



Karen A. Roesch. *Language Maintenance and Language Death: The Decline of Texas Alsatian.*

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In her book *Language Maintenance and Language Death: The Decline of Texas Alsatian*, Karen A. Roesch provides a detailed and multifaceted case study of the Texas Alsatian dialect spoken in Castroville and the surrounding area in Medina County, Texas. Her work is the sixth volume of the series *Culture and Language Use: Studies in Anthropological Linguistics*, published by the John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Roesch takes a three-part approach to thoroughly examine the maintenance and decline of Texas Alsatian. In the first two chapters, she provides background and context for language use in the speech community. In the following three chapters she then describes and analyzes the lexicon and structure of the Texas Alsatian dialect. At the end of the volume, she investigates speakers' attitudes and discusses how the findings of her study contribute to our understanding of the processes of language maintenance and death.

In the introduction, Roesch lays the groundwork for her study, outlines the six research questions guiding her work, and details the methodology and data collection procedures. After giving an overview of the origins of Texas Alsatian and language use in Texas German speech communities, she then focuses specifically on Medina County, its Texas Alsatian speakers, and the community's connections to Alsace.

Building on the background information provided in the previous chapter, Roesch uses the second chapter to demonstrate the importance of sociohistorical context in examining language maintenance issues. She provides historical information on German immigration to Texas and Medina County, and the founding of the city of Castroville. After examining the roles of religion and education in the community, she looks at the political and economic structures of Castroville, and examines how they relate to language shift using the concept of verticalization.[1] Closing the chapter, she focuses in on the sociolinguistic contexts for language use, the development of diglossia, and language shift.

In chapter 3, Roesch begins her description and analysis of the Texas Alsatian dialect itself. She starts the chapter off by looking at how the lexicon of Texas Alsatian differs from other Texas German varieties and discusses borrowings, the creation of new words, and examples of linguistic convergence. She then investigates code-switching, patterns of "language alternation" (p. 85), among speakers.

Roesch then examines the sound system of Texas Alsatian in chapter 4. She identifies her sources on European Alsatian, discusses the three German dialects in contact with Alsatian, and then provides an overview of the consonantal and

vocalic features of Alsatian. She then describes the regional varieties of Alsatian, focusing on Upper Rhenish as the main donor dialect. She then returns attention to Texas Alsatian to see what features from Upper Rhenish have been retained and to look at the internal developments from the Gilbert recordings. After citing examples of phonological transference, Roesch summarizes the chapter's two purposes: to describe the donor dialects of Upper Rhenish which are unique to that dialect and then to see how they have been retained.

In chapter 5 Roesch examines the morphosyntactic features of Texas Alsatian to see what features have been preserved and what the speaker data suggests about contact-induced change. To form the basis of comparison, she first discusses the features of gender, case, and number in Standard German and the Upper Rhenish donor dialect and then looks at nouns and pronouns in Texas Alsatian. She then turns her attention to verbs in Upper Rhenish and compares Texas Alsatian with Upper Rhenish to see what has been maintained and what shows reduction of function with mood and voice. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the morphosyntactic data, concluding that even though Texas Alsatian is becoming extinct, it is "dying with its morphological boots on" (p. 167).

In chapter 6 she segues from structures to speaker attitudes and describes the role of speaker attitudes in shift, maintenance, and death. She then examines how the Castroville Alsatians see their identity, and how that identity is defined by ancestry, language, and other criteria (pp. 176-177). After looking at in-group communication, she examines how language is used with others, i.e., nonmembers of the speech community, and asks if Texas Alsatians see themselves as Texas German or if they see Texas Germans as others. At the end of the chapter she examines preservation issues.

In the final chapter, Roesch reviews the three fronts of her approach to studying Texas Alsatian and revisits each of her six research questions and what information this yields for studies of language maintenance and death. She concludes her book with the importance of documenting varieties like Texas Alsatian and directions for future research.

Like the influential work of Glenn Gilbert and Hans Boas, Roesch's work is an extremely valuable contribution to the research on Texas German varieties and furthers our understanding of language contact, maintenance, and death. Her book is well organized with clearly defined research questions which she answers with historical information, speaker data, and survey information on speaker attitudes.

Language Maintenance and Language Death: The Decline of Texas Alsatian will be of interest not only to linguists, but also to historians interested in German-American history and more specifically, the German communities of Texas. Roesch's work is especially valuable as a model to scholars who are interested in doing similar types of dialect studies.

Language Maintenance and Language Death: The Decline of Texas Alsatian underscores the importance of dialect case studies in understanding maintenance and death, as well as the value of projects like the Texas German Dialect Project at the University of Texas, Austin: <http://www.tgdp.org/tgdp>.

Note

[1]. R. Warren, *The Community in America*, 3rd ed. (Boston: University Press of America, 1978); and J. Salmons, "The role of community and regional structure in language shift," in *Regionalism in the Age of Globalism, Vol. 1: Concepts of Regionalism*, ed. Lothar Hönnighausen, Marc Frey, James Peacock, and Niklaus Steiner (Madison, WI: Center for the Study of Upper Mid-

western Cultures, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2005), 129-38.

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