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# How Universal Is the Pragmatic Detachability Scale? Evidence from Texas German Discourse Markers

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## 1 Introduction

Over the past two decades, discourse markers (DMs) have attracted considerable attention because of their role in marking and negotiating speaker roles (cf. Schiffrin 1985, Brinton 1990, Jucker 1993, Schourup 1999, Fuller 2003, among others). More recently, a number of studies have analyzed DMs in language contact situations in order to determine what types of DMs are borrowed and why (cf. Brody 1987, Maschler 1998, Serra 1998). Depending on the intensity and length of contact between two languages, only selected DMs are borrowed. For example, Gumperz and Hernández-Chaves (1971: 319) show that Spanish-English bilinguals often use English DMs such as *you know* in Spanish. These can be regarded as ethnic identity markers much in the same way that Yiddish expressions like *oi gewalt* characterize the in-group English speech style of some Americans of Jewish heritage.

In other cases, entire discourse-marking systems can be borrowed from one language into another, often fulfilling specific emblematic, pragmatic, or semantic purposes. For example, American German dialects have borrowed English DMs due to intense contact over long periods of time (see Salmons 1990, Fuller 2001). One such DM is *well*, which serves the

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pragmatic function of framing the content of an utterance in the discourse of German-American bilinguals (see Fuller 2001). According to Matras' (1998) pragmatic detachability hierarchy, DMs such as *well* are borrowed particularly easily because they do not have semantic/pragmatic equivalents in the other language (cf. Fuller 2001 and de Rooij 2000).

In this paper, we compare previous research on English DMs in three American German dialects with more recent data on DMs extracted from a large electronic corpus of spoken Texas German (henceforth TxG). The focus of our investigation is the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic distribution of *you know* and its German equivalents *weisst du/weisst(e)*. The main questions addressed in this paper are the following: (1) Does *you know* have the same distribution in modern-day TxG as in Pennsylvania German and Indiana German? (2) Do TxG speakers prefer the use of *you know* over its German counterparts *weisst du/weisst(e)*? (3) Has modern-day TxG adopted an English-based DM system similar to other American German dialects? (4) How far do the TxG data support Matras' (1998) pragmatic detachability hierarchy?

The paper is structured as follows: Part one reviews some relevant aspects of English *you know*. Part two summarizes previous research on DMs in American German dialects. Part three discusses the distribution of *you know* in TxG and investigates how it differs from that of other American German dialects. In addition, we examine whether TxG *you know* exhibits the types of properties predicted by Matras' (1998) pragmatic detachability hierarchy. Finally, we will attempt to determine whether TxG is in the process of adopting an English-origin discourse marking system that replaces the German system of DMs.

## 2 Properties of English *You Know*

Östman (1981) distinguishes several functions of *you know*. The first function is 'face-saving and politeness', which performs an implicit anchoring function such as expressing relative certainty about the acceptability of the subject matter of an utterance, the speaker's emotional stake in the subject matter being breeched (1981: 6-7). According to Östman, *you know* can also lessen the aggressiveness or rudeness of an utterance, as is illustrated by sentences such as *You know, ma'am, if you weren't a lady, I'd punch you right in your face* (Östman 1981: 20).

The second function of *you know* is to mark the beginning or end of a speaker's speech-turn. Implicit anchorage is used by Östman to mean a pragmatic device for tags and hedges which he defines as 'to delimit the area of interest, and to capture the two most basic features of this class of linguistic phenomena' (Östman 1981: 5). These devices can be used to

mitigate the speaker's responsibility for the subject matter of an utterance and to soften the directness of a statement, sometimes implying through their use that in power-semantic terms, the speaker is inferior to the addressee because of his overt implication (*you know*) that the addressee has more information than he has himself. In this sense, expressing politeness is the main purpose of employing *you know* in this way.

Other functions of *you know* include planning and indirectness, i.e. elements of conversation which incorporate aspects of hesitation, repetition, false-starts, and afterthoughts, according to Östman. For example, pauses in speech that are not clearly identifiable as temporary can sometimes be erroneously understood as being relevant markers of transition, as is illustrated by *And then we used to – and I'm an artist you know we used to...* (Östman 1981: 19). These functions do not have to be intentional information-suppression on the part of the speaker, but could instead be indicative of the speaker's uncertainty of what he wants to say. In this way the speaker has failed to plan out his utterance and uses *you know* as a pause-filler. Östman (1981) claims that *you know* has also been characterized in terms of interjections, hedges, and turn-taking devices; in addition, it could be classified in the same category as modal or adverbial particles. This DM's general pragmatic purpose is that of a lexical hedge as it functions to qualify the whole speech act it appears with without actually adding any meaning itself (Östman 1981: 16, 31). As such, *you know* is a lexical-semantic plea for cooperation on the part of the speaker so that the addressee will presuppose the tenability of what he is saying. Moreover, *you know* can be used in the same way as *well* to acknowledge the insufficiency of a response (A: *What time is it?* B: *Well, you know, the sun just came up.* (Östman 1981: 32)). With this brief review of some of the most important functions of *you know*, we now turn to the properties of its German counterpart *weisst du/weisst(e)*.<sup>1</sup>

### 3 Previous Analyses

#### 3.1 English DMs in Texas German and Indiana German

Salmons (1990) analyzes the distribution of English and German DMs in Gillespie County Texas German and Dubois County Indiana German.<sup>2</sup> He

<sup>1</sup> For different intonation patterns of *you know* in utterance-initial and utterance-final positions, see Östman (1981: 22-24) for a description of the declarative and interrogative contours.

