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## The Prepositional Case in German-American Dialects

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That languages change is common knowledge among linguists. The debate often ensues when linguists attempt to distinguish whether or not a particular change is due primarily to external convergence or internal adjustment. The loss of the dative case, a common morphological development in German-American enclave dialects, has been the subject of extensive research in recent years. Many linguists originally adhered to a convergence hypothesis claiming that these German-American dialects were assimilated more toward the case structure of modern standard American English.

In his study "Convergence and Language Death," Lois Huffines maintains that the loss of the dative results in a Pennsylvania German noun system that corresponds more closely to that of English. Mark Loudon claims that the "most obvious evidence of complete convergence with American English is case in nominal and pronominal morphology" ("Variation" 5). The fact that plain, i.e. nonsectarian, Pennsylvania German now has, as American English, a two-case system for pronouns (subjective and objective, formally derived from the historical nominative and accusative cases) and a single, common case for nouns, whereas earlier it had three- and two-case systems, respectively, has led scholars to hypothesize that the case syncretism found in 'plain' dialects such as Ohio Pennsylvania German is due primarily to encroachment of American English upon the dialect.

However strong the evidence for external influences, i.e. American English, might be, research dealing with other dialectal German 'linguistic enclaves' provides us with the opportunity to see that this shift is taking place not only on in the Midwest of the United States but also in other non-English speaking environments.

It would be, of course, too complex to address all of the various German 'enclave dialects' and their respective case morphology structures, therefore this study will only briefly mention studies conducted in the former Soviet Union dealing with the German dialects embedded in Russian and Ukrainian language areas. Amongst the German dialects in those areas we find case syncretism similar to the patterns displayed by their counterparts in North America. Differing distinctly from Standard English, both Russian and Ukrainian possess a rich case morphology system similar to that of Latin with five degrees of inflection, hence an active and thriving dative case and its respective markers.

That paradigm leveling in the case system has taken place also in modern German dialects in Central Europe and in areas in which the dominant language is not English shows that the mechanism for this analogous change is most plausibly internal. Ohio Pennsylvania German (OPG) follows the expected historical paradigm of Germanic languages and dialects for inflectional case morphology erosion. Case reduction by analogous change is a consistent characteristic of this language family. The case system reconstructed for Proto-Indo-European (PIE) exhibits an eight-case system. During the Germanic period we postulate a case reduction from eight to six, and during the Old High German (750-1050 AD) period we find only five attested. The Middle High German (1050-1350 AD) case system evidences a four-tier system, and all modern dialectal German vernaculars employ systems with a maximum of three cases.<sup>1</sup> OPG exhibits changes that are to be expected from a dialect with Western Germanic heritage. Not only are such differences present in the various synchronic stages of modern Standard German, they are also documented in the development of current German dialects.<sup>2</sup>

It appears that the accelerated rate at which these changes appear to be taking place in the case system of these dialects is due primarily to the absence of a standard orthography and prescribed grammar of the vernacular, i.e., there is nothing to 'hold the dialect back' from developing free of external influences. Agreeing with the study conducted by Janet Fuller (1997), the pronoun system in Pennsylvania German indicates that the surface forms in this case system are not converging to English, but that there is, quite simply,

nothing more than a loss of dative case marking. In summary, the case morphology syncretism currently taking place in many of these German-American dialect communities, when compared with the same processes in other German 'enclave dialects' in areas where the dominant language is not English, can be attributed by and large to internal factors rather than external convergence with American English.<sup>3</sup>

Michael Putnam and Huffines both show that age of speakers is the primary factor determining whether the dialect speakers will employ dative forms or not; the younger the speaker, the fewer dative forms they will use. Renate Born, in her 2003 study "Regression, Convergence, Internal Development," has shown that the loss of case distinctions occurs in the inverse order of the acquisition sequence exhibited by German children. Structures which are lost first in German-American dialect communities are acquired last and, conversely, structures which are retained longest in declining dialects emerge earliest in the child language acquisition process.<sup>4</sup> Born states that "the regression hypothesis explains why in declining German enclave dialects the dative case tends to be replaced by the accusative rather than the reverse, and why certain word classes retain dative case markers longer than others" (158).

