer**

5
6 **Abstract:** This paper investigates the multiple functions of *wo* in the complemen-
7 tizer position of relative and non-relative clauses in Texas German (= TxG), a criti-
8 cally endangered diaspora dialect of German, in order to determine whether its
9 distribution is unique or comparable to that of *wo* in Standard German. We fur-
10 ther attempt to determine whether the different functions of *wo* in the comple-
11 mentizer position are due to internal or external factors. Finally, we address the
12 question of whether the variability of *wo* is perhaps indicative of the imminent
13 demise of TxG.

14
15 **Keywords:** Texas German, complementizers, relative pronouns, dialect contact,
16 dialect leveling

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21 **1 Introduction**

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23
24 The status of relative clauses in German has long been a popular object of study.
25 Consider, for instance, Weise (1917), which surveys the use of such clauses in var-
26 ious German dialects, or the more recent paper by Fleischer (2004), which offers
27 a similar survey. One of the defining features of German relative clauses is the
28 variability of the elements in the complementizer position which function as rel-
29 ative pronouns. Besides the well-known pronouns *der*, *die*, and *das*, other words
30 such as *welcher*, *welche*, *welches*, *wer*, *wo*, and *was* may also appear in the com-
31 plementizer position of relative clauses, depending on factors such as regional
32

Should
one be a
Corres-
ponding
author?

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variation, register, and contextual background information (see, e.g., Bayer 1984, 1
 Auer 1998, Fleischer 2004, Weinert 2004, Eroms 2005). This paper investigates 2
 the multiple functions of *wo* in the complementizer position of relative and 3
 non-relative clauses in Texas German (= TxG), a critically endangered diaspora 4
 dialect of German (see Boas 2003). Consider, for example, cases in which *wo* 5
 occurs in the complementizer position of relative clauses, in which it fulfills the 6
 same function as that of Standard German relative pronouns *der*, *die* and *das*, as 7
 in the following examples. 8

- (1) a. *Un die Leut wo nah bei die Schul gewohnt* [1-38-17]¹ 10
 and the people REL near by the school lived 11
ham die konnten 12
 have they could 13
 ‘And the people who lived near the school, they could ...’ 14
- b. *Wir hamm Games gehabt, wo wir ham gespielt,* [1-64-17] 15
 we have games had REL we have played, 16
weist de 17
 know you 18
 ‘We had games that we played, you know.’ 19
- c. *Ich wünsch, dass ich mehr Leude kennen dääd,* [9-153-2-18] 20
 I wish that I more people know did, 21
wo Deutsch sprechen kenn 22
 REL German speak can 23
 ‘I wish that I knew more people who can speak German.’ 24

A relatively common assumption is that relative clauses introduced by *wo* were 26
 originally restricted to contexts in which the head noun would refer to (an ab- 27
 stract notion of) place and that it later spread to other environments such that it 28
 could relativize all types of head nouns (Brandner & Bräuning 2013: 5, Fleischer 29
 2004: 231). This reanalysis of *wo* as a head led to the present-day situation in 30
 which *wo* is used as a general complementizer. The original meaning of *wo* as a 31
 pronoun referring to a place is also found in present-day TxG, as the following 32
 examples illustrate. 33

¹ Examples come from the Texas German Dialect Archive (TGDA) (<http://www.tgdp.org/archive.php>). The transcriptions use modified German orthography. The combination of numbers follow- 37
 ing each example is a unique file identification number that allows users of the TGDA to find the 38
 examples in the transcripts, thereby allowing for access to the relevant contexts in which the 39
 examples occur (see Boas et al. 2010 for details). 40

- 1 (2) a. *Da sin storen in die Stadt, wo die Arbeiter* [3-129-1-20]
 2 there are stores in the city REL the workers
 3 *noch Deutsch sprechen zu dich*
 4 still German speak to you
 5 ‘There are stores in the city where the workers still speak German to you’
 6 b. *hat sie angefang bei ne Schul zu arbeiten wo* [9-122-5-2]
 7 has she begun at a school to work REL
 8 *Kinder bleiben nach die Schul*
 9 children stay after the school
 10 ‘She has started to work at a school where children stay after school.’

11

12 The use of Texas German *wo* in the complementizer position of relative clauses
 13 is similar to that of *wo* in several regional dialects of German (see Fleischer 2004
 14 for an overview of such dialects). However, *wo* also serves other functions in the
 15 complementizer position of non-relative clauses as in the following examples,
 16 where *wo* has a similar meaning as *als* (‘when’).

17

- 18 (3) a. *Die sind in die Stadt suh Samstahs wo meistens* [1-1-21]
 19 they are in the city s- Saturdays REL most
 20 *Leut in die Stadt war*
 21 people in the city was
 22 ‘They are in the city on Saturdays when most people were in the city.’
 23 b. *Ich konnt gut Dominoes spiele wo ich sechs,* [1-2-1-11]
 24 I could well dominoes play REL I six
 25 *sieben Jahr alt war*
 26 seven year old was
 27 ‘I could play dominoes well when I was six, seven years-old.’
 28 c. *Ich hab das Papier wo der Sam Houston der* [1-51-1-22]
 29 I have the paper REL that Sam Houston the
 30 *Governor war*
 31 governor was
 32 ‘I have the paper when Sam Houston was the governor.’

33

34 In addition to these uses of *wo* in complementizer position, there are other uses of
 35 *wo* whose exact status and functions are not entirely clear, as in the following
 36 examples.