<sup>2</sup> The two dialects differ in that the former is of primarily Nassau-Hessian origin and thus exhibits many similar central German features, which makes it mutually intelligible with contemporary Standard German (Gilbert 1963, 1972). In contrast, the Dubois County speakers all speak different local varieties (see Salmons 1990: 456).

claims that language contact between English and German has resulted in a shared system of discourse marking that is basically the American English system. It includes borrowed English surface forms, whereas the German system shows only traces of itself (1990: 473). For example, all of Salmons' six speakers have largely lost German modal particles such as *ja*, *aber*, *mal*, and *denn* (1990: 464). At the same time, the speakers have acquired a new English-based system 'that performs some of the functions of the modal particles' (1990: 474).

An important feature of such mixed systems is that they show characteristics of borrowing and convergence, but do not fit definitions of code switching (1990: 455). While the loss of German DMs and simultaneous acquisition of most English DMs such as *well* is explained in terms of mutual convergence (1990: 474), Salmons points out that *you know* and *weisst du/weisst(e)* served similar functions before English and German came into contact with each other in Texas and Indiana. This observation leads him to propose that the distribution of the two DMs should not be described in terms of convergence (cf. Weinreich 1959), but rather in terms of 'overlap' as defined by Woolford (1983: 522) (see Salmons 1990: 469). Based on his field recordings, Salmons (1990) identifies three different functions of *you know* in Indiana German and TxG. The following example illustrates the first function, which is to clarify a point or to establish a shared knowledge with the hearer.

(1) Ich war hier mehre Jahre zurick, waren an Reise gewese mit die  
Feed Company, you know, womit ich arbeite due ...

'I was here back several years ago, [we] were on a trip with the feed  
company, you know, that I work for ...' (Salmons 1990: 460)

In (1), the speaker employs *you know* while telling a story about traveling for the feed company. This use signals to the hearer that the speaker intends to clarify whether the hearer has understood the first statement of his sentence. Alternatively, *you know* in this context could signal that the speaker and hearer share the same background knowledge (see Schifffrin (1987: 267-68), Salmons (1990: 459)). The second function of *you know* is that of hesitation or introspective use (see Schourup (1985: 102) and Salmons (1990: 459-60)), as illustrated by the following sentence:

- (2) Das is nicht schlim; das is alright; das is bloss, da sitzt man in Haus, man kann nichts doan, you know, und alles, muss da bei die Phone sitzen.

‘It’s not bad, it’s all right, it’s just that, there you sit in the house, you can’t do anything, you know, and all, [I] have to sit by the phone.’ (Salmons 1990: 460)

Another function identified by Salmons is that of self-repair, as discussed by Östman (1981: 29-31) employed here to smooth over a false start:

- (3) Aber das hat auch mit de ... you know, wenn sie mit in die Schul gehn...

‘But that has to do with the ... you know, when they go along to school ...’ (Salmons 1990: 460)

With this brief review of Salmons’ (1990) classification of *you know* in Texas German and Indiana German, we now turn to Fuller’s (2001) analysis of the distribution of *you know* in Pennsylvania German, which also considers the distribution of its German counterpart *weescht*.

### 3.2 Pragmatic Detachability of DMs in Pennsylvania German

Based on a total of thirty hours of conversational data collected among 18 speakers, Fuller (2001) discusses Pennsylvania German DMs in three categories: (1) DMs that have counterparts in both languages, (2) English DMs that do not have semantic/pragmatic equivalents in German, and (3) German DMs that do not have semantic/pragmatic equivalents in English. DMs of each category are listed in Table 1. Fuller’s (2001) analysis crucially depends on Matras’ (1998) account of grammatical borrowing, which we will now discuss briefly. Matras suggests that in language contact situations, the donor language is often pragmatically dominant, which can lead to mixed DM systems (DMs of donor and recipient languages converge), or the complete borrowing of the DM system of the donor language. Matras (1998) establishes three scenarios for DM borrowing: (1) the donor language is pragmatically dominant; (2) the change leading to convergence is not only gradual but also gradational; (3) there is a hierarchy of pragmatic detachability, and those DMs that are at the top of the hierarchy (i.e., pragmatically more detachable) will be borrowed first. Whether a DM is easily borrowed depends on three different scales.