As a result of this aforementioned inflectional case syncretism, some of these German-American speech island communities exhibit a potential common prepositional case. An example of this prepositional case can be observed development in the Volga-German dialects in West Central Kansas. William Keel shows that the sentences "he was sitting in the cold water" and "we fell into the cold water" are both produced with the definite article *den* after the preposition: "der hot in *den* kalde Wasser gesotz" and "mir sin in *den* kalde Wasser gfall" (Keel 98). Here we see the neuter noun *das Wasser* (the water) appearing with both *das* and *den* in the above attested examples. First, two-way prepositions such as Standard German *in* exhibit objects marked for dative case when the matrix verb of the sentence does not imply movement. This clearly demonstrates the aforementioned case morphology attrition underway in many German-American dialects. Second, the definite article *das* is expected within the neuter paradigm: while *den* is the accusative definite article of masculine nouns. It appears that a merger of

traditional neuter and masculine definite articles is taking place to form a prepositional case in conjunction with the case syncretism occurring in these dialects.

This phenomenon was first mentioned by Keel and has unfortunately not received a great amount of attention by scholars until now. The focus of this article is to present examples in support of this prepositional case in German-American dialects. After a brief presentation of the data, the following questions will be addressed:

1. Is this phenomenon really a 'separate case' or just the result of phonological conditioning?
2. Is this merely a transitional step towards further case syncretism?
3. Why do some dialects exhibit this prepositional case, while others do not?

#### Previous Accounts of Prepositional Case

Instances of the presence of this prepositional case in research dealing with German-American dialect communities abound, contrary to the low level of attention that it has received. Glen Gilbert's work on the retention and loss of case marking in Texas-German dialects is one such study. In a detailed study of a modern text from Fredericksburg, Texas, Gilbert describes the following situation: "The forms of the accusative have replaced the dative almost everywhere" (Gilbert, "Phonology" 97). Out of 53 instances where one would expect a dative form in comparison with Standard German usage following a preposition, Gilbert records 45 accusative, 3 nominative and 5 dative forms. He attributes the retention of the five dative forms to either fixed formulae or assimilation of the case marker to a following nasal consonant.<sup>5</sup>

J. Wilson reports of exclusive use of accusative forms of the personal pronouns in object case situations for the German in the counties of Lee and Fayette in Central Texas. Feminine, neuter, and plural determiners exhibit only one case form; masculine determiners distinguish a nominative and an oblique case. The oblique forms reflect older accusative forms such as *mit den Mann*

(94).

Alternate forms for expected neuter dative markers occur in some examples from Gilbert's dissertation (1963). He notes that in the sentence "a picture is hanging over the bed" the prepositional phrase is rendered as *i:ber das bet* 21 times and as *i:ber den bet* 6 times. Both of these prepositional phrases translated into English mean "over the bed." The object of the preposition, *das Bett*, is neuter. Similar examples are presented for the phrase with the double meaning of either "into/in the room": *in den/das tsumer*, which an individual speaker using the same form for both meanings (Gilbert, *Dialect* 19). As noted earlier in this article, here we see the beginning stages of the merger of traditional masculine and neuter accusative definite articles forming a prepositional case. Keel notes:

In addition to the phenomena of case distinction reduction and loss, we see here the potential development of a transitional stage with a common prepositional case in the neuter system which merger the older accusative/dative dichotomy after prepositions. (97)

This notion of a prepositional case is based on a similar development in the Volga-German dialects in West Central Kansas. A Volga-German dialect spoken in the community of Victoria in Ellis County, Kansas exhibits the following case system for the definite article (Keel):

	Nom.	Acc.	Dat.	Prep.
Masc.	der	den	den	den
Neut.	des	des	den	den
Fem.	die	die	der	die/der
Plural	die	die	die/denne	die/denne

Here we can observe the analogous shift of dative forms with the accusative definite articles. It is also evident from these data that a merger of the masculine and neuter analogized forms have created a prepositional case. The feminine and plural forms have not fully participated yet in the case attrition in this dialect, therefore they do not exhibit the prepositional case. Keel provides the following

commentary concerning the table above:

...the distinction...is modified in that the dative forms appear after all prepositions, even in those instances where an accusative is reflected in Standard German (*der hot in den kalde Wasser gesotz* "he was sitting in the cold water" vs. *mir sin in den kalde Wasser gfall* "we fell into the cold water"). Thus the neuter definite article follows the pattern of the masculine definite article after all prepositions. The feminine article reflects a more traditional two-case distinction (common case vs. dative case) with prepositional usage retaining that distinction as well. (98)

A word of caution must be issued when comparing these dialect forms with Standard German. Data from the 'mother dialect regions' of these enclave dialects from the Middle High/Early New High German period would be most desirable and preferred for a more accurate diachronic comparison. Due to the fact that these data do not exist, Standard German serves as the best means of comparison.