37

38

39

40

- (4) a. *'Ne masse die olde Ranchers, wo ich for arbeit,* [1-54-1-8] 1
 a lot the old ranchers REL I for work 2
die sprechen noch Deutsch 3
 they speak still German 4
 'A lot of the old ranchers who I work for, they still speak German' 5
- b. *Was ist das Wort wo die punished 'em you* [1-1-1-6] 6
 what is that word REL they punished 'em you 7
know? 8
 know 9
 'What is that word for/where they punished 'em you know?' 10
- c. *da hamm se deutsche Musik gespielt, wo die* [1-29-1-23] 11
 there have they German music played, REL the 12
Leuten mit getanzt hamm 13
 people with danced have 14
 'They played German music there, where the people danced along' 15
- d. *die dedication is noch ein Wort, wo ich nicht* [3-129-1-21] 16
 the dedication is still a word REL I not 17
sicher bin darauf 18
 sure am about 19
 'Dedication is still a word I am not sure about' 20
 21

In this paper, we investigate the variability of *wo* as a complementizer in TxG to 22
 determine whether its distribution is unique or comparable to that of *wo* in Stan- 23
 dard German. We further attempt to determine whether the different functions of 24
wo in the complementizer position are due to internal or external factors. Finally, 25
 we address the question of whether the variability of *wo* is perhaps indicative of 26
 the imminent demise of TxG. 27

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides an overview of relative 28
 clauses in standard German, since the standard has traditionally been used as a 29
 point of comparison in the study of TxG (e.g. by Eikel 1949, Gilbert 1972, Guion 30
 1996, and Boas 2009, among others).² In section 3 we describe the socio-historical 31
 background of German in Texas, as well as previous research on TxG and the 32
 workflow of the Teas German Dialect Project. In section 4, we survey present day 33
 TxG data to determine how many of the types of relative clauses found in stan- 34
 dard German are also attested therein. Section 5 discusses the role of internal and 35
 external factors. The paper concludes with some suggestions for future research. 36

² Our use of standard German as a reference baseline here does not imply that we view TxG as 39
 some descendant of the standard language. 40

2 Relative clauses in standard German

Durrell (2011) contends that standard German has the following five types of relative clauses:³

- I. Relative clauses with *der/die/das*, e.g.: *Der Mann, der heute zu uns kommt* ‘the man who is coming to us today’
- II. Relative clauses with *welcher*, e.g. *die Gerüchte, welche über die wirtschaftliche Lage meines Vaters am Orte umgelaufen waren* (from THOMAS MANN’S 1922 novel, *Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull: Buch der Kindheit*) ‘the rumors which had been circulating in the town about my father’s financial situation’
- III. Relative clauses with *was*, e.g.: *Nichts/Etwas/Alles, was er sagte, war mir neu* ‘Nothing/Something/Everything (that) he said was new to me’
- IV. Relative clauses with *wer*, e.g.: *Wer viele Freunde hat, ist glücklich* ‘He who has many friends is happy’
- V. Relative clauses with *wo*, e.g.: *Die Stadt, wo ich wohne* ‘the town where I live’

Some of these types are more colloquial and/or more common than others. Relative clauses with *welcher*, for instance, are relatively rare – Durrell (2011: 94) remarks that this type “is restricted to formal written German, and even there it can be considered clumsy and is much less frequent than *der*.” As for relative clauses with *wo*, Durrell (2011: 98) writes:

The use of *wo* as a relative indicating time is common, especially in speech, and it is not uncommon in writing. However, many Germans do not accept it as standard and prefer other alternatives in formal, especially written registers.

Durrell (2011: 97) further notes that “the use of *wo* as a general relative pronoun (e.g.: *die Frau, wo jetzt kommt*) is a widespread non-standard regionalism” (italics and bold face as in original). Finally, Durrell (2011: 92) argues that “in English, we often drop a relative pronoun, especially in speech (*The book (which) I am just reading*), but in German it can **never** be left out in this way” (italics and bold face as in original). Thus, according to Durrell (2011), while the relative clauses given in (5) are both grammatically acceptable in English, the corresponding German version given in (6) is not.⁴

³ See also Fleischer (2004). All examples cited here are taken from Durrell (2011) or Fleischer (2004).

⁴ Fleischer (2004: 226) points out that at least one dialect of German allows zero relatives, namely the North Saxon dialect of Husby described by Bock (1933). We return to this issue below.

(5) *The book which I am just reading* 1
The book I am just reading 2

(6) **Das Buch ich gerade lese* 3
 the book I now read 4

3 Socio-historical background of Texas German

Having described the possible types of relative clauses in standard German, we now outline the socio-historical background of German in Texas (see also works like Boas 2009 and Boas et al. 2010, which cover this topic in more detail than we can here). The German language has a long history in Texas, as the first large wave of German settlers arrived in the early 1840s, and large-scale immigration continued for several decades. The majority of German-speaking immigrants settled in what later became known as the “German belt,” i.e. the area between Gillespie and Medina Counties in the west, Bell and Williamson Counties in the north, Bureson, Washington, Austin, and Fort Bend Counties in the east, and DeWitt, Karnes, and Wilson Counties in the south.