Discourse marker	<i>N</i>	Discourse function
<i>well</i>	106	indicates that the subsequent utterance may not be what is expected by the hearer
<i>so</i>	193	links two utterances or assumptions causally
<i>y'know</i>	215	emphasis/focus; presents information as shared, creating common ground
<i>weescht</i>	154	emphasis/focus; presents information as shared, creating common ground
<i>but</i>	224	contrastive conjunction
<i>aber</i>	201	contrastive conjunction
<i>ja</i>	1	contrast an emphasis
<i>mal</i>	15	indicates the limited duration of the action referred to in the utterance

Table 1. *DMs in Pennsylvania German and their functions* (see Fuller 2001: 356)<sup>3</sup>

The first scale is the pragmatic detachability scale. Elements that organize the speech event are perceived as gesturelike,<sup>4</sup> situation-bound devices and are therefore detachable from the content message of the utterance, according to Matras (1998: 309). Such elements are more turn-related (e.g. *well*) and are borrowed before more content-related ones such as *but* (which functions to contrast the meanings of clauses). The second scale is the category-sensitive scale, which illustrates that elements that are more lexical or deictic are borrowed last. In other words, elements that are not easily analyzed in terms of lexical meaning (e.g., *well*) are predicted to be borrowed more easily than more highly lexical items (e.g. *you know*). Matras' (1998) third scale, the semantic scale, is used to measure DMs that identify contrast, restriction, or change, which are more easily borrowed than those that mark addition, elaboration, or continuation. Therefore,

<sup>3</sup> Fuller's (2001: 356) original table appears to have switched the order of *y'know* and *but*. Whereas her table shows *y'know* followed by *but*, *weescht*, and *aber*, we have corrected the order of DMs in our table to what we believe was the intended order of DMs in Fuller's original table.

<sup>4</sup> Gesturelike: In the area of conjunction and focus particles, it is hypothesized that gesturelike properties go together with the semantics-pragmatics of contrast, change, and restriction. In the domain of sentence particles, hesitation markers, fillers and tags, it can be assumed that the less lexical content an expression has and the less analyzable it is to the speaker, the more gesturelike and situation-bound it is likely to be (Matras 1998: 310).

contrastive *but* is more likely to be borrowed than the additive conjunction *and*.

Following Matras' (1998) proposals, Fuller (2001) splits Pennsylvania German DMs into three distinct groups, each differing in their level of pragmatic detachability. Members of the first group, which consists of *well* and *so*, signal a change in speakers, and their content is not easily analyzable, because they are nonlexical (Fuller 2001: 360). This combination of factors makes these DMs highly pragmatically detachable, which explains why they have been easily borrowed into PG from English (a fact that is also supported by the frequency data), according to Fuller.

Her second group, which includes *you know* and *but*, are ranked lower on the pragmatic detachability scale and are used in variation with their German counterparts *weescht* and *aber*. She points out that the English DMs are not borrowed that easily, because they are lexical. Although *you know* exhibits content-related functions, it is also frequently used in a turn-related fashion, which places it high enough on the pragmatic detachability scale to be borrowed into PG. With respect to the frequency of English DMs and their German counterparts Fuller claims that *you know* 'has operational features that contribute to its borrowability, and it is thus present at a high frequency: 215/369, or 58 percent, of the contributed *y'know weescht* tokens are *y'know* in these PG data' (2001: 361). Another important fact pointed out by Fuller is that both *y'know* and *weescht* appear in the same discourse contexts, that is, either at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of an utterance (2001: 362-363). Besides its literal usages indicating mutual knowledge (see also Östman 1981, Holmes 1986, Brinton 1990), a bid for common ground, a confirmation check, and an emphasis to draw attention to a point, among others, *y'know* and *weescht* can also be used nonliterally. An example is a case where information is clearly not known to the hearer, where both DMs can be used to indicate that an utterance contains new information and opinions (2001: 362). These observations lead her to the conclusion that there is 'a gradual turnover from the recipient-language discourse-marking system used in the donor language' (2001: 363).

The third group, which includes *ja* and *mal*, are at the lowest level of Fuller's hierarchy, because 'they are not pragmatically detachable, and they do not have English equivalents that could replace them' (2001: 365). Since they occur only infrequently in PG, Fuller proposes that they signal a loss of German DMs, or, in other words, that "the English discourse-marking system is taking over the language" (2001: 366).

The distribution of English and German DMs lead Fuller to propose that Pennsylvania German exhibits a gradual and gradational turnover from the recipient-language discourse-marking system to the DM system of the

donor language (i.e., English), where the motivation for borrowing is based on pragmatic functions (2001: 353). Thus, DMs that are high on the detachability scale (e.g., *well*) are borrowed more easily than those that are lower (e.g., *you know*), as illustrated by Table 1 (cf. Fuller 2001: 363). At the same time, German-origin DMs that persist are pragmatically detachable vestiges. She concludes that the likelihood of a DM to be lost or borrowed is predictable based on Matras' (1998) pragmatic detachability scale (Fuller 2001: 367). Having surveyed the distribution of *you know* and its German counterparts in three American German dialects, we now turn to data from present-day Texas German. We begin with a brief discussion of the present situation of TxG, and then we address issues of data collection and analysis.

#### **4 Distribution of *You Know* in Present-Day Texas German**

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, only an estimated 8-10,000 fluent speakers of fifth and sixth generation Texas Germans remain. The number of semifluent speakers using a drastically reduced inventory of phrases based on the language of their forbearers is estimated to be 4-6,000. Since the great majority of the remaining fluent and semifluent speakers of TxG are sixty years and older and the dialect is not learned by the younger generations, it is considered a critically endangered dialect. This sharp decrease in speakers puts TxG on the list of about 3,000 languages and dialects world-wide that are expected to go extinct by the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (see Boas 2005: 1031).

