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Fred Eikel and the Study of Texas German¹

There is a long history of the study of Texas German, on topics ranging from its origins and development to the numerous fascinating linguistic phenomena it exhibits.² While the number of Texas German speakers has declined precipitously, from a high of around 150,000 in 1940 to about 3,000-5,000 today, it remains a viable object of study and has been the subject of numerous recent and forthcoming works, e.g., Boas 2021, Blevins 2022, and Warmuth 2022, among others). The first scholar to investigate Texas German extensively, specifically New Braunfels German (hereafter NBG), was Fred Eikel, Jr. (1909-67), himself a native speaker of NBG (Eikel 1954: iv).³ Eikel's most important contribution to scholarship on Texas German (and to scholarship in general) is his 1954 study, "The New Braunfels German Dialect," which documents NBG as spoken in the early 1950s and was intended to be his doctoral dissertation at Johns Hopkins University. Although it was never published in book form, a number of its findings were eventually published in several shorter articles, e.g., Eikel (1966a, 1966b), and it remains a foundational work on Texas German.⁴ This paper therefore assesses Eikel's place in the history of linguistics. We begin with a brief biographical sketch of Eikel, then discuss his publications on Texas German, and conclude with an assessment of his place in the history of the field.

Fred Eikel, Jr., was born in New Braunfels in 1909.⁵ He entered the University of Texas in 1927 and completed a BA there in 1933 and an MA there in 1935. There is no clear indication of his major on his UT transcripts, although we assume he majored in German. In addition, he studied at UT from 1940-42 and for brief periods at Columbia University (summers of 1938 and 1939), the University of Oklahoma (part-time from 1947-49 and

full time in the summer of 1948), and the University of North Carolina (at the LSA Institute in Summer 1941). Eikel entered Johns Hopkins University in 1950 to work on a Ph.D. in German, and eventually completed Eikel (1954). While he did defend this work as a dissertation twice (in 1954 and in 1960), both defenses were unsuccessful and he eventually left Johns Hopkins without a doctorate, but with a considerable amount of bitterness.

Eikel's teaching record was similarly checkered. When he entered Johns Hopkins, he had taught German and English on various levels at a number of institutions, as follows:

- (1) Fred Eikel's teaching appointments up to 1954
- 1931-35 Unnamed junior high school in New Braunfels⁶
- 1935-37 Head of the English Department, Mount Pleasant High School (Mt. Pleasant, TX)
- 1937-40 The Schreiner Institute (Kerrville, TX)⁷
- 1942-44 Instructor of English and German, Texas A&M University
- 1944-46 Instructor of English, University of Texas
- 1946-47 Associate Professor of English, North Texas Agricultural College⁸
- 1947-49 Instructor of German, University of Oklahoma
- 1949-50 Instructor of English and German, University of Florida

Eikel's post-Johns Hopkins teaching career is inadequately documented, although it is known from letters in his student file that he taught at Georgia Tech and at Maryland State College, and from various articles on newspapers.com that he taught at McMurray College (Abilene, Texas), Centenary College (Shreveport, Louisiana), and Riverside High School (Riverside, New Jersey). Despite the incomplete documentation, it is readily apparent that Eikel never obtained the kind of academic position that he so clearly desired.

Eikel's publication record is rather thin, although his articles did largely appear in excellent journals; searches of JSTOR and MLAB turned up references to 11 publications, as follows: (1) a two-page 1948 paper in *College English* on an assignment he had developed for what was then called "Freshman English"; (2) four short papers in *American Speech* on questions of English vocabulary (on Texas A&M slang, on North Texas Agricultural College slang, on 'complicity,' and on 'tub' and 'shell'); (3) a fifth short paper in *American Speech*, this one on Hermann Collitz's marginal notes in his *Festschrift*; (4) a 1952 paper on h-loss in Germanic, published in the *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*; and (5) four papers in *American Speech* on NBG (a 1949 paper on case, and three papers drawn from Eikel 1954 and published in 1966 and 1967). His Johns Hopkins application lists three more

studies: a book review published in the Dallas *Times-Herald* in April 1947; a paper on “The Goethe Bicentennial Convocation in Aspen, Colorado,” which was “to be published in a volume of Goethe Studies by Southern Methodist University”; and a paper on “Cervisial Nomenclature in America,” which is described as “In the hands of the editor of Word” (underlining in original). The last two papers do not seem to have ever actually appeared in print. His Texas German papers are of the most importance for this work, and we therefore turn to them now. Because of the overlap between the published papers and Eikel (1954), and because the published papers are available via JSTOR and thus considerably more accessible than Eikel (1954), we focus on the published versions.