This phenomenon of a prepositional case has also appeared in Gabriel Lunte's 1998 dissertation on a Catholic Bohemian German dialect spoken in Ellis County, Kansas. Lunte provides the following commentary and data on this topic:

The tendency of the accusative and dative masculine towards a common objective case is particularly evident in conjunction with prepositions that are contracted with the definite article. The accusative masculine ending /n/ is predominant in a historically dative (of location) environment:  
 /du sitst hintən tɪʃ/ *Du sitzt schon hinterm Tisch.*  
 'You are already sitting behind the table.'  
 /bɑm kooɫ samə ɛlton/ *bei Karls Eltern*  
 'at Karl's parents' (Lunte 87, my emphasis)

It also appears that aspects of this case are present in an Eastern Franconian German dialect spoken in Frankenmuth, Michigan (Born).

German enclave dialects in the former Soviet Union also document this intermediary case shift. Sergej Mironow focused his 1940 dissertation on the development of analytical forms in the Volga German dialects of Marxstadt, Mariental, Balzer and Norka. The vernacular spoken in this area was a mixture of dialects from Swabia, Hesse, and the Rhenish-Palatinate, dialects similar in morphosyntactic structure to Ohio Pennsylvania German. Mironow's analysis begins by analyzing the continual reduction and unification of case endings. Mironow further states that "die Herstellung der syntaktischen Beziehungen [wird] auf verschiedene Hilfsörter verlagert, insbesondere auf den Artikel und die Präpositionen" (Berend 159-60). In summary to Mironow's findings, Nina Berend offers the following commentary:

Der Verlust der phonetischen Differenzierung der Kasus führt in den Mundarten zu einem immer mehr um sich greifenden Synkretismus im Kasussystem. Viele sowjetdeutsche Mundarten besitzen nur noch zwei Kasus: Nominativ und Akkusativ oder Nominativ und Dativ. Aber auch die Tendenz zu völligem Kasusverlust macht sich in diesen Mundarten schon bemerkbar. *Diese Entwicklung, meint S. Mironow, ist möglich geworden, weil die syntaktischen Beziehungen hinreichend durch die Präpositionen und die Semantik der Verben gekennzeichnet und somit formale phonetische Marker überflüssig geworden sind.* So hat zum Beispiel die Mundart von Marxstadt an der Wolga nur noch zwei Kasus – den Nominativ und den Akkusativ, sogar beim Personalpronomen. [...] Diese Beispiele – so S. Mironow – zeigen, dass sich in den Mundarten ein vom Subjekt-Objekt-Kasus unterschiedener Präpositionalkasus entwickelt hat, in dem die Präposition mit der Form des Akkusativs des Artikels verschmolzen ist. (158-59, my emphasis)

The gradual elimination of the grammatical importance of articles marking for case is strengthened by modern syntactic theory. In the German standard language the “rich inflectional morphology [...] fulfills in part purely semantic functions; on the other hand, it is in part clearly motivated syntactically” (Eisenberg 374). If case is marked in dialect varieties at all, syntactic or semantic information is morphologically expressed only to the extent of realizing the nominative (or common case) – oblique case distinction. “Syntactic functions (e.g. noun-adjective-agreement) or semantic information (e.g. direct-indirect object relation) are more and more only a matter of word order, not morphology. In prepositional phrases the information is moved one step further leftward to the lexical element, the preposition” (Rosenberg 210).

In syntax, heads of phrases are supposed to carry more morphological marking; this is what we are seeing here with the prepositional case, namely that the importance of the definite article is being replaced by the preposition itself. New distinctions emerge, and systems that have become simpler in terms of morphology substitute these lost items by means of grammatical information now embedded in lexical items or word order. Increased use of prepositions contributes to the loss of the case inflection, since presumably the preposition itself without the case ending is sufficient to carry the burden of meaning. Since the preposition is more specific semantically, the multi-functioned (and therefore ambiguous) case endings eventually give way. Objects of prepositions can never serve as the subject of the sentence in which they appear. In the German-American enclave dialects mentioned in this study, case attrition of the dative case reduces the possible markers for the oblique cases. Naturally, the accusative case is the only option available for masculine and neuter nouns. That the prepositions themselves carry more grammatical meaning in these dialects can be seen in the merger of ‘traditional’ accusative definite articles to form the prepositional case. In other words, the definite article is only significant in that it is non-nominative in prepositional phrases.