##### **4.1 Data Collection and Analysis**

In 2001, the Texas German Dialect Project (TGDP) was founded at the University of Texas at Austin in order to record and archive as many remaining TxG speakers as possible. Since 2002, members of the TGDP have interviewed more than 180 fluent speakers of TxG in New Braunfels, Fredericksburg, Doss, Brenham, Victoria, Houston, Schulenburg, Black Jack, Spring Branch, Bulverde, and Crawford, among other locations. The interviews have resulted in the recording of different types of data, including open-ended sociolinguistic interviews and elicitation tasks, as well as written demographic questionnaires (see Boas 2003). The audio recordings of the open-ended interviews are transcribed and translated using the ELAN annotation software, and subsequently stored in the Texas German Dialect Archive (see Boas 2006), which is accessible over the



internet.<sup>5</sup> The resulting electronic corpus is in XML-compatible format and is searchable using a web-based concordancer interface that employs PERL regular expressions (Hall and Schwartz 1997).

In October 2005, we accessed the on-line archive with the concordancer interface, searching for the distribution of *you know* and its German counterparts in the transcriptions of the informants' speech. We searched the transcripts of open-ended interviews with 70 informants (each interview is about 50-55 minutes in length), which were conducted between February 2002 and September 2005. The electronic corpus contains a total of 305,429 German words uttered by our informants.<sup>6</sup> Our search resulted in a list of 599 instances of *you know* and 5 instances of *weisst du/weisst(e)* used as DMs (as opposed to their use in questions (e.g., *You know where the store is?*) or other types of grammatical constructions). The list was then divided into five different categories, according to the functions of the DMs: awareness of shared knowledge, clarification of common knowledge, indication of hesitation, self-repair, and appeal for understanding. In the following sections, we first discuss the distribution of the English and German DMs for each of the categories, and then we compare our findings with the results of Salmons (1990) and Fuller (2001).

#### 4.2 Awareness of Shared Knowledge

The most common use of *you know* and *weisst du/ weissst(e)* in present-day TxG is to encourage the hearer to accept what the speaker is saying as shared knowledge (cf. Östman 1981, Schiffrin 1987). For example, in (4) the speaker aims to convince the hearer to recognize that there was only one person among a group of people who became a teacher. This sentence illustrates that *you know* is often used to introduce new knowledge, where *you know* signals the beginning of new information (cf. Brinton 1990):

- (4) Und der einzige Lehrer, die anderen warn alle you know Haus  
and the only teacher the others were all you know house  
frauen geworden oder Farmers oder was.  
wives became or farmers or something

‘And the only teacher, the others all became you know housewives

<sup>5</sup> The URL of the TGDP is <http://www.tgdp.org>. For more information on ELAN, which was developed by the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics at Nijmegen, see <http://www.mpi.nl/tools/elan.html>.

<sup>6</sup> The electronic corpus is enlarged constantly as more recordings are transcribed, translated, and stored in the online archive.

- or farmers or something (else).’ (1-25-1-3-a)<sup>7</sup>  
 (5) Mit de dope da you know drugs.  
 ‘With the dope there, you know drugs.’ (1-98-1-130-a)

Example (5) shows that *you know* is also employed to introduce new information at the end of sentences. In this case, the speaker introduces the borrowed word *drugs* in combination with *you know* in order to make sure that the hearer understands what is meant. In (6) the speaker answers a question about the class size of elementary school classes in a small rural community northwest of Fredericksburg in the late 1940s. After acknowledging that there were quite a few students, the speaker uses *you know* to encourage the hearer to acknowledge the actual class size as being 45 or 50 students. This use of *you know* is an instance of what He and Lindsey (1998) label an ‘information status enhancing device’, used to highlight a specific point (in this case, the more exact number of students).

- (6) Oh da waren mehr divan you know finfundverzig fuchzig.  
 Oh there were more of that you know five-and-forty fifty  
 ‘Oh, there were more of those, you know, forty-five, fifty.’  
 (1-54-1-2-a)

Similar to Fuller’s (2001) description of Pennsylvania German, our data show that *you know* and *weisst du/weisst(e)* can occur in the same contexts in TxG. The following example is a response to a question about who immigrated to Texas in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

- (7) Unser Verwandte weisste und da.  
 our relative you know and there.  
 ‘Our relative you know and there.’ (1-28-1-22-a)

So far, we have shown that this particular use of the two DMs in modern-day TxG is similar to that described by Salmons (1990) for (older) TxG and Indiana German, and by Fuller (2001) for Pennsylvania German. However, there is one important difference between Fuller’s (2001) data set and ours. Although the English and German DMs can occur in the same contexts in

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<sup>7</sup> The combination of numbers at the end of sentences point to files in the Texas German Dialect Archive (<http://www.tgdp.org>) that contain them. The first number refers to the interviewer, the second number identifies the informant, the third number represents the interview with the informant, and the fourth number indicates the section of the interview. The designations ‘a’ and ‘v’ refer to audio and video, respectively.