Eikel’s first paper on TxG, “The Use of Cases in New Braunfels German” (Eikel 1949), addressed the case system of NBG, focusing on the differences between NBG and the standard language in this regard. It is “merely a pioneer attempt in the study of German dialects in Texas; for there are also the dialects of Comfort, Fredericksburg, and other settlements, which are equally unique and merit investigation” (Eikel 1949: 279), i.e., a pilot study. To summarize the data briefly, the use of nominative and accusative in the NBG of the time lined up nicely with the use of these cases in Standard German. The dative, on the other hand, had largely been lost in NBG and speakers of NBG used accusative where speakers of Standard German used dative. This applies across the board, e.g., verbs like *helfen* ‘to help’ which take dative in Standard German are accompanied by the accusative in NBG, prepositions + accusative are used instead of the dative of reference, e.g., *Das ist mich einerlei* ‘it’s all the same to me’ for Standard German *Das ist mir einerlei* (Eikel 1949: 280), and so on. There is one intriguing exception to the loss of the dative, namely that “after *mit* an occasional dative may be heard to compete with the ever more popular accusative; for some reason *mit* seems to be more permanently associated with the dative” (Eikel 1949: 249).⁹ The genitive is also rare. According to Eikel (1949), the genitive is rarely used with names, while in other situations where Standard German uses the genitive, NBG uses *von* + the accusative, e.g., Standard German *Sie ist eine Schwester meiner ersten Frau* corresponds to NBG *Sie ist eine Schwester von meine erste Frau* (Eikel 1949: 280). Prepositions like *während* and *trotz* that assign genitive case to their objects in Standard German assign accusative case in NBG, e.g., *Während den kalten Wetter* for Standard German *Während des kalten Wetters* and *Trotz den Regen* for Standard German *Trotz des Regens*. There is some retention of dative in relative pronouns, as Eikel (1949: 280) reports that “Among older people one still hears *dem seine, denen ihre, and wem seine*, while the present generation says *den seine, wen seine*, but retains *denen ihre*.” Also of interest is the shifting nature of the case system. For

instance, in colloquial forms of Standard German *von* + dative is often used instead of genitive, e.g., *Sie ist eine Schwester von meiner ersten Frau*, but as noted above, in NBG accusative is used in place of dative, i.e., *Sie ist eine Schwester von meine erste Frau*, meaning that NBG often uses *von* + accusative where Standard German uses the genitive and colloquial Standard German uses *von* + dative.

The paper is largely descriptive, echoing statements like a “linguist establishes the facts of change, leaving its explanation to the anthropologist” (Lehmann 1962: 200) and, more memorably, if “the facts have been fully stated, it is perverse or childish to demand an explanation into the bargain” (Joos 1958: v). Eikel (1949: 281) contends that to “answer the question why? is hardly within the realm of the descriptive linguist, but I feel it is not out of place to suggest two reasons for this development in the use of cases in New Braunfels, although there may be other significant contributing factors.”¹⁰ These reasons are (1) the original donor dialects of NBG and (2) contact with English. Eikel (1949: 281) gives the first possibility only one sentence, stating that: “This use of the cases may follow a pattern inherited from the parent dialects of Germany.”¹¹ Eikel instead opts for the second possibility, arguing that “New Braunfels German has been forced to follow the English pattern of syntax” (Eikel 1949: 281). He makes this claim because older speakers of NBG use dative more than younger speakers, and older speakers were exposed more often to Standard German and less often to English than younger speakers, i.e., older speakers had more exposure to the four-case system of Standard German and less exposure to the two-case (with a few remnants of a third case in the pronouns) system of English.¹²

The remaining three papers are extracted, verbatim or nearly so, from Eikel (1954); all of the published papers are described as “Copyright 1954 by Fred Eikel, Jr.” The first of these, “New Braunfels German, Part I” Eikel (1966a), is a condensed version of part of chapter 1 of Eikel (1954). It outlines the history of the German settlement of New Braunfels and describes the methodology he used in his 1954 study. The historical and cultural background of New Braunfels are covered at some length; the discussion is provided not only because the material was then largely unknown, especially to non-specialists and/or non-Texans, but “also [to] shed some light on the sociological, cultural, and perhaps psychological background of these people—all aspects in which the linguist is interested when he sets out to describe the linguistic expression of a group” (Eikel 1966a: 5). This section occupies most of the article, covering nearly nine pages of an eleven-page paper. The remainder of the article addresses methodological issues. Eikel describes the method used (that of “the Linguistic Atlas and also used in the Pennsylvania German dialect studies” [Eikel 1966a: 14]);¹³ comments on the