#### Linguistic Universals and Typological Convergence

Linguists accept that languages are never at a static position, because linguistic change is common in all languages. Edward Sapir’s theorems were constructed to analyze larger tendencies at work in languages. He labeled these three major drifts as follows (I will label them as S1, S2 and S3 respectively):

- S1: the familiar tendency to level the distinction between subjective and objective [the subject and object cases], itself but a late chapter in the steady reduction of the old Indo-European system of syntactic case (163)<sup>6</sup>
- S2: the tendency to fixed position in the sentence, determined by the syntactic relation of the word (166)
- S3: the drift toward the invariable word (168)

Moreover, the investigation of drift is given new dimension by relating it to comparative and typological linguistic studies. In this way, a connection is established between the study of drift on the one hand and the theory of grammar on the other. Robin Lakoff begins by presenting “a list of some changes...that occur in many or all of the Indo-European languages, clearly not as the result of one being influenced by the other” (174). I will focus on two of the proposed changes issued by Lakoff that are relevant to this paper: (1) The use of articles, definite and indefinite. (2) The use of prepositions instead of case endings. (174) Lakoff sheds further light upon the use of prepositions in IE languages:

The older IE languages expressed grammatical relationships in nouns through the use of case endings... Later languages have tended to develop, instead, an invariable independent noun without ending (expect for plural) and a set of prepositions, also morphologically independent, to fulfill the functions previously performed by case endings [...] This change can be considered as one in favor of segmentation. (174, 185)

All of Lakoff's common features of Indo-European languages are based upon the shift from synthetic to analytic forms, or toward greater segmentation. This is obviously also true for the case syncretism that has occurred in German and Germanic dialects and that is occurring in these German-American speech communities. In most Germanic languages, the rich suffixation that carried case, gender and number markers were replaced by nominal forms due to the Germanic Accent Shift. The definite articles, except in dialects where they also serve as demonstratives, were also unstressed, hence rendering their importance, and in some cases, their very existence superfluous.

#### Default Rules

According to Steven Pinker, simplification frequently consists of transformations into "default rules" (Pinker 256). For example, the expansion of the weak verb inflection paradigm (e.g. German past tense markings of the preterite by *-te*, English by *-ed* instead of the strong verb inflection by stem allomorphy (*Ablaut*)) is considered to be a default rule. "Default rules are regularities based on the principle to act upon the mere category (of a "noun" or a "verb" for example)" (Rosenberg 220). In other words, where memory fails, default rules apply.

The concept of *default rules* may explain some processes of reduction, such as the subsequent loss of inflections in nouns, possessive pronouns or determiners. At the phonological level, the reduction of the historical dative *-em* marking and merger with *-en* could be seen as an example of this phenomenon. At the morphosyntactic level, linguistic units participating in a shift or change would most likely first undergo a transformation into a default rule, and then become subject to possible further simplification.

Caroline Smits discusses internal changes in Iowa Dutch concerning the restructuring of grammar rules related to language contact. She distinguishes three types of changes in her study which are parallel to the theory of default rules mentioned by Pinker: regularization, simplification and loss of inflectional distinctions (47). This is exactly the same process that is currently taking place in those German-American enclave dialects that exhibit a

transitional prepositional case. First these forms are regularized, then simplification sets in, and finally the inflectional distinctions are further eliminated. Rosenberg validates the application of default rules in German-American dialectology, and also explains how these processes in general could feed and promote a possible prepositional case:

What, however, may be the line which links regularization and loss of morphology? The "externalization" of marking external relations could be regarded as a redistribution of functional features to different markers each one carrying little if any grammatical information. Given the successive simplification of noun inflection, the replacement of morphological markers by determiners, then by prepositions and finally by word order may be interpreted as further steps of transformation into default rules: a determiner (without morphological marking), a preposition as well as the combinatory rules of word order act upon the mere category. (24)

The elimination of inflectional distinctions in German-American enclave dialects has led to the presence of "default rules," such as this proposed prepositional case.