By 1860 there were nearly 20,000 German-born immigrants in Texas, mostly from northern and central Germany, and approximately 30,000 Texas Germans, including the American-born children of immigrants (Jordan 1975: 54). Although German immigration to Texas eventually slackened, the number of Texas Germans continued to increase: by 1940 there were approximately 159,000 Texas Germans (Kloss 1998). For the first several decades of German settlement in Texas, the Texas Germans were relatively isolated, and also strove to maintain the language of their ancestors: there were numerous German-language church services, newspapers and other periodicals, schools, and social organizations (ranging from choirs to shooting clubs). This situation eventually changed dramatically, starting with the passing of an English-only law for public schools in 1909 (Salmons 1983: 188). World War I, especially following America’s entry into the war in 1917 and the resulting increase in anti-German sentiment, dealt a major blow to TxG, and World War II reinforced this stigma. Institutional support for German was largely abandoned; German-language newspapers and periodicals began to publish in English or stopped publishing altogether; some German-language schools closed and German instruction was dropped in others; and German-speaking churches replaced German-language services with English-language ones (see Boas 2005).

After World War II, speakers of English moved in increasing numbers to the traditional German enclaves, and generally refused to assimilate linguistically to

1 their new neighbors by learning German, leading to the large-scale abandonment
2 of German in the public sphere. At the same time, younger Texas Germans left
3 the traditional German-speaking areas for employment or education, and began
4 to speak primarily English. Texas Germans also increasingly married partners,
5 who could not speak German, and English typically became the language of the
6 household in such linguistically mixed marriages; children raised in such house-
7 holds typically have at best a very limited knowledge of TxG. Finally, the develop-
8 ment of the American interstate highway system in the 1950s made the once-
9 isolated TxG communities much more accessible, making it easier for non-German
10 speakers to visit or live in previously monolingual German communities, and for
11 German-speakers to accept employment in more urban areas. Both of these pos-
12 sibilities led to the spread of English at the expense of German (see Boas 2005).

13 Despite these factors, in the 1960s there were still approximately 70,000
14 speakers of TxG. Today only an estimated 8,000–10,000 Texas Germans, primar-
15 ily in their sixties or older, still speak the language of their forbearers fluently
16 (Boas 2009), and English has become the primary language for most Texas Ger-
17 mans in all domains. With no signs of this shift to English being halted or re-
18 versed and fluent speakers almost exclusively above the age of 60, TxG is expected
19 to die out within the next 30 years (Boas 2009).⁵

20 Given this long history, it is unsurprising that there is a correspondingly long
21 history of research into TxG. Here we only note the pioneering work of Fred Eikel
22 (e.g. Eikel 1954), which is based on data collected in the 1930s and 1940s; and
23 Glenn Gilbert, whose fieldwork in the 1960s led to the publication of the massive
24 *Linguistic atlas of Texas German* (Gilbert 1972). The studies of Eikel and Gilbert
25 both rely on the elicitation method by which linguistic fieldworkers read English
26 words, phrases, or sentences to speakers of Texas German, who would then trans-
27 late them into TxG. The recordings of these translations were then used for lin-
28 guistic description and analysis.

29 In addition to more recent smaller-scale studies like Salmons (1983) and
30 Guion (1996), a large-scale study, the *Texas German Dialect Project* (= TGDP), di-
31 rected by Hans C. Boas, has been underway since 2001, and has resulted in a
32 number of publications (e.g. Boas 2009, Boas et al. 2010, Boas & Pierce 2011; and
33 Roesch 2012). TGDP members have re-sampled Eikel's (1954) and Gilbert's (1972)
34 word and sentence lists, resulting in a rich pool of real-time data, which facili-
35 tates comparison.⁶ Moreover, members of the TGDP have conducted open-ended
36 sociolinguistic interviews with more than 440 speakers of TxG (all of whom are

37

38 ⁵ See Nicolini (2004) for a considerably more optimistic outlook on the possible fate of TxG.

39 ⁶ In fact, one TxG speaker from New Braunfels who was recorded for the TGDP in 2004 was also
40 recorded by Fred Eikel in the late 1930s or early 1940s.

60 years or older). The recorded interviews are transcribed and translated, and subsequently uploaded, together with the relevant metadata for each speaker and interview, to the TGDA, where they can be accessed over the internet at [http://www.tgdp.org] (see Boas et al. 2010). The transcripts of the open-ended sociolinguistic interviews can be searched on-line with the help of a concordance tool, which allows users to search for particular keywords and their relevant contexts. Using data from earlier studies as well as from the TGDA, we now turn to the distribution of relative clauses in present-day TxG to determine whether this new world variety exhibits a similar distribution of relative pronouns as Standard German.

4 The distribution of relative clauses in present-day Texas German

4.1 Open-ended sociolinguistic interviews

Following Durrell's classification of relative clauses in Standard German, we first turn to relative clauses with *der*, *die*, and *das* as relative pronouns. The following examples illustrate that these are used in present-day TxG. The following examples are from the transcripts of the open-ended sociolinguistic interviews in the TGDA.