selection of informants (he needed what he refers to as “true representatives of the three generations of New Braunfels German speech” [Eikel 1966a: 14], which at this remove to our ears sounds like the idea of the NORM in traditional dialectology);¹⁴ notes that his worksheets (which consisted of 191 sentences that informants had to translate from English to NBG) had to differ somewhat from those of Reed (1949), because of the differences between the more urban New Braunfels community he was investigating and the more rural Pennsylvania communities investigated by Reed (1949), and because Eikel was interested in NBG syntax and his worksheets therefore had to include more multi-word items in order to collect the type of data he was interested in; describes the biographical data he collected from his informants; and then gives some biographical information about his 24 informants. The final sentence of the article promises work to come: “It is out of the question to think that New Braunfels German is representative of any *one* German dialect. Rather, it is a fusion of various dialects that in Texas has acquired its own unique character, and that primarily in syntax, which will be dealt with extensively in a later article of this series” (Eikel 1966a: 16, italics in original).

The second in this series of articles, Eikel (1966b), “New Braunfels German, Part II,” is a straightforward structuralist description of the phoneme system, comparing it extensively with that of Standard German. Eikel posits a vocalic system of seven phonemes, each with a long allophone and a short allophone, e.g., /i:/, which is found in words like [di:] *die* ‘the’ (feminine), [i:m] *ihm* ‘he’ (dative singular), [fi:] *Vieh* ‘cattle’, etc., and /i/, which is found in words like [tiʃ] *Tisch* ‘table’, [vint] *Wind* ‘wind’, and [ʃpriçt] *spricht* ‘(he/she) speaks’.¹⁵ Both of these allophones are described as “a high-front unrounded open vowel” (Eikel 1966b: 254, 255). The paper then goes on to describe the diphthongs. Eikel (1966b: 256-57) posits three diphthongs for NBG: /aɪ/, /aʊ/ and /ɔɪ/, as in [bai] *bei* ‘by, near, etc.’, [maʊs] *Maus* ‘mouse’, and [hɔɪtə] *heute* ‘today’, respectively. The first diphthong, /aɪ/, differs slightly from its Standard German counterpart, as it “begins at a lower mid-front position and ends at a mid-front position ... in S[tandard]G[erman] it begins at a low-central position and ends at a mid-front position” (Eikel 1966b: 256); the other NBG diphthongs are identical to their Standard German counterparts. The remainder of the article lays out the NBG consonantal system, with eight stops (three pairs of voiceless and voiced phonemes, e.g., /p/ - /b/, /t/ - /d/, and /k/ - /g/, as in [plats] *Platz* ‘place’, [blu:mən] *Blumen* ‘flowers’, [tiʃ] *Tisch* ‘table’, [diesən] *diesen* ‘this’ (masculine accusative singular), [komt] *kommt* ‘(he/she/it) comes’, and [ze:gə] *Säge* ‘saw’, respectively; as well as two affricates, namely [ts] and [tʃ], as in [tsu:] *zu* ‘to’ and [ræntʃ] *Ranch* ‘ranch’. The system further includes eight fricatives: six pairs of voiced-voiceless fricatives, e.g., /f/ and /v/, as in [flus] *Fluss* ‘river’ and [vo:] *wo* ‘where’, as well as /s/ (which has

two allophones, [s] and [z]) and /ʃ/, as in [zainə] *seine* ‘his’ (feminine singular/plural) and [aŋst] *Angst* ‘fear’, and [ʃpriçt] *spricht* ‘(he/she/it) speaks’. NBG also has three nasals ([m], [n], and [ŋ]), as in Standard German, e.g., [maʊs] *Maus* ‘mouse’, [blu:mən] *Blumen* ‘flowers’, and [aŋst] *Angst* ‘fear’, respectively. Finally, NBG also has /l/ and /r/ as phonemes, e.g., in [ta:l] *Tal* ‘valley’ and [reçt] *Recht* ‘right’. The /r/ phoneme has two allophones, one “a tongue tip trilled dental fricative” and the other “a lenis post-velar fricative,” with the dental allophone appearing before vowels and the post-velar allophone appearing following vowels and word-finally (Eikel 1966b: 260).