both Pennsylvania German and TxG, they differ drastically in their numerical distribution. When used to indicate awareness of shared knowledge, we found 539 tokens of *you know* (99.63 percent), but only two tokens of *weisst du/weisst(e)* (0.37 percent) in the TxG corpus. This is in stark contrast to Fuller's data set, where 58 percent of the overall number of *y'know weescht* tokens are *y'know* (2001: 361). Since Fuller does not include specific frequency counts when discussing the different uses of the two DMs, we will return to this point after discussing the other functions of the two DMs (and their frequencies) in TxG. Our discussion of the frequency data will also shed light on the question of whether Matras' (1998) pragmatic detachability hierarchy makes the right predictions about the distribution of bilingual DMs in TxG.

### 4.3 Clarification of Common Knowledge

The second major function of *you know* in TxG is to mark knowledge that is already known to the speaker. This function, which is similar to its Pennsylvania German counterpart labeled by Fuller (2001: 361) as 'confirmation check', differs from the one above in that it does not introduce new information or attempts to encourage the speaker to accept the information following *you know* as new information. Consider (8), which comes at the end of a lengthy narrative about World War I explaining how Germany had lost the war. Here *you know* serves to repeat common knowledge in order to make sure that the hearer knows about the content of the utterance. This strategy re-affirms a mutual understanding about the situation.

- (8) In neunzehnzwanzig Deutschland war nichts, you know.  
 'In 1920 Germany was nothing, you know.' (1-63-1-2-a)
- (9) Und denn du kocht das icing you know iber und tue das iber.  
 and then you cook that icing you know over and put it over  
 'And then you cook the icing, you know, over and put it over [it].'  
 (1-60-1-15-a)
- (10) Aber die hat ... you know gutes Gemis von Leut gekauft.  
 but she has ... you know good vegetables from people bought  
 'But she has, you know, bought good vegetables from people.'  
 (1-39-1-11-a)

A similar state of affairs can be observed in (9), where the speaker uses *you know* to indicate that both she and the interviewer are aware of (a) what

icing is, and (b) that there is a pre-arranged set of steps for preparing cakes, i.e. that cooking the icing and putting it on the cake is the logical next step after the cake has come out of the oven and has cooled off. Similarly, in (10) the speaker uses *you know* to reference a previous statement that she made about her relative being a good cook. In this case, *you know* indicates that the validity of her statement will already be anticipated by the hearer. These uses of *you know* are identified by Schourup (1985) as one its central functions:

Y[ou] k[now] indicates that the speaker expects that there is no communicatively significant discrepancy between what is now in the private world and what is now in the other world, with respect to what is now in the shared world.  
(Schourup 1985: 102)

Similar occurrences are found with the German DM *weisste* as the following sentence shows:

(11) Und die - die Männer, weisste, was auch durch die Schule  
And the - the men, you know, which also through the school  
gegangen warn un was.  
went gone and what

‘And the men, you know, who also completed school and so on.’  
(1-28-1-23-a)

The example in (11) is part of a conversation about attending a vocational school in San Antonio. Before uttering (11), the informant is talking about the fact that all teachers had to go through the school in order to get an education. The use of *weisste* reiterates that the teachers attending the school also included male teachers. Comparing the frequency of the DMs with this function, we find a total of 22 instances of *you know* and only 2 instances of *weisst du/weisst(e)*.

#### 4.4 Indication of Hesitation

*You know* can also be used as an indication of hesitation on the part of the speaker when the subject matter is difficult or evocative of strong emotions. This often is the case when a speaker has begun to discuss something emotional, like the loss of a friend or relative, or something that could be

embarrassing, such as a relative's alcoholism. Such instances are often precipitated by pauses as the following examples illustrate.

- (12) Andere da ... sind gestorben oder ... oder you know, das is das,  
 others there have died or or you know that is that

wenn's einfach so allmählich komm.  
 when-it simply so slowly comes

'Others there died, or, you know, that is it when it simply goes like that.' (1-25-1-21-a)

- (13) Alle die – da war so 'n Art uh you know Krieg gewesen da  
 all those there was so a sort uh you know war was there

sehr ... uh unruh  
 very uh unrest

'All those- there was a sort of uh, you know, war there and a lot of uh unrest.' (1-59-1-4-a)

This use of *you know* is similar to Salmons' (1990: 458) discussion of Schourup's (1985) notion of introspective usage of DMs in similar situations. This appears to be congruent with our example of hesitation in (12), where *you know* is not merely a pause-filler, though it does occur in conjunction with pauses and hesitation. The corpus contains a total of four instances of this function of *you know*, but no comparable examples with *weisst du/weisst(e)*.

#### 4.5 Self-Repair

Salmons (1990: 460) points out that sometimes 'self-repair is set up with *you know*'. In our data, we found nine examples where a speaker misspeaks and *you know* is used to mark the mistake in a way that expresses something like *you know what I meant to say* (we did not find any instances of *weisst du/weisst(e)* in this context). Consider (14), where the speaker says the wrong number and uses *you know* to segue into the correction when talking about the end of World War I:

- (14) Uh es nähmte denn bis acht you know neunzehnachtzehn wenn  
uh it took then until eight you know nineteen eighteen when  
  
der Krieg vorbei war ...  
the war over was ...

