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Interview Methodology

Interviews usually happened in this way.
1. Engage the speaker(s) in introductory small talk to set them at ease.
2. Ask volunteers to translate a questionnaire from English to German
3. In some cases, use other interview tools such as describing pictures to elicit more natural speech than questionnaires give.
4. In some cases, follow up with more narrowly targeted follow-up questions and word lists to get grammatical forms and more vocabulary.
5. Ask speakers to relate any anecdotes, jokes, songs, recipes, etc. that they are comfortable relating in order to get more relatively free-speech examples of the dialect.

Since each interview was unique when meeting people where they live and different speakers showed different language competence, some interviews more successfully followed the pattern than others.
On multiple occasions when doing interviews, speakers would produce a standard German response and would have to be reminded to use the dialect used at home.
The Recordings

Most recordings prior to 2000 were made with portable cassette recorders. These cassettes were later digitized into .mp3 files. The quality of these converted files is affected by the age and condition of the cassette at the time it was digitized, combined with the compression technology used during conversion. Similarly, any digital recording done in a large .wav (i.e. uncompressed) format has been compressed to .mp3, greatly reducing file size for posting online. Otherwise, most recordings done since 2000 have been captured directly as .mp3.

The process of redacting recordings to remove any reference to the identity of a speaker or to select specific portions of a recorded interview has also resulted in some quality degradation, since a compressed .mp3 file is being further compressed when a selected portion is saved off as a new .mp3.

Thankfully, the goal of these interviews was never to produce acoustically perfect recordings for phonetic analysis, but rather to capture vocabulary and grammar features of the dialects and to preserve some spoken German for others to hear online. Only a few recordings were done in perfect interview conditions, such as in a quiet room, with just the fieldworker and the speaker working one-on-one. Most were conducted in group situations, with every effort being made to keep others quiet when an individual working a questionnaire was being recorded. Group dynamics actually helped encourage participation by shy participants and also resulted in some good back-and-forth among participants as to how something might have been said in the dialect.

External noises, such as a clock striking the hour or a phone ringing or a lawn mower running may occasionally occur while a person is being recorded.

Many of the files posted to ScholarWorks are zip files containing full sets of questionnaire responses for a speaker. This is done to reduce download file size.

The process of redacting recordings is slow work. Expect additional files to be posted to ScholarWorks throughout the rest of 2020 into 2021.

The Speakers

Not all speakers show the same level of fluency with vocabulary and grammar. All spoke German in their childhood, but gradually moved over to using mostly English in adulthood. Translating the questionnaires for many means speaking German from memory, with a word here and there never having been learned in German. Some people, though very few in numbers by 2020, still use German daily for social interactions with other German speakers. Many of those recorded are now deceased.

The identities of all recorded speakers are protected by disclosure agreements created to protect subjects who participate in human experimentation. Speakers will be identified only by Speaker ID, Gender, Year of Birth, County, City/Township, Dialect and Year of Recording. Some interviews involved multiple speakers sharing the interview.

Some speakers were interviewed multiple times over the years by different fieldworkers.
### Kansas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Year of Birth</th>
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The Questionnaires

Wenker Sentences

1. In the winter the dry leaves fly around in the air.
2. It will soon stop snowing, then the weather will get better again.
3. Put coals into the stove, so that the milk will start to boil soon.
4. The good old man broke through the ice with his horse and fell into the cold water.
5. He died four or six weeks ago.
6. The fire was too hot. The cakes are burned black on the bottom.
7. He always eats eggs without salt and pepper.
8. My feet hurt so much. I believe, I have walked them off.
9. I was at the woman's and told it to her, and she said, she wanted to tell it to her daughter too.
10. I also don’t want to do it ever again.
11. I am going to hit you around the ears with a wooden spoon, you monkey!
12. Where are you going? Shall we go with you?
13. The times are bad.
14. My dear child, stay down here. Those mean geese will bite you to death.
15. You learned the most today and were well-behaved. You may go home earlier than the others.
16. You aren't big enough to drink a whole bottle of wine. You have to grow some more first and get bigger.
17. Go, be so good and tell your sister she should finish sewing the clothes for your mother and clean them with a brush.
18. If only you had known him! Things would have turned out differently and he would be better off.
19. Who stole my basket of meat?
20. He acted as if they had hired him for the threshing; but they did it themselves.
21. Who did he tell the new story to?
22. One must shout loudly, otherwise he doesn't understand us.
23. We are tired and thirsty.
24. When we got home last night, the others were already lying in bed and were fast asleep.
25. The snow at our place stayed on the ground last night, but it melted this morning.
26. Behind our house stand three beautiful little apple trees with little red apples.
27. Couldn't you (all) wait a moment for us? Then we will go with you.
28. You (all) may not be so silly.
29. Our mountains aren't very high. Yours are much higher.
30. How many pounds of sausage and how much bread did you all want?
31. I don't understand you (all). You must speak a little louder.
32. Didn't you (all) find a piece of soap for me on my table?
33. His brother wants to build himself two beautiful new houses in your garden.
34. That word came straight from his heart!
35. They did the right thing!
36. What kind of little birds are sitting up there on the little wall?
37. The farmers had brought five oxen and nine cows and twelve little sheep before the village. They wanted to sell them.
38. All the people are outside today in the field and mowing.
39. Go on, the brown dog won't hurt you.
40. I drove with the people back there over the meadow into the grain field

KU Questionnaire

Please translate the following words and sentences into your German dialect.