Items of particular interest in this description include the following. First, although Eikel explicitly describes the front rounded vowels /y/ and /ø/ as phonemes in NBG, he also indicates that many of his speakers do not use these vowels. He states:

Of my informants (described in “New Braunfels German: Part I,” pp. 15-16 [Eikel 1966a]), of the oldest generation (I) two rounded this vowel distinctly and consistently, two showed occasional unrounding, and two did not round the vowel at all. Of the twelve informants of the second generation (II), one rounded consistently, while all the others fluctuated, showing more instances of unrounding than of rounding. All six informants of the third generation (III) showed no signs of rounding: in their speech /y:/ is completely replaced by /i:/ (Eikel 1966b: 255 fn. 5).¹⁶

Eikel (1966b: 255 fn. 6) notes that the mid front rounded vowel /ø/ is also generally produced without rounding.¹⁷ Second, Eikel (1966b: 257 fn. 8) indicates that “In NBG /p/ does not occur initially before /f/,” meaning that words like *Pferd* ‘horse’ and *Pfeffer* ‘pepper’ are produced with an initial [f]. This contradicts the account given in Clardy (1954), who reports the presence of initial [pf] for her speakers (see below for additional discussion). Third, Eikel (1966b: 258 fn. 11) points out that his worksheets were not designed to elicit [tʃ], since his sources on German pronunciation had different opinions about the phoneme, i.e., Curme (1923) treated it as a phoneme found only in foreign words, while Vietör (1923) and Siebs (1912) did not mention it. However, the sound is quite common in NBG (it is found in *Cello* ‘cello’, *Deutsch* ‘German’, and *Peitsche* ‘whip’, among others). Fourth, Eikel notes that the dorsal fricatives behave differently in NBG than in the standard language. He contends that “NBG /x/ has the same three allophones as S[andard] G[erman] ([x], [ç], and [h]), but with a different distribution” (Eikel 1966b: 258): [x] occurs “medially and finally after /a o u aʊ/”; [ç] occurs “medially and

finally after palatals,” as well as in syllable- and word-initial position; and [h] occurs only in word-initial position. This analysis is somewhat puzzling: Eikel (1966b: 259) states strongly and explicitly that “Initial [h] ... undoubtedly is an allophone of /x/,” even though *Hühner* ‘chickens’ and *China*, the first of which is transcribed with an initial [h] and the second of which is transcribed with an initial [ç], are described as being “homophonous in NBG,” which indicated that [h] is better treated as a separate phoneme, and not as an allophone of /x/ (since the presence of minimal pairs, as *Hühner* and *China* appear to be, means by definition separate phonemes). Finally, Eikel (1966b: 259-260) sets up the voiced velar fricative /ɣ/ as a phoneme of NBG, with [j] and [ɣ] as allophones, despite the absence of this sound from later stages of NBG and from Standard German (e.g., it is not present in the post-2001 NBG data collected by the Texas German Dialect Project and described in works like Boas 2009a). More details on the historical development of this phoneme would therefore have been extremely welcome.

The final paper in this series, “New Braunfels German, Part III” (Eikel 1967), is on morphology and syntax. This is by far the longest of Eikel’s published works on the subject and overlaps considerably with Eikel’s previous publications on Texas German.¹⁸ It begins with nominal morphology (plural formation, which closely resembles that of Standard German; then noun gender, which also closely resembles that of Standard German; case, which is limited to the observation that some speakers occasionally use dative and/or genitive forms; and pronouns), before turning briefly (just under two pages in total) to adjectives and then verbs (mostly on apocope in verbs and non-standard verb forms like *frug* ‘asked’ [for Standard German *fragte*]). This is followed by a section on syntax, beginning with cases, and followed by sections on voice (passive), tense, and mood, and concluding with a section on “verbals” (participles, infinitives, etc.) The last portion of the paper summarizes some of the differences between NBG and Standard German, e.g., gender assignment in loan words, as Eikel (1967: 84) remarks that “The gender of English loanwords is quite uniform in NBG and differs frequently from the gender attributed to English loanwords that have been recorded in the studies of other German dialects in the United States.”¹⁹ As is typical for his work, Eikel does not offer a real explanation for this difference, stating only that “It is of course impossible to see what ‘logic’ was at work in determining the gender of loanwords acquired in Texas” (Eikel 1967: 85 fn. 4). He suggests that it may be due to “the principle of logical gender” (e.g., in words like *der Farmer*) or the gender of the closest German equivalent (e.g., TxG *Cotton* is feminine because Standard German *Baumwolle* is feminine), but notes that

[W]hen the word suggests no German word from which it could have received its gender (e.g., *der blanket* or *der bottom*, i.e., river bottom) or when the word names an object that was unknown to the people while in Germany or was “invented” later (e.g., *die fence*, i.e., wire fence; *die car*; *der globe*; *der flat*; and *die ranch*), one cannot accurately account for the gender applied, and the linguist is reduced to mere speculation (Eikel 1967: 85 fn. 4).