‘It took then until eight, you know, nineteen eighteen when the war was over...’ (1-63-1-2-a)

- (15) Es wächst nach San Anton ganz wei-, you know, ganz viel.  
it grows to San Antonio very fa-, you know, very much  
‘It grows to San Antonio very fa-, you know, a whole lot.  
(1-98-1-13-a)

Similarly, when informant 98 talks about urban sprawl in the San Antonio area in (15) she stops short of completing the phrase *ganz weit* (‘very far’), interrupts her sentence with *you know*, and then completes it with *ganz viel* (‘very much’). Sentences (16) and (17) provide additional examples of *you know* being used for self-repair.

- (16) Denn ge- denn das Blut you know - UH Messer genom un  
then Pr then the blood you know - uh knife taken and  
  
in uh in Hals hier  
in uh in throat here

‘Then the blood you know – I took the knife and put it in the throat here.’ (1-7-1-21-a)

- (17) Mein Grossvater war war verheiradet bevo- you know ... before  
my grandfather was was married befo- you know ... before  
  
uh uh anyhow uh – denn he married.  
uh uh anyhow uh – then he married

‘My grandfather was married before, you now, before, uh, anyhow uh, then he married.’ (1-92-1-8-a)

#### 4.6. Appeal for Understanding

*You know* can also be built into a statement as an appeal for understanding or empathizing with the speaker's disposition toward the information contained in the statement. This use of *you know* is different from the simple use signaling awareness of knowledge discussed in 4.2 in that it includes an emotional component which reveals the speakers' feelings. Consider example (18), which is uttered during a conversation about activities during lunch breaks at school in the 1930s.

- (18) You know ich kann mich gar nicht mehr erinnern.  
 you know I can myself totally not more remember  
 'You know, I totally can't remember that myself.' (1-8-1-4-a)

Before uttering (18), the informant talks about playing baseball during breaks while in sixth and seventh grade. However, when asked about what children used to play during lunch breaks in elementary school, she admits that she cannot remember what games she used to play when she was that young. The use of *you know* at the beginning of this sentence thus suggests that the informant may feel slightly embarrassed, which explains her use of the DM. That is, she intends to appeal for the understanding of the hearer.

Sometimes, *you know* is also used to mark a sentence as contradictory to what one might expect. In this case, the DM is used to appeal to the hearer's attention that the utterance may contain some unexpected information that the hearer was unaware of previously. An example of this use of *you know* is (19), where the informant explains why she did not understand the reasons for not being allowed to speak German in school:

- (19) You know ich war ... uh ... uhm ... acht I guess.  
 'You know I was ... uh ... uhm ... eight I guess.' (1-82-1-8-a)

Sentences (20) - (21) are other examples illustrating this particular use of *you know*. (20) is uttered in a context where the informant expresses her remorse that she and her husband did not teach their kids German when they were growing up.

- (20) You know das ist jetzt unser ganze Schuld.  
 you know that is now our whole guilt  
 'You know, we're really guilty of that.' (1-85-1-8-a)

- (21) You know die die darf nicht nach die Schule gehn.  
 you know they they allowed not to the school go  
 ‘You know, they were not allowed to go to school.’ (1-59-1-12-a)

Before uttering (21), informant 59 talks about school education in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, pointing out that school education was generally available for every child, even in remote areas of the Hill Country. However, (21) reminds the hearer that there was an (from today’s point of view unfair) exception to the availability of school education beyond the fifth grade, namely, that girls were not allowed to continue their education once they had reached a certain age. As with the previous usages of *you know* and *weisst du/weisst(e)* can appear in the same pragmatic contexts. However, the distribution of the DMs is extremely unbalanced, with *you know* appearing 25 times in our corpus, and *weisst du/weisst(e)* only once, as shown in (22):

- (22) Weisst, er hat un- er hat un- ... ein Geschäft gehabt.  
 you know he has un- he has un- a store had  
 ‘You know he had a store.’ (1-1-1-29-a)

#### 4.7 Comparison with Salmons’ (1990) and Fuller’s (2001) Data

Table 2 summarizes our discussion of the present-day TxG data in the sections above. Comparing our data with Salmons’ (1990) and Fuller’s (2001) classifications of the functions of *you know* and *weisst du/weisst(e)* we note a number of important similarities. *You know* is most frequently used in our data to indicate that both the speaker and the addressee are aware of shared knowledge. This suggests that for Texas Germans establishing a communicative base-line may be a very important element of discourse, a point already made by Fuller (2001).

Our data are also similar to Salmons’ (1990) and Fuller’s (2001) accounts in that they reflect the use of *you know* to indicate the clarification of common knowledge, hesitation, and self-repair. In concordance with Salmons (1990) and Östman (1981), we also find that the DMs appear most frequently in the middle of utterances, as Table 3 illustrates. This distribution can be partially attributed to the fact that the DMs often occur in conjunction with pauses and between clauses.