- (7) a. *Of course wenn der Schulleider das ausgefunden* [1-11-8]
of course when the teacher that found out
hat, der hat nich aufgegeben
has REL has not given up
'Of course when teacher found that out, he did not give up'
- b. *Und der pickup, der hat nich so gut* [1-62-1-21]
and the pickup REL has not so good
ausgesehen
looked
'And the pickup, it did not look so good.'
- c. *Mein Daddy, der hat nich geglaubt an Schule viel* [1-85-1-5]
my daddy REL has not believed on school much
'My daddy, he did not believe much in school'

- 1 (8) a. *Und den meine Tochter, die war auch in die* [1-121-10]
 2 and then my daughter REL was also in the
 3 *Band*
 4 band
 5 ‘And then my daughter, she was also in the band’
- 6 b. *Die anderen, die sprechen immer Englisch* [1-62-1-3]
 7 the others REL speak always English
 8 ‘The others, they always speak English.’
- 9 c. *Aber meine Grossmutter, die ist auf einem Schiff* [1-85-1-3]
 10 but my grandmother REL is on a ship
 11 *geboren*
 12 born
 13 ‘But my grandmother, she was born on a ship’
 14
- 15 (9) a. *un hat das grosses Haus, das steht jetzt auf* [1-169-2-4]
 16 and has the big house REL stands now on
 17 *die conservation plaza*
 18 the conservation plaza
 19 ‘... and has the big house that stands now on the conservation plaza.’
- 20 b. *Alsmal find man Deutsche, das rieberkommt ...* [1-121-1-14]
 21 always finds one Germans REL come over
 22 ‘One always finds Germans who come over ...’
- 23 c. *Das ist ein Gram, das tust du in Wasser rin* [1-118-1-22]
 24 that is a gram, REL put you in water therein
 25 ‘That is a gram that you put water in.’
 26

27 In contrast to Standard German, TxG does not employ the relative pronouns
 28 *welche*, *welcher*, or *welches*. We see this as a register issue: as noted above, these
 29 relative pronouns are used more frequently in more formal registers and in
 30 written German (Weinert 2004, Fleischer 2004). Since present-day TxG is not used
 31 in formal situations or for writing, the absence of *welche*, *welcher*, and *welches* as
 32 relative pronouns in our data is entirely unsurprising.

33 Next, consider Durrell’s third category of relative pronouns, namely *was*,
 34 which is well attested in our TxG data. Note, however, that the usage of *was* as
 35 a relative pronoun in TxG differs sharply from its use as a relative pronoun in
 36 the standard language. That is, in standard German *was* is only used as a relative
 37 pronoun (1) following neuter indefinites like *alles*, *einiges*, and *weniges*, among
 38 others; (2) “after a neuter adjective used as a noun referring to something indefi-
 39 nite” (Durrell 2011: 95), as in sentences like *Das Beste, was man machen kann* ‘the
 40 best [thing] that one can do’; (3) “after the indefinite demonstrative *das*” (Durrell

2011: 95); and (4) when used to refer back to a whole clause. Its use in TxG is much broader, as the sentences below reveal. In fact, these TxG sentences contain none of the contexts in which *was* would be used as a relative pronoun in standard German. We suspect that this broadened use of *was* as a relative pronoun in TxG results from the speakers' fading fluency in TxG – for some TxG speakers, then, *was* is quite possibly the default relative pronoun.

- (10) a. *Er hat un Onkel, was da gewohnt hat* [1-8-112]
 he has a uncle REL there lived has
 'He has an uncle who lived there.'
- b. *Das ist die einste Farm, was noch iebrig ist* [1-27-1-22]
 that is the only farm REL still remaining is
 'That is the only farm that is remaining.'
- c. *Mir ham die Gebäude, was danebe war ...* [1-54-1-7]
 we have the buildings REL next to was
 'We have the buildings, that were next to ...'

Another type of relative pronoun found in TxG is *wer*, as illustrated by the following examples.

- (11) a. *Un viele denken jeder wer 'n Opa ist* [1-62-1-19]
 and many think everyone REL a grandpa is
kann Deutsch sprechen
 can German speak
 'And many think everyone who is a grandpa can speak German.'
- b. *aber Mittachszeit da hat die Lehrerin wer das* [1-80-1-5]
 but midday there has the teacher REL that
wollt ham ...
 wanted have
 '... but at midday the teacher has those that wanted to have that ...'
- c. *dieser Quana Parker, wer Chef war von die* [1-96-1-12]
 this Quana Parker REL chief was of the
Comanchen ...
 Comanches
 '... this Quana Parker who was chief of the Comanches ...'

We attribute the use of *wer* as a relative pronoun in these contexts to contact with English – *who* is a well-established relative pronoun in English, and sentences like (11c) are best translated into English using *who*: 'this Quana Parker, who was chief of the Comanches'.

1 Finally, we turn to Durrell's fifth category of relative clause, that headed by
2 *wo*, which is also well attested in our data, as the following sentences show.

3
4 (12) a. *Die Ersten wo hier kamn von Deutschland* [1-29-1-1]
5 the first ones REL here came from Germany
6 *nach Neu Braunfels*
7 to New Braunfels
8 'The first ones who came here from Germany to New Braunfels ...'

9 b. *Un ich bin die einsiste, wo noch da is* [1-40-1-1]
10 and I am the only one REL still here is
11 *von die [family]*
12 from the family
13 'And I am the only one who is still here from the family.'

14 c. *Oh da waren ne' Masse wo bloss English* [1-51-1-23]
15 oh there were a lot REL only English
16 *gesprochen haben*
17 spoken have
18 'Oh there were a lot who only spoke English.'

19 d. *Sieben, acht, vielleicht zehn Kieh gehabt wo ma* [1-94-1-10]
20 seven eight maybe ten cows had REL we
21 *gemolgen ham*
22 milked have
23 'Had seven, eight, maybe ten cows that we milked.'

24
25 Interestingly, in present-day TxG *wo* is not only restricted to a relative pronoun
26 function in complementizer position, as there are in fact other uses, too, that
27 go beyond Durrell's categorization of relative clauses/complementizers. The re-
28 mainder of this section therefore explores other uses of *wo* in TxG.