The paper concludes with the observation that “the uniqueness of NBG lies in its syntax” (Eikel 1967: 104), because NBG phonology is closer to that of the standard language than NBG syntax.

Having summarized Eikel’s papers on Texas German, we now contextualize his work within the study of Texas German as a whole. A search of Google Scholar conducted on 4/19/22 shows that all of his works on Texas German (Eikel 1949, 1954, 1966a, 1966b, and 1967) are cited at least occasionally. Eikel (1949) is cited 48 times; Eikel (1954) 37 times; Eikel (1966a) 13 times; Eikel (1966b) 15 times; and Eikel (1967) 18 times. Most of the citations are in later studies of Texas German, e.g., Eikel (1949) is cited in Gilbert (1965), Salmons (1983), Boas (2009a), and Roesch (2012), among others; while Eikel (1967) is cited in Roesch (2012) and Lindemann (2019), among others. However, they are all also cited in more general studies of language contact and change, particularly those working within the American context, e.g., Weinreich (1953), Van Ness (1996), Baran (2017), and Zimmer (2020); and there are also a few citations in more theoretical works (e.g., Eikel 1967 is cited in Roehrs 2020). Other fundamental works on Texas German tend to be cited more often, e.g., Gilbert (1972) is cited 59 times and Boas (2009a) is cited 131 times. Both of these studies are also cited more often in more general studies, e.g., Boas (2009a) is cited in Finegan’s (2014) textbook. On the other hand, Clardy (1954), another early study of TxG, is cited only nine times, almost exclusively in other studies of TxG. We return briefly to this citation discrepancy below.

In our view, Eikel’s most important work on Texas German is his 1954 study, even though Eikel (1949) is the most often cited of his works. We suggest that his 1949 case paper is cited more often than his 1954 work because it is more readily available (it is available via JSTOR, while the 1954 work is not). But where does Eikel fit in the history of the study of Texas German, and beyond that in the history of Germanic linguistics in North America?

On the history of the study of Texas German: German has a long history in Texas, with the first settlers arriving in the late 1820s, and by the turn of the twentieth century, the various dialects of German brought to Texas by

German-speaking settlers had coalesced into a set of New World varieties of German, Texas German. Despite the prominence of Texas German, there is almost no mention of Texas German in the linguistics literature up until 1949, in contrast to other forms of American German, e.g., Pennsylvania German, which was very well-documented and studied even at that point.²⁰ Eikel (1954) is in fact the first large-scale study of Texas German, and his work provides a rich pool of data for analysis and a valuable snapshot of Texas German as it was spoken then. This alone would guarantee Eikel a crucial place in the history of the study of Texas German, but Eikel's work took on added importance as the study of Texas German continued.

In the 1960s Glenn Gilbert completed the next large-scale study of Texas German (with the most important representative publications being Gilbert 1963 and 1972). Gilbert's work, based on data collected in the 1960s, was able to use Eikel's data as a valuable point of comparison, as the existence of Eikel (1954) made real-time comparison with Gilbert's own data possible.²¹ This point also applies to the next large-scale study of Texas German, the Texas German Dialect Project (TGDP; www.tgdp.org), directed by Hans C. Boas, which has been collecting data since 2001. The TGDP has been able to rely consistently on Eikel's data (and Gilbert's) for real-time comparison, meaning that Eikel (1954) remains a valuable source of data even today, nearly 70 years after its completion.²² Recent studies which draw on Eikel's data (and on Gilbert's) include works like Roesch (2012), Pierce et al. (2015), Blevins (2022), and Warmuth (2022), among others, meaning that Eikel's work remains relevant for the study of Texas German today.

Eikel (1954) has also influenced the methodology of later studies of Texas German. For instance, as part of the interview process of the TGDP, project fieldworkers re-record the word and sentence lists used by both Eikel (1954) and Gilbert (1972), which makes comparison with these earlier studies relatively straightforward.²³ This enhances the continuing relevance of Eikel's work for the study of Texas German.