Category	<i>you know</i>	<i>weisst du/weisst(e)</i>
Aware of knowledge shared	539	2
Clarification of common knowledge	22	2
Indication of hesitation	1	0
Self-repair	12	0
Appeal for understanding	25	1

Table 2. *Summary of pragmatic contexts in present-day TxG*

Position of DM	<i>you know</i>	<i>weisst du/weisst(e)</i>
Utterance-initially	82	1
Utterance-medially	359	4
Utterance-finally	158	0

Table 3. *Distribution of discourse markers*

Interestingly, there are also some differences between our corpus data and the data reported by Salmons (1990) and Fuller (2001). For example, Salmons claims that ‘the slots where English DMs occur are not natural slots in German to contemporary European speakers’ (1990: 362-363). Based on informal interviews with six native German speakers residing in Europe, we could not confirm this type of restriction for our data extracted from the TxG corpus. That is, given a range of options and contexts, native German speakers are indeed capable of filling *weisst du/weisst(e)* into empty slots of sentences where *you know* has previously been deleted. For example, after erasing *you know* from a sentence such as *You know das ist jetzt unser ganze Schuld* (1-85-1-8-a), we asked our European German informants what types of DMs they could fill in, given different contexts. Answers to this, as well as fifty other examples randomly chosen from our dataset, included *ja*, *doch*, *naja*, and *weisst du/ weisst(e)*, depending on the context. The results from this preliminary experiment suggests that *you know* and *weisst du/weisst(e)* may be used interchangeably in TxG. Additional evidence comes from two sources. First, we created a list of twenty-five English sentences including *you know* in various contexts. In January 2006, we asked ten Texas German informants from Fredericksburg and Doss to translate the sentences from English into TxG. Except for three

mistranslations, all informants successfully translated *you know* as *weisst du/weisst(e)* into TxG. The second piece of evidence for the interchangeability of the two DMs comes from Fuller's Pennsylvania German data, which demonstrate that 'the placement options for these DMs are the same (2001: 361-62).

Another difference between present-day TxG and the data presented by Salmons (1990) and Fuller (2001) is the occurrence of *you know* in contexts that have previously not been described in detail. The first type concerns the use of *you know* preceding or following borrowed words and phrases as illustrated by the following examples.

- (23) Was ist das Wort wo die punished 'em you know.  
 what is the word where they punished them you know  
 'What is the word, they punished them, you know.' (1-1-1-6-a)
- (24) Un you know my dad done often said neunzehnneuzehn das war...  
 'And you know my dad done often said nineteen nineteen that  
 was...'. (1-21-1-9-a)
- (25) Oh der war raus und hat tires gechanged, you know.  
 oh it was out and had tires changed, you know  
 'Oh he was outside and changed tires, you know.' (1-114-1-8-a)
- (26) Die ham ein von die was did hat you know foreign language.  
 they have one of the was did have you know foreign language  
 'They have ... one of them knew, you know, a foreign language.'  
 (1-78-1-10-a)
- (27) Well, das musste alles you know with elevation geschossen  
 well that must everything you know with elevation shot  
 werden.  
 been  
 'Well, all of it, you know, had to be shot with elevation.'  
 (1-90-1-15-a)

The uses of *you know* in (23) – (27) signal shared knowledge or an attempt to appeal to the hearer to accept what the speaker is saying. Technically, this use could be considered a subtype of the more general type of 'confirmation check' described in section 4.3. We attribute the high frequency of this particular use of the DM to the fact that all interviewers

speak Standard German with the informants, who are often aware of the linguistic differences. In other words, the differences between the two varieties – including the misperception among some speakers of TxG that their variety is somehow inferior vis-à-vis Standard German – and the fact that the interviewers also speak English fluently may lead the TxG speakers to employ *you know* in the context of a word or phrase that is borrowed from English.

Another phenomenon that we have found in our corpus data, and which is not explicitly mentioned by Salmons (1990) or Fuller (2001), is the combined use of two DMs next to each other. Consider (28), where *you know* is followed by *well* in the middle of the sentence.

(28) Und denn hier sind die Kinder, die sind alle, you know, well,  
and then here are the children they are all you know well

Englisch und die Eltern, sie waren Deutsch.  
English and the parents they were German

‘And then here are the children, they are all, you know, well,  
English, and the parents, they were German.’ (1-63-1-6-a)

At first sight, it is not clear how to classify the use of *you know* in (28). It could be regarded as indicating hesitation on the part of the speaker who, while uttering (28), is in the process of realizing that there are pronounced linguistic and cultural differences between the older and the younger generations. This analysis is supported by the subsequent use of *well*, which has been classified as a conversational-coherence marker which indicates that the speaker’s utterance may not fit with the presuppositions of the hearer (Schiffrin 1987: 127). This view suggests that *well* may be used to emphasize the meaning of *you know* in this particular context in order to heighten the feeling of uncertainty and embarrassment that overcomes the speaker while uttering (28). Alternatively, the use of *you know* in combination with *well* could be interpreted as an attempt to establish mutual knowledge with the hearer (cf. section 4.2 above). Often it is not possible to clearly distinguish between the different functions of the DMs. For example, the combined use of *you know* and *well* in (29) may at first sight appear to signal self-repair (cf. section 4.5 above).