29 In some cases, *wo* can be used where the standard language would require
30 the use of a *wo*-compound, as in the following example:

31
32 (13) *In Marion, wo ma von gesprochen haben, die* [1-97-1-18]
33 in Marion REL we of spoken have REL
34 *haben trockene Wurscht*
35 have dried sausage
36 'In Marion, that we spoke about, they have dried sausage.'

37
38 In this particular example, the speaker has the pieces necessary for the same
39 construction as in standard German (*wo* and *von*), but does not put them to-
40 gether, separating them with the third person plural pronoun *ma*. This example

also presumably results from contact with English, as *In Marion, [the place]* 1
where we spoke of; although it could also indicate that *wo* is the default rela- 2
 tive pronoun for some speakers. In other cases, *wo* is used where the stan- 3
 dard language would require the use of a dative relative pronoun, including the 4
 following: 5

- (14) a. *Die zehn Kinder, wo mein Vater ein von war* [1-80-1-2] 7
 the ten children REL my father one of was 8
 ‘The ten children, of whom my father was the first.’ 9
- b. *Die Leut – wo mir von gekauft hamm hier* [1-29-1-11] 10
 the people REL we of bought have here 11
 – *die heißen* 12
 they called ...’ 13
 ‘The people of those who bought here, they are called ...’ 14

A similar result is found in sentences like the following: 16

- (15) *Hier in die Stadt hab ich drei Person wo* [1-61-1-5] 18
 here in the town have I uh three people REL 19
ich mitspielen dun 20
 I with-play do⁷ 21
 ‘Here in town I have three people with whom I play.’ 22

And a still similar result occurs in sentences like the following: 24

- (16) *Ich hab ungefähr sechshundert Leut wo ich die* [9-155-2-8] 26
 I have about six hundred people REL I the 27
Post jeden Dag die Post bring 28
 mail every day the mail bring 29
 ‘I have about six-hundred people to whom I bring the mail every day.’ 30

In addition, *wo* can be used as a time expression, as in the following examples: 32

7 Note also the use of *tun* as an auxiliary verb here, which is well attested in numerous German 38
 dialects, but is not grammatical in the standard language (cf. Langer 2001 on the history of this 39
 construction). 40

- 1 (17) a. *Wo ich jung war, merste die Leute die* [1-1-32-a.eaf]
 2 when I young was most the people the
 3 *Stadt habn*
 4 town have
 5 ‘When I was young, most of the people have the city ...’
 6 b. *Die Mama hats allsmal nicht leicht gehabt,* [1-56-1-8-a.eaf]
 7 the mother has always not easy had
 8 *wo sie allein zu Haus war*
 9 REL she alone at home was
 10 ‘Mama did not have everything easy, when she was home alone ...’
 11

12 Finally, there are some examples where it is not entirely clear how the speakers
 13 are using *wo*, including the following:
 14

- 15
 16 (18) a. *Ich kann mich des nich erinnern von wo* [1-1-1-18]
 17 I can myself of this not remember from REL
 18 *ich jinger war*
 19 I younger was
 20 ‘I cannot remember this from when I was younger.’
 21 b. *Ne masse die olde Ranchers, wo ich for arbeit,* [1-54-1-8]
 22 a lot the old ranchers REL I for work
 23 *die sprechen noch Deutsch.*
 24 they speak still German
 25 ‘A lot of the old ranchers who I work for, they still speak German.’
 26 c. *Was ist das Wort wo die punished ,em you* [1-1-1-6]
 27 what is that word REL they punished ‘em you
 28 *know?*
 29 know
 30 ‘What is that word for/where they punished ‘em you know?’
 31 d. *da hamm se deutsche Musik gespielt, wo* [1-29-1-23]
 32 there have they German music played, REL
 33 *die Leuten mit getanzt hamm*
 34 the people with danced have
 35 ‘They played German music there, where the people danced along.’
 36 e. *die [dedication] is noch ein Wort, wo ich* [3-129-1-21]
 37 the dedication is still a word REL I
 38 *nicht sicher bin darauf*
 39 not sure am about
 40 ‘Dedication is still a word I am not sure about.’

The bottom line here is that there is greater variability of the functions and meanings of *wo* in complementizer position in TxG than in the standard language.

4.2 Real-time data and variability in complementizer position

In fact, we find this greater variability of relative pronouns in complementizer positions in TxG in general, not only with *wo*. A comparison of the TxG data reported in Gilbert (1972) with present-day TGDP data reveals this. Gilbert's (1972) Atlas contains two sentences that would require the use of relative clauses in standard German, as follows:

(19) *There's a man who I want to see* [Gilbert sentence #37]
Standard German: *Da ist der Mann, den ich sehen will*

(20) *There are the children who I gave the candy to* [Gilbert sentence #38]
Standard German: *Dort sind die Kinder, denen ich die Bonbons gab*

The following discussion focuses on the distribution of relative pronouns in Gilbert's (1972) data for Gillespie County and Comal County. We concentrate on these counties because they have been the focus of several previous studies such as Clardy (1954), Eikel (1949, 1954, 1966, 1967), Gilbert (1963, 1965), Moore (1979), Salmons (1983), Guion (1996), and Boas (2009). Table 1 summarizes the distribution of relative pronouns in Gillespie County reported by Gilbert (1972) for his sentence #37.