We view Eikel (1954) as both groundbreaking and flawed. It is groundbreaking as the first major study of Texas German, and it is flawed because his data and analyses must sometimes be interpreted with caution and moreover his data cannot be verified entirely, as there are no extant recordings that could be rechecked.²⁴ In terms of the potential pitfalls of Eikel (1954), we note that Eikel sometimes incorrectly (in our view) treats differences between Standard German and New Braunfels German as resulting exclusively from language change in New Braunfels German, and (again in our view) sometimes records forms that seem considerably too close to Standard German to be completely accurate. His discussion of the case system exemplifies the first point: as discussed above, Eikel views the differences between the case systems of NBG and Standard German as

(largely) the result of contact between NBG and English. However, other scholars, like Gilbert (1972), Boas (2009a, 2009b), and Salmons (2018) demonstrate that some of the differences between North American varieties of German and Standard German are due to the donor dialects of the North American varieties. In this particular situation, if the donor dialects of NBG lacked the four-case system of Standard German, then there is no reason to expect New Braunfels German to exhibit a standard-like case system. Speakers of NBG would simply not have had sufficient exposure to a four-case system to construct it in their own mental grammars.²⁵ Eikel's treatment of front rounded vowels could represent the second point: although he views them as part of the NBG phonemic system, they were, as noted above, in the process of being lost when he collected his data, meaning in our view, that their presence in NBG at that time was moving towards marginal. At the same time, we do not want to make too much out of this point, as it does not seem to happen all that often. Moreover, Eikel's data is often corroborated by the other main contemporary source on Texas German, Clardy (1954), meaning that it is generally reliable.²⁶ And these issues aside, Eikel's work remains crucial for the study of Texas German.

This leads (briefly) to the question of why Eikel (1954) is cited so much more widely than Clardy (1954), especially because Clardy (1954) is almost as long as Eikel (1954), despite being an MA thesis, not a doctoral dissertation. (Recall here that the citation numbers are 27 to 7 in favor of Eikel.) We contend that the answer to this lies in the scope of Eikel's work: despite the title of her work, Clardy focuses on NBG phonology, and only on six speakers. Eikel's database and scope are considerably broader, meaning that it is of interest for readers interested in questions about NBG that go beyond phonology/phonetics.

We turn now to Eikel's place in the history of Germanic linguistics in North America. Although Eikel (1954) had a considerable impact on the field, as just detailed, we suspect that it had less of an impact than it could have. It did set the stage for later work on Texas German, and it did demonstrate that other North American dialects of German beyond Pennsylvania German were worthwhile objects of study, but under different circumstances, it could have made more of an impact on general linguistics in North America. We attribute this to three major factors, all of which are closely related. They are: (1) that Eikel did not obtain a doctorate at JHU; (2) that Eikel did not hold a position at a major research university; and (3) that New Braunfels German was not viewed as a valid object of study by numerous American *Germanisten*.²⁷

To the first point, as Pierce, Boas, and Gilbert (2018) demonstrate, Eikel's dissertation committee damned him with faint praise. This is clearest in an April 26, 1954, letter to the Group Council at JHU, signed by Eikel's

advisor, Arno Schirokauer, and Kemp Malone, another member of Eikel's committee. This letter recommended that Eikel's dissertation be accepted, as it was a "competent and sufficiently detailed description of Texas German as spoken in the community of New Braunfels" that "fills a gap and adds to our knowledge of the decay of a colonial dialect being separated from its roots and contaminated by heteroglot speakers." The letter further states that "Mr. Eikel develops a sound method in the presentation of the properties of his chosen dialect, and gives a satisfactory description of a language exposed to coalescence with the culturally superior idiom of English," and if his "findings are less spectacular" than those of studies of Pennsylvania German, "this is not because of ineptitude on his part." Eikel's dissertation could certainly have used some honing and expansion, but this letter, by not supporting his dissertation more strongly, put Eikel into a position where his committee felt comfortable rejecting his dissertation. JHU was clearly not the right place for Eikel to have pursued his work.²⁸ Eikel was also working in isolation, as Eikel (1954) does not cite Clardy (1954), and vice versa. Moreover, the failure of Clardy to cite Eikel shows not only that Clardy was unaware of Eikel's work, but also that Winfred Lehmann, the second reader of Clardy's thesis, was unaware of Eikel's work. Had Lehmann, one of the most important American linguists of the time, been aware of Eikel's work, perhaps he would have supported Eikel, and perhaps then Eikel would have received his doctorate and obtained a better academic position.

