

## A Quantitative Analysis of Gender Assignment in Texas German Loanwords

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A number of studies have investigated the rules for gender assignment in German for both standard and dialectal varieties, including speech islands in North America. Contrary to early beliefs that gender assignment is arbitrary (e.g. Bloomfield 1933), Köpcke (1982) showed the existence of systematic rules, while Onysko confirmed that English loanwords follow the same rules for gender assignment. Earlier research on English loanwords in American German (AmG) showed a feminine tendency for gender assignment (Clausing 1986). However, the first robust quantitative statistical analysis for AmG refuted this: Rather than the feminine tendency claimed for Pennsylvania German (PG) by previous studies (e.g. Reed 1942), Page's study (2011) demonstrated a statistically significant tendency for masculine nouns both in native and loan vocabulary in comparison to Standard German (StG). Studies on gender in Texas German (TxG) have claimed both feminine (Vanderheijden 2007) and neuter tendencies (Boas 2009). A quantitative analysis following Page (2011), which could support or refute existing claims, remains a desideratum.

The current study applies Page's statistical methodology to TxG, utilizing a  $\chi^2$  goodness-of-fit test to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference for gender assignment in a three-way comparison: 1) native StG vocabulary to native AmG vocabulary; 2) native StG vocabulary to AmG English loanwords; 3) native AmG vocabulary to English loanwords in AmG. Additionally, we compare our results to Page's to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between these AmG varieties.

For our analysis, we draw on the open-ended interviews of a representative number of speakers from the archive of the Texas German Dialect Project (TGDP). The gender assigned to both the native TxG nouns and loanwords therein will serve as our corpus. This replicates the role of the dictionary which served as a dataset for Page's analysis as such does not exist for TxG. For the comparandum data set of StG, we utilize the Celex database following Page's methodology.

Because of both the nature of StG grammar and the reduction of determiners and adjective endings in TxG, it is often challenging to differentiate between neuter and masculine gender, illustrated in the following examples:

*'n farmhouse*

*auf'm pickup*

the [m/n] farmhouse

on the [m/n] pickup

Due to this reduction, a cursory analysis appears to support the general feminine tendency. However, our preliminary results support a similar finding as Page's for PG: there is no statistically significant difference in gender assignment for loanwords in comparison to native vocabulary. While there is a substantial number of feminine loanwords whose gender cannot be explained by its German equivalent, such as TxG *die fence* vs. StG *der Zaun*, there are also counterexamples such as *der blanket* vs. StG *die Decke*. We therefore hypothesize no feminine tendency for gender of TxG loanwords.

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