Table 1 shows a varied distribution of relative pronouns among Gilbert's 24 Gillespie County speakers. Whereas in Standard German one would expect the relative pronoun *den*, and this is indeed the most common response, with 58% of the Gillespie County TxG speakers using it; Gilbert's speakers also use *wo* (25%),

Table 1: Distribution of relative pronouns in Gillespie County (Gilbert sentence #37). Total number of speakers: 24

Relative Pronoun	Total
<i>wem</i>	2 (9%)
<i>den</i>	14 (58%)
<i>was</i>	1 (4%)
<i>wo</i>	6 (25%)
<i>das</i>	1 (4%)

1 **Table 2:** Distribution of relative pronouns in Comal County (Gilbert sentence #37). Total number
2 of speakers: 15

4 Relative Pronoun	Total
5 <i>den</i>	9 (60%)
6 <i>was</i>	3 (20%)
7 <i>wo</i>	3 (20%)

10 **Table 3:** Distribution of relative pronouns in Gillespie County (Gilbert sentence #38). Total
11 number of speakers: 25

13 Relative Pronoun	Total
14 <i>den</i>	4 (16%)
15 <i>was</i>	2 (8%)
16 <i>wo</i>	12 (48%)
17 \emptyset	1 (4%)
18 <i>die</i>	3 (12%)
19 <i>wem</i>	1 (4%)
20 <i>das</i>	2 (8%)

23 *wem* (8%), *was* (4%) and *das* (4%) as relative pronouns. Next, compare Gilbert's
24 data for sentence #37 in Comal County in Table 2.

25 The data in Table 2 show that Comal County TxG speakers, similarly to the
26 Gillespie County speakers, also use the standard relative pronoun *den* in the ma-
27 jority of cases (60%). The Comal County TxG speakers also employ *was* (20%) and
28 *wo* (20%) as relative pronouns, but overall they use comparatively fewer other
29 relative pronouns in comparison with the Gillespie County speakers, who also
30 use *das* and *wem*.

31 Next, consider Gilbert's sentence #38. Table 3 shows that none of the 25
32 Gillespie County speakers use the Standard German relative pronoun *denen*. In-
33 stead, we find that the majority of speakers use *wo* (48%), followed by *den* (16%),
34 *die* (12%), *das* (8%), *was* (8%), *wem* (4%), and a zero pronoun (4%). Comparing
35 the data in Table 3 with those in Table 1 shows that Gilbert's Gillespie County TxG
36 speakers exhibit a significantly higher variation of relative pronouns in contexts
37 in which Standard German would use *denen*, as opposed to those contexts in
38 which Standard German would use *den*.

39 We now turn to the data from Gilbert's 15 TxG speakers from Comal County.
40 As Table 4 illustrates, there exists considerably less variation in pronoun use

Table 4: Distribution of relative pronouns in Comal County (Gilbert sentence #38). Total number of speakers: 15

Relative Pronoun	Total
<i>den</i>	2 (13%)
<i>wo</i>	9 (60%)
<i>was</i>	1 (7%)
<i>die</i>	2 (13%)
<i>wo/die</i>	1 (7%)

Table 5: Distribution of relative pronouns in Gillespie County. TGDA data. (Gilbert sentence #37). Total number of speakers: 30

Relative Pronoun	Informant	Total
<i>“whom”</i>	126	1 (3%)
<i>was</i>	149, 177, 180, 182, 187, 210, 214, 305, 306, 366, 368, 369, 371	13 (44%)
<i>den</i>	176, 177, 190, 216	4 (13%)
<i>wo</i>	56, 185, 199, 216, 365, 370	6 (20%)
\emptyset	181, 186, 212	3 (10%)
<i>das</i>	179, 226	2 (7%)
<i>wie</i>	367	1 (3%)

among his Comal County speakers, who use five variants, as opposed to those from Gillespie County, who use a total of seven variants.

At the same time, a cautionary note is required: Gilbert (1972) reports on data from 24/25 speakers in Gillespie County, as opposed to 15 speakers in Comal County. Given this discrepancy in sample size, we cannot rule out the possibility that Comal County TxG might have had as much variation in relative pronoun use as Gillespie County TxG, but that the different sizes in participant groups obscure this fact. We do not see this as a serious issue, but readers should be aware of it.

Next, consider more modern data collected since 2001 and available in the TGDA. Table 5 summarizes the use of relative pronouns in Gilbert sentence #37 for present-day speakers of TxG in Gillespie County.

Here we see that variability in relative pronoun use has increased considerably. While Gilbert (1972) reported only five variants (*wem*, *den*, *was*, *wo*, and *das*), the TGDA data show seven variants (including the English *whom*). Use of *was* has also increased considerably: only one of Gilbert’s (1972) speakers used it, but 13 of the TGDA speakers do. Use of the standard relative pronoun *den* has decreased

1 **Table 6:** Distribution of relative pronouns in Comal County. TGDA data. (Gilbert sentence #37).