The lack of a doctorate led to the next problem, namely Eikel's employment situation. As noted above, Eikel did have some teaching positions after leaving JHU, but they were not the type of teaching positions he coveted. The latest document in his JHU file is a memo, dated 28 August 1967, raising the question of a transcript request made by Eikel; he had apparently requested these transcripts to submit them as part of a job application. This indicates that he was still looking for a permanent position at the time of his death.²⁹ More to the point is another letter from Eikel to JHU, containing a paragraph that sums things up:

When one studies at Hopkins two years completely on one's own borrowed money and a third with only partial assistance, one has incurred a large expense; and when one then fails to obtain the Ph.D. and the additional earning power, the indebtedness becomes doubly hard.... Consequently it is imperative that I try to locate a position that promised more, and if I can't get transcripts sent to these schools, I can't hope to be elected, and then I will never be able to get out of debt (letter from Eikel to Ross Jones, Assistant to the President at JHU, dated August 9, 1965).

Without a degree and without a teaching position at a major research university, Eikel was not in as strong a position to influence Germanic linguistics in North America as he could have.

On the final point, the legitimacy of Texas German as an object of study, we suggest that this opinion was widely prevalent in Eikel's academic circles at the time he was preparing his dissertation. (It was certainly widely prevalent in Texas academic circles when Glenn Gilbert was a professor at UT Austin in the 1960s and early 1970s.) We further suggest that this opinion contributed to the rejection of Eikel's dissertation. An instructive parallel here is to *Kiezdeutsch*, a new multiethnolect form of German described in Wiese (2012) and much subsequent work. When Wiese began working on *Kiezdeutsch*, and specifically when Wiese argued that it was a form of German, the public backlash was considerable, with laypeople labelling *Kiezdeutsch* "ghetto German," "Turkish German," "migrants' babble," and so on.³⁰ While the backlash against *Kiezdeutsch* is rooted in xenophobia and racism, the backlash against Texas German in this regard was more subtle: Texas German was viewed as a less interesting and less valuable form of German than other North American dialects of German, meaning that Eikel's dissertation stood a greater chance of getting rejected than it would have, had it been about something else.

In sum, Eikel (1954) remains an important work in the history of linguistics in North America and Fred Eikel remains a critically important scholar in the history of the study of Texas German. Eikel (1954) is the first large-scale study of Texas German, and thereby set the stage for a number of later works. It remains relevant today, mainly for the data it preserves. At the same time, Eikel did not have as much of an influence on linguistics in North America as he could have, due to his lack of a doctorate and of a stable academic position at a major research university, and to the generally negative attitude towards Texas German as an object of scholarly study in the 1950s and beyond. His work did win some resonance, but it could have been much more. Happily for those interested in the topic, the attitude towards Texas German has changed, and it is now viewed as a legitimate object of scholarly inquiry by both academics and laypeople, as demonstrated by things like the Linguistic Society of America presenting its Leonard Bloomfield Book Award to Hans Boas for his 2009 book on Texas German. It is unfortunate that this development came too late for Eikel.

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Notes

¹ An earlier version of this essay was presented at the 45th Annual Symposium of the Society for German-American Studies (held virtually in April 2021). We are grateful to the conference participants for their feedback. We also thank the three anonymous referees for their comments and William Keel for his help in his role as editor.

² We use the term “Texas German” for a set of standard-near varieties of German spoken (currently or formerly) in Texas, which are descended from the 19th-century varieties of German brought to Texas by German-speaking immigrants. See Boas (2009a) for details.

³ NBG remains the best-studied variety of Texas German. New Braunfels, Texas, is approximately 35–40 miles from San Antonio (depending on the route taken).

⁴ Eikel (1954) was in fact never accepted as a dissertation (see Pierce, Boas, and Gilbert 2018 for details).

⁵ Biographical details are generally culled from his student file at Johns Hopkins University; we thank James Stimpert, Senior Research Archivist at JHU, for supplying us with a copy of Eikel’s student file; enough time has passed that we are able to quote from it.

⁶ Eikel was still a student at Texas at the time; the demands of this position are presumably the reasons for the delayed completion of his BA.

⁷ The institute is now Schreiner University; during Eikel’s time there, the Institute offered high school and junior college level classes.

⁸ That he was an associate professor there is surprising, given his lack of a PhD and of previous experience on the professorial level (i.e., it would make more sense if he had been an associate professor somewhere else previously). The institution is now the University of Texas at Arlington.