1. The four seasons: spring, summer, fall, winter
2. The days of the week: Sunday - Saturday
3. The numbers from 1 - 10
4. Mother, father, brother, sister
5. That woman is a relative of mine.
6. I have a headache.
7. A girl and a boy; 2 girls and 2 boys
8. That was my neighbor's barn.
9. I like little red apples.
10. If I were rich, I would buy a new house.
11. If only I had told the truth.
12. Horse, goat, lightning bug
13. Put the milk on the table.
14. Wheat
15. This year
16. Outhouse
17. Noodles, dumplings, potatoes, cucumbers, sweet cream, watermelon, pepper
18. The children cried all night long.
19. That skunk stinks really bad.
20. He's going into town./ He lives in town.
21. We did the right thing.
22. Give me the book!
23. I am hungry and thirsty.
24. I'm getting older every day.
25. The burial is tomorrow, right?
26. They speak German differently than we do. (Added 2000
Reference Maps for Locating Potential Speakers

Speakers were sought out in those places that prior scholarly work had identified as locations where German-speaking immigrants settled starting in the 1830s in Missouri and a couple of decades later in Kansas. Two of those sources provided helpful maps. The top map in each state pair below shows the actual counties where interviews were held. The other shows the places of interest that guided our search for speakers.

Kansas Counties where Interviews Were Conducted 1981-2003

Missouri Counties Where Interviews Were Held 1993-2019

1 Color-coding for the dialects is based on this simplistic dialect map of Germany.

2 From 1877-1887, Georg Wenker, a German linguist, utilized a network of schoolteachers throughout the German Empire to present a questionnaire of sentences to speakers in thousands of locations. These 40 sentences were designed to present key lexical and grammatical items that could be used to differentiate the many German dialects. The data collected from this project were used to create the Deutscher Sprachatlas (DSA) that began to appear in print in 1927 and took 30 years to fully complete. This folio set of maps graphically depict the distribution of the dialects in the German Empire. So as not to lead speakers into using standard (i.e. high) German, With few exceptions for those who don’t know English well, KU researchers use the English version of the Wenker sentences as one of our primary interview tools. (Original German by Georg Wenker, c.1876. English by Ilse Vogel-Shire, c.1980).

1. Im Winter fliegen die trockenen Blätter in der Luft herum.
2. Es hört gleich auf zu schneien, dann wird das Wetter wieder besser.
3. Tu Kohlen in den Ofen, daß die Milch bald an zu kochen fängt.
4. Der gute alte Mann ist mit dem Pferde durchs Eis gebrochen und in das kalte Wasser gefallen.
5. Er ist vor vier oder sechs Wochen gestorben.
7. Er ißt die Eier immer ohne Salz und Pfeffer.
9. Ich bin bei der Frau gewesen und habe es ihr gesagt, und sie sagte, sie wollte es auch ihrer Tochter sagen.
10. Ich will es auch nicht mehr wieder tun.
11. Ich schlage dich gleich mit dem Kochlöffel um die Ohren, du Affe!
12. Wo gehst du hin? Sollen wir mit dir gehen?
13. Es sind schlechte Zeiten.
15. Du hast heute am meisten gelernt und bist artig gewesen. Du darfst früher nach Hause gehen als die anderen.
17. Geh, sei so gut und sag deiner Schwester, sie sollte die Kleider für eure Mutter fertig nähen und mit der Bürste rein machen.
19. Wer hat mir meinen Korb mit Fleisch gestohlen?
20. Er tat so, als hätten sie ihn zum Dreschen bestellt. Sie haben es aber selbst getan.
21. Wem hat er die neue Geschichte erzählt?
22. Man muß laut schreien, sonst versteht er uns nicht.
23. Wir sind müde und haben Durst.
25. Der Schnee ist diese Nacht bei uns liegen geblieben, aber heute morgen ist er geschmolzen.
28. Ihr dürft nicht solche Kindereien treiben.
30. Wieviel Pfund Wurst und wieviel Brot wollt ihr haben?
31. Ich verstehe euch nicht. Ihr müßt ein bißchen lauter sprechen.
32. Habt ihr kein Stückchen weiße Seife für mich auf meinem Tische gefunden?
33. Sein Bruder will sich zwei schöne neue Häuser in eurem Garten bauen.
34. Das Wort kam ihm vom Herzen!
35. Das war recht von ihnen!
36. Was sitzen da für Vögelchen oben auf dem Mauerchen?
38. Die Leute sind heute alle draußen auf dem Felde und mähen.
39. Geh nur, der braune Hund tut dir nichts.
40. Ich bin mit den Leuten da hinten über die Wiese ins Korn gefahren.

³ KU researchers use the KU questionnaire as an easier alternative/supplement to Wenker sentences in order to collect additional words and phrases that help distinguish different German dialects in Kansas and Missouri.