#### Is This Really A Separate Case?

But can we go as far as classifying this linguistic shift as a prepositional case as opposed to phonological leveling? After all, it appears that the changes present are only taking place at the phonological level. Consider the following statement by Born concerning case assignment in East Franconian:

East Franconian case assignment diverges considerably from standard German norms since prepositions and verbs requiring accusative objects in standard German may require dative objects in

the dialect and visa versa. The occurrence of final nasal consonants is phonologically conditioned, so that suffixes ending in /-m/ occur before lexemes with initial bilabial consonants, suffixes ending in /-n/ in all other environments. (154)

This same phenomenon is also mentioned by D. Chris Johnson (54).

According to Theo Vennemann, while “in the case on hand, and, we can extrapolate, in all suffixing languages with a drift of final syllable reduction, the relation between phonetic change and syntactic change is an obvious one” (275). Vennemann argues further that, “clearly, the two changes took place simultaneously; neither was caused by the other. Rather each depended on the other [...] Why should prepositions ever develop in a language with a fully functional system of case markers, so as to render the case markers redundant and invite phonetic change to step in and take them away? Phonetic change leading to reduction and loss is always going on” (284).

Comparative synchronic and diachronic linguistics show that “every morphological system is destroyed in time by phonological change” (qtd. in Vennemann 293). It is quite obvious to view this prepositional case as a phonological change, but there appears to be a further reanalysis of the case morphology through this prepositional case. A strong argument against pure phonological change with no effects on the structure of the case morphology is the fact that the prepositional case pronoun *den* is assumed not only by the masculine, but also by the neuter forms. The table from the last section of this article from the Volga-German dialect spoken in the community of Victoria in Ellis County, Kansas illustrates this merger between masculine and neuter forms into a unified prepositional case.

Viewing this phonological change in tandem with the creation of a prepositional case also fits nicely with Roman Jakobson’s regression theory of language learning. In brief, Jakobson’s regression theory is based upon the order in which cases are acquired by first language learners. Jakobson’s research shows that people who have suffered trauma to the brain will lose their ability to mark cases in the opposite order in which they acquired them. In other words: the last

case acquired, will be the first one lost in the event of brain injury. In dialects that display this case, most of them have either lost their dative case markers or use them seldom. According to Jakobson’s regression theory, the accusative case would be the obvious choice to fill the void left by the absence of dative case markers. In the prepositional case there is reassignment and reanalysis of the case of the determiners. This also, in essence, answers the question as to whether or not this prepositional case is a transitional step towards further case syncretism or if it will continue to develop further as a separate case. According to the regression theory and examples of dialects that display an even less complex case morphology, we can assume that this prepositional case is simply an ‘extra step’ that some dialects take on their road to further case morphology erosion.

This concept of an ‘extra step’ is also present in the reconstructed grammars of other older German and Germanic dialects. Herbert Penzl represents the forms of the singular definite article in Middle High German with the following table (Penzl, 88):

<i>Singular</i>	<b>m</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>f</b>
<b>Nom.</b>	der	daz	diu
<b>Gen.</b>	des	des	der(e)
<b>Dat.</b>	dem(e)	dem(e)	der(e)
<b>Akk.</b>	den	daz	die
<b>Instr.</b>	diu	diu	diu

Penzl also elaborates further on the instrumental case mentioned in the table:

Die demonstrative Instrumentalform kommt mhd. nur nach Präposition in gewissen Wendungen vor, sie hat ihre grammatische Kasusbedeutung verloren: *von diu, ze diu* u. dgl. *deste, desto* geht auf ahd. *des diu* zurück. (88)

William O’Neil describes the same process of simplification of the noun inflection in the Middle English of the south of England (254). This instrumental case did not survive in Standard German, Standard British or American English, but rather the transitory mechanism assisted the syncretism of the inflectional morphology

of the reconstructed historical dialects of Middle English and Middle High German. Viewing the phenomenon of a prepositional case in this light, we see that the German-American enclave dialects which display this system behave with typological consistency given their Germanic heritage.