⁹ Boas (2021) reports a similar situation in the NBG of today, noting that *mit* is used with dative marking about 8.4% of the time in the open-ended interview data he examined (there were just under 1500 examples of *mit*) in his corpus. He attributes the status of *mit* to factors like the influence of English, incomplete language acquisition, and the age of TxG speakers today, among others.

¹⁰ These “other significant contributing factors” could include things like incomplete acquisition, new dialect formation (Trudgill 2004), and the like (i.e., factors similar to those contributing to the occasional use of dative after *mit* mentioned in the previous footnote). See Boas (2009a, b) for details.

¹¹ One wishes that Eikel had attempted to confirm or deny this possibility. We return to the donor dialect question briefly below.

¹² Gilbert (1972) reports a similar distinction in case usage between older and younger speakers.

¹³ It is not entirely clear to us what he means by “the Linguistic Atlas.” By “the Pennsylvania German dialect studies” he presumably means especially Reed (1949), since he calls it his “ever-guiding model” (Eikel 1966a: 14 fn. 24).

¹⁴ The acronym NORM stands for “non-mobile, older, rural male.” Traditional dialectology sought out such speakers as informants. See Chambers and Trudgill (1998: 29–30) for some discussion of the concept.

¹⁵ Here and elsewhere we have modified Eikel’s phonetic transcriptions slightly in accordance with more current transcription practices.

¹⁶ Eikel (1954: 28) phrases the statement slightly differently, but the meaning is the same.

¹⁷ This development is typical for NBG of the time; Clardy (1954) reports that her informants show the same general pattern (her oldest speaker uses front rounded vowels regularly, her middle group of speakers uses them less often, and her youngest speaker does use them). See Boas (2009a) or Pierce, Boas, and Roesch (2015) for more discussion of the history of front rounded vowels in NBG.

¹⁸ The section on cases, for instance, is taken largely from Eikel (1949).

¹⁹ For discussions of grammatical gender in Pennsylvania German (i.e., another “German dialect in the United States”) see Page (2011) or Louden (2016), for instance.

²⁰ JSTOR contains no articles on Texas German that appeared before Eikel’s own 1949 paper, for instance.

²¹ Glenn Gilbert (email to Marc Pierce, November 26, 2022) reports that he met Eikel in person once in the early 1960s. The lack of personal contact aside, it is clear that Gilbert’s work on Texas German owes a great deal to Eikel’s earlier studies.

²² There are a few other smaller-scale studies which also provide data for analysis, e.g., Salmons (1983), based on data collected in the late 1970s, and Guion (1996), based on data collected in the early 1990s. These studies generally corroborate the descriptions of Texas German presented in the three large-scale studies.

²³ In fact, the TGDP has even interviewed two speakers who were interviewed by either Eikel or Gilbert (one who was interviewed by Gilbert in the early 1960s and by the TGDP in 2018, and another who was interviewed by Eikel in the late 1930s or early 1940s [the exact date is unclear at this remove], and for the TGDP in 2004.)

²⁴ See Pierce, Boas, and Gilbert (2022) for more discussion of this issue.

²⁵ The status of Standard German in Texas has been a matter of some dispute. We do not engage with this debate here; see e.g., Salmons and Lucht (2006) for one main view and Boas and Fuchs (2018) for another.

²⁶ This is not always the case, e.g., Eikel 1954 holds that the affricate /pf/ has been lost in initial position in New Braunfels German, while Clardy 1954 records its presence in initial position for some of her 6 speakers. This question is particularly interesting as Gilbert (1972) records that his New Braunfels speakers mostly use /pf/ in initial position, and Boas (2009a) that his New Braunfels speakers do not. If Eikel’s data is completely accurate, then the historical picture is more complicated. Pierce (in preparation) attributes the difference between Eikel (1954) and Clardy (1954) in this regard to sampling (i.e., Eikel happened not to select any informants who used /pf/ initially, while Clardy did select some such informants).

²⁷ One could also point to Eikel’s personality in this regard, as it is clear from various sources (e.g., some of the letters in his student file) that Eikel could be prickly. We see this as a less important factor, although we do suggest that it contributed to his difficulties in finding a permanent position.

²⁸ It is in fact unclear to us why Eikel chose to study at JHU.

²⁹ On a macabre note, Eikel died on August 3, 1967, i.e., before the date of the memo.

³⁰ See Wiese (2015) for details and discussion.

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