2 Total number of speakers: 56

4	Relative Pronoun	Inf.	Total
5	<i>was</i>	24, 28, 34, 62, 75, 80, 83, 84, 87, 138, 139, 172	13 (23%)
6	<i>wo</i>	25, 29, 33, 78, 79, 153, 159, 171, 205	9 (16%)
7	<i>den</i>	26, 85, 96, 167, 168	5 (9%)
8	<i>das</i>	27, 60, 82, 160, 162, 163, 169, 188, 189, 201, 204	12 (21%)
9	<i>der</i>	30, 31	2 (3%)
10	<i>wer</i>	32	1 (2%)
11	<i>wo+der</i>	77	1 (2%)
12	\emptyset	76, 97, 150, 156, 157, 173, 206, 207	8 (14%)
13	<i>wen</i>	155	1 (2%)
14	<i>did not know</i>	165	1 (2%)
15	<i>wo/was</i>	200	1 (2%)
16	<i>dey</i>	204	1 (2%)
17	<i>mit den</i>	170	1 (2%)

18
19 considerably (from 14 speakers in Gilbert's data to 4 speakers in the TGDA data).
20 The use of *wo* as a relative pronoun has remained stable; note also the use of the
21 zero relative pronoun in the TGDA data, which does not appear in the Gilbert
22 (1972) data. This is presumably due to contact with English. Table 6 summarizes
23 the use of relative pronouns in Gilbert sentence #37 for present-day speakers of
24 TxG in Comal County.

25 Here we find a tremendous increase in variability – the 30 TGDA speakers use
26 13 different variants (including *dey* [presumably a 'Germanized' version of En-
27 glish *they*] and 'I don't know'). Moreover, use of the standard relative pronoun
28 *den* has decreased sharply – from 60% of Gilbert's (1972) informants to 9% of the
29 TGDA informants. Use of *was* has also increased somewhat (from 20% to 23%),
30 and TGDA speakers also use *das* and the zero relative pronoun in this sentence,
31 neither of which is reported in Gilbert's (1972) data. Use of *wo* remains relatively
32 stable (20% in Gilbert's data as opposed to 16% in the TGDA data).

33 Table 7 summarizes the distribution of relative pronouns in Gillespie County
34 for Gilbert sentence #38 found in the TGDA data.

35 Here again we find an increase in variability in the TGDA data. While none
36 of Gilbert's (1972) informants used the standard German relative pronoun *denen*,
37 4 of his informants used a dative pronoun *den*. In contrast, none of the TGDA in-
38 formants use a dative relative pronoun here. Instead, use of *was* has increased
39 considerably (from 8% to 23%), while the use of *wo* remains relatively stable
40 (48% in the Gilbert data vs. 54% in the TGDA data).

Table 7: Distribution of relative pronouns in Gillespie County. TGDA data. (Gilbert sentence #38). Total number of speakers: 30

Relative Pronoun	Informant	Total
∅	126, 176	2 (7%)
wo	56, 177, 178, 180, 181, 182, 185, 186, 187, 210, 211, 214, 224, 226, 365, 370	16 (54%)
was	149, 183, 306, 366, 367, 369, 371	7 (23%)
das	179, 212	2 (7%)
die	216	1 (3%)
as	305	1 (3%)
was/das/wo	368	1 (3%)

Table 8: Distribution of relative pronouns in Comal County. TGDA data. (Gilbert sentence #38). Total number of speakers: 54.

Relative Pronoun	Infor.	Total
was	24, 28, 30, 33, 34, 51, 87, 139, 156, 172, 200	11 (20%)
wo	25, 26, 29, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 83, 84, 85, 138, 153, 155, 159, 167, 171, 174, 205	19 (35%)
den	27	1 (2%)
zu wem	32	1 (2%)
das	35, 60, 97, 157, 160, 162, 163, 169, 188, 201, 245	11 (20%)
wem	75, 168	2 (4%)
die	96, 204	2 (4%)
dem	165	1 (2%)
wo/wem	170	1 (2%)
∅	150, 173, 207	3 (5%)
die/das	189	1 (2%)
wer	82	1 (2%)

In the TGDA Comal County data, variability has increased even more: where Gilbert (1972) reported five possible variants, the TGDA data show twelve possible variants. The use of *was* has increased considerably (from 6.67% in Gilbert 1972 to 20% in the TGDA data); *das*, which is not reported as a possible variant in Gilbert (1972) is used by 20% of the TGDA informants. The use of *wo* has actually decreased considerably (from 60% in the Gilbert data to 35% in the TGDA data). We suspect that this change reflects the breakdown of the TxG relative pronoun system, such that *wo* was the default dative relative pronoun in the Gilbert (1972) data, but that now there is no real default dative relative pronoun for Comal County TxG speakers, hence the increased variability.

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citation
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Table 8?

1 As noted above, *wo* fulfills a greater range of functions in complementizer
 2 positions in present-day TxG. Moreover, this reflects a more general tendency in
 3 TxG, as shown by a comparison of Gilbert (1972) with comparable TGDA data. This
 4 leaves us with the following bottom line: there is more variability in present-day
 5 TxG. In the following section, we address some possible reasons for this increased
 6 variability.

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8

9 **5 The influence of internal and external factors**

10

11 We view this increased variability as the result of three main factors: (1) the origi-
 12 nal donor dialects of TxG, (2) contact with English, and (3) the changing lin-
 13 guistics and social contexts of TxG. To the first such factor: a number of German
 14 dialects have relative pronoun/complementizer systems that differ starkly from
 15 that of the standard language – see, e.g. Saxon (Albrecht 1881), East Franconian
 16 (Schübel 1955), and Low German (Meyer & Bichel 1983). For instance, *wo* is the
 17 default relative pronoun in the dialect of Oberrotweil (Low Alemannic), as noted
 18 by Fleischer (2004: 224), cf. also (Binz 1888). The implications of this observa-
 19 tion for the relative clause/complementizer system of present-day TxG are clear:
 20 if the dialects of German out of which TxG were formed had relative pronoun/
 21 complementizer systems with non-standard relative pronouns as the default,
 22 then there would be no reason for TxG to have a relative pronoun/complementizer
 23 system which closely resembles that of standard German.⁸

24 This factor must be treated with some caution, however. First, as Boas (2009)
 25 forcefully notes, it is extremely difficult to identify the exact donor dialects of
 26 TxG, as the necessary demographic information is simply not available (although
 27 passenger lists from ships and other materials do provide some pointers in this
 28 direction). Second, even if the original donor dialects are the cause of some of the
 29 variability in relative pronouns/complementizers reported in Gilbert (1972), this
 30 factor alone cannot account for the considerable variability in relative pronouns/
 31 complementizers attested in the present-day TGDA data.