But why do some dialects display this prepositional case while others do not? It appears to depend on the case morphology system that the individual German-American dialect communities inherited from their mother dialects in German-speaking Europe. Take for example Ohio Pennsylvania German, a dialect that does not display this transitional prepositional case, yet has undergone significant case syncretism and maintains today on a subject vs. object dichotomy. Ohio Pennsylvania German most accurately reflects the dialects spoken in the vicinity of Mannheim (Putnam 81).<sup>7</sup> The dialects found in the *Vorderpfälzisch* area, do not have a nominative/accusative distinction in their inventory of definite articles; hence they have a 'common case.' Born mentions that dialects that come into contact with other German-speaking dialect communities may also be more susceptible to case loss (158). Thus, the answer is quite simple: those dialects that have participated in this shift to a transitional prepositional case most likely originated from mother dialects that have a three-case system with strong distinction. Dialects like Ohio Pennsylvania German would not need to participate in such an 'extra step,' because their mother dialects only display a two-case distinction.

### Conclusions and Further Questions

Vennemann states that surely "learners and speakers of a language do not wait until the last trace of a case marking is lost before they realize that something is going wrong in their language" (296). Those German-American enclave dialects that have employed a transitional prepositional case on their way to further case syncretism utilize default rules as a mechanism to maintain what remains of their case marking system. It appears that this phenomenon will continue until a two-case system at best exists.

The presence of this transitional prepositional case further strengthens the argument that the case morphology attrition

exhibited by other contemporary German-American enclave dialects originates from an internal development rather than the result of convergence with Standard American English. That variants of North American English do not display a prepositional case, and that case syncretism is taking place in environments that are not dominated by English (e.g. the Ukraine), provides further evidence that the linguistic phenomenon, of case morphology erosion, is an internal development.

Lastly, let us return to Sapir's concept (S2) of "the tendency to fixed position in the sentence, determined by the syntactic relation of the word." It appears that the most productive research in the future should focus on the resultant syntactic developments and word order changes of these German-American dialect communities. Are there certain syntactic structures that exist in these dialects that have fed this case syncretism? Many of these dialects exhibit a generic relative pronoun "wo/wu" or "as" that does not indicate number, gender or case.

Plain Pennsylvania German: *Des is der Mann, as sei Fraa grank is.* "This is the man, *that* his wife is sick."

The relative pronoun *as* is not inflected for case, number or gender. Could it be that such structures in the syntax of certain dialects aided these changes? Second, how will this case syncretism, in which the prepositional case is included, further affect the independent and dependent clause word order in these dialects? Viewing these phonological changes as simultaneously having strong effects also on the morphosyntactic level of languages, we realize that we have only begun to research these important facets of these German-American dialects.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The genitive case has been lost in all modern German dialects in Central Europe. Most of these dialects only exhibit a two-case system.



<sup>2</sup> For excellent summaries of these phenomena consult Keel and Moulton.

<sup>3</sup> Born states, "If the loss of the dative case in sectarian Pennsylvania German is indeed the result of convergence toward the case system of American English, it appears that this process can take place only if the contact languages are closely related and the dominant language is morphologically less complex than the minority language, so that convergence results in a morphological simplification rather than a complication of the affected dialect" (152). Such a statement is problematic, because it does not take into account the typical diachronic behavior of the case morphology of Germanic languages mentioned in this paper nor is the research cited in Berend (1991) pertaining to the German dialect research in the former Soviet Union fully considered.

<sup>4</sup> This parallelism between language acquisition and language attrition, the *regression hypothesis*, was first proposed by Roman Jakobson in his monograph *Kindersprache, Aphasie und allgemeine Lautgesetze* to account for language loss among individuals suffering from brain injuries.

<sup>5</sup> A map illustrating the use of accusative pronominal markers in place of expected dative markers in Central Texas reveals that although there is a clear trend toward the use of the accusative forms, dative forms are preserved in a surprisingly large area (Gilbert, *Phonology* 99,102).

<sup>6</sup> The "One-to-One Principle" and the markedness argument may be paralleled to a certain extent in that the "greater functional load" of preserved features mentioned by Andersen (95).

<sup>6</sup> The adjectival declension of the Mannheim dialect from 1934 compared with the OPG system provides strong support for Palatine origin. The retention of strong masculine singular *-r* is first and foremost a Palatine feature. The fact that all strong plural endings are designated with an /i/ could very well have taken place through analogous dialect leveling.

<sup>7</sup> Born reports that Texas German is a mixed dialect (*Ausgleichsprache*), hence more susceptible to participate in case morphology syncretism. Although the fact that Texas German was a mixed dialect could prove profitable in other studies, this paper is primarily interested in the fact that Texas German originally possessed a three-case system.

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