32 This leads us to the second factor, namely contact with English. The precise
 33 impact of contact with English on TxG remains debatable. Although the influence
 34 of English on some areas of TxG is clear – e.g. in the lexicon, as there are a number
 35 of English loanwords in TxG and their number has increased considerably re-
 36 cently (cf. Boas & Pierce 2011) – its influence on other areas, like the phonology

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38 ⁸ A similar point is made by Gilbert (1972: 1 fn. 5), who writes that “[m]any, though not all, of the
 39 features listed as characteristic of Texas German may be recognized as belonging to certain non-
 40 standard varieties of German that are or were spoken in the Old World.”

and morpho-syntax, is not as clear-cut. For instance, while Eikel (1949) attributes 1
 case changes in TxG to contact with English, Boas (2009) argues instead in favor 2
 of an account that considers both language-internal factors like the process of 3
 new dialect formation (Trudgill 2004) and language-external factors like contact 4
 with English. 5

In the case of the relative pronoun/complementizer system, we see some 6
 changes as definitely being the result of influence from English, specifically the 7
 occasional use of a zero relative pronoun. Fleischer (2004: 226) points out that at 8
 least one dialect of German allows zero relatives, namely the North Saxon dialect 9
 of Husby described by Bock (1933), as in the following example (Fleischer 2004: 10
 226, cf. Bock 1933: 104): 11

- (21) *de Rügen, wi harren vörgestern* 13
 the rain we had day before yesterday 14
 ‘the rain we had the day before yesterday’ 15

Fleischer (2004) links the presence of zero relatives in this dialect to contact with 17
 Danish, but also suggests that since “zero relatives are attested for older stages of 18
 German ... it is thus also possible that we are dealing with an old structure pre- 19
 served only in the north-west of the German-speaking area” (Fleischer 2004: 239, 20
 fn. 8). Given that there is no evidence of specifically North Saxon dialect features 21
 elsewhere in TxG, and that zero relatives are common in English, we see it as im- 22
 possible that TxG has preserved “an old structure” in this situation and therefore 23
 attribute these zero relatives to language contact with English. 24

Finally, we point to a final casual factor, specifically the changing linguistic 25
 and social contexts of TxG. When Gilbert collected his data in the 1960s, TxG was 26
 largely in a state of language maintenance, even though its position in this regard 27
 was much weaker than it had been twenty years before. (In the 1940s there were 28
 over 150,000 speakers of TxG, as compared to approximately 70,000 speakers in 29
 the 1960s). By now, however, TxG is in a state of language shift; it is critically en- 30
 dangered and in fact dying (cf. Boas 2009). 31

Nettle & Romaine (2000: 53) point out that gradual language death of the 32
 type TxG is undergoing can have profound linguistic consequences: “[w]hen a 33
 dying language declines gradually over a period of generations, it ... is not used 34
 for all the functions and purposes it was previously. Like a limb not used, it atro- 35
 phies.”⁹ In the specific case of TxG, as its linguistic and social contexts changed, 36
 TxG speakers simply stopped using the language in various situations, meaning 37

⁹ See also Trudgill (2011) on the linguistic consequences of language death. 40

1 that their fluency declined substantially.¹⁰ As their fluency declined, the variabil-
 2 ity of the structures of TxG may have increased considerably because of the ab-
 3 sence of everyday face to face interaction.

4
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6 Conclusions

7

8 In this paper we examined the distribution of relative pronouns in Texas German.
 9 More specifically, we compared the relative pronoun system of TxG with that
 10 of Standard German, and we argued that present-day TxG exhibits a consider-
 11 ably greater variability in pronoun use, especially when it comes to the relative
 12 pronoun *wo*. A comparison of data from earlier studies on TxG with data from
 13 present-day TxG suggests that there has been an increase in variability in the use
 14 and function of pronouns in TxG, specifically *wo*. Finally, we attributed these de-
 15 velopments to a mix of three factors: contact with English, variability in the pro-
 16 noun system of the donor dialects of TxG (together with other internal factors),
 17 and the on-going decline of TxG, which leads to fewer speakers and a breakdown
 18 of the structure of TxG.

19

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 21 ing the data from the Texas German Dialect Archive.

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35 **10** At times, this atrophy has some surprising results; for example, one TxG speaker from Doss
 36 (about 10 miles from New Braunfels) interviewed by Boas seemed to understand all of Boas'
 37 questions, but struggled to respond to them, until Boas happened to ask the informant about an
 38 upcoming hunting trip. It turned out that the informant could speak very fluently and knowl-
 39 edgeably about hunting in TxG, as he had often gone hunting with family members when he was
 40 younger and had always spoken TxG on those trips. This informant therefore shows considerable
 atrophy of his TxG abilities, with the exception of the one area where he seems to have used TxG
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