(29) Wenn wir jetzt Kinder gehabt hätten, you know, well wir haben  
if we now children have had you know well we have

sie hat zwei Kinder gehabt.  
she has two children had

‘If we would have had children now, you know, well, we have she  
had two children.’ (1-94-1-18-a)

In sentence (29) the speaker tells a story about how he and his wife did not have children, only to go on to say how his sister had two children. The use of *you know* in the middle of the sentence could be regarded as an appeal for understanding if the sentence ended naturally by naming the consequences of having children. However, the conditional sentence is interrupted halfway and is continued instead by the regular declarative sentence *sie hat zwei Kinder gehabt* (‘... she had two children’). This suggests that *you know* is employed here both as an appeal for understanding and as an indicator of hesitation followed by *well* to start a new thought. This overlap in functions becomes even more complicated when *you know* is both preceded and followed by *well* as in the following example:

(30) Well die kam’n zu mich, und ich well you know well meine uh ich  
well she came then to me and I well you know well my uh I

hab ein Bruder gehabt.  
have a brother had

‘Well, she came to me, and I well you know well my uh I had a  
brother.’ (1-39-1-15-a)

The frequency of *you know* vis-à-vis *weisst du/weisst(e)* is another point that sets our data apart from those reported by Salmons (1990) and Fuller (2001). In contrast to Salmons, we have already shown above that the two DMs are capable of occurring in the same pragmatic contexts, i.e., they can be substituted for each other. This would lead us to expect that *weisst du/weisst(e)* would also occur relatively frequently in our corpus data. However, this expectation is not borne out. In our data we find only an 0.83 percent occurrence of *weisst(e)/weisst du* with an overwhelming occurrence of 99.17 percent of *you know* compared to 58 percent for *you know* and 42 percent for *weescht* in Fuller’s PG data. In the following section we discuss

a possible explanation for the unequal distribution of the two DMs in present-day TxG.

## 5 Evidence for Matras' (1998) Pragmatic Detachability Hierarchy?

One way of explaining the low frequency of *weisst du/weisst(e)* in present-day TxG would be to follow Fuller's (2001) proposals, i.e. to adopt Matras' (1998) concept of pragmatic detachability to explain the borrowing of English DMs into TxG. In this view *you know* has been borrowed into TxG because it has a number of operational features, i.e. content-related and turn-related functions, which contribute to its borrowability (Fuller 2001: 361). Following this line of reasoning requires us to consider a number of other important points, to which we now turn.

The first point concerns the present-day status of TxG DMs vis-à-vis Salmons' (1990) account. Concerning the distribution of *you know* and *weisst du/weisst(e)* Salmons claims that 'it is not surprising, then, to find these two surface forms, one English and one German, in variation for many speakers' (1990: 469). Although he does not provide exact frequency counts reflecting the variation between these English and German DMs, it appears as if the distribution is significant enough for Salmons to characterize it as 'overlap' (1990: 469). While this overlap undoubtedly still exists in present-day TxG, our corpus data demonstrate that at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century there is virtually no variation left between the two DMs (99.17 percent of the tokens in our corpus are *you know*). Our comparison of present-day TxG with Salmons' data, which was collected in the early 1980s, thus indicates a dramatic loss of *weisst du/weisst(e)* within two decades.<sup>8</sup> As such, our data are also in stark contrast to the distribution of the two DMs in Pennsylvania German, where *y'know* exhibits a much higher frequency (58 percent of tokens) (Fuller 2001: 361). This divergence in distribution would suggest that present-day TxG *you know* is located at a higher level of Matras' (1998) pragmatic detachability scale than it is in Pennsylvania German. As such, our data would also indicate that the turnover from the recipient-language discourse-marking system to that of the donor language is much further advanced in present-day TxG than previously thought. Although such an explanation sounds intriguing at first

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<sup>8</sup> The difference in variation could also be caused by discrepancies between corpora. The data cited by Salmons are based on fieldwork with three TxG speakers in Gillespie County. In contrast, our corpus data are based on interviews with 70 TxG speakers from various locations across central Texas.

sight, it is imperative that we consider it in the overall context of Matras' scale.

The second point of significance is thus the question of whether other TxG DMs exhibit frequencies that are similar to those reported by Fuller (2001) for Pennsylvania German.<sup>9</sup> According to Fuller, the contrastive conjunctions *but* and (its German counterpart) *aber*, are roughly at the same level of the pragmatic detachability scale as *you know* and *weisst du/weisst(e)*, with the English DM accounting for 47 percent of all tokens, and its German counterpart for 53 percent (2001: 364). The distribution of these DMs is quite different in the electronic corpus of present-day TxG, where we find 1493 instances of contrastive *aber* (94 percent of all tokens), but only 93 instances (6 percent) of contrastive *but*. This difference in distribution suggests that in TxG, in contrast to Pennsylvania German, *but* and *aber* are not part of a pattern indicating 'borrowing of DMs, possibly as part of a turnover in the discourse-marking system from a German system to an English one' (Fuller 2001: 365). If we were to establish a hierarchy similar to Fuller's (2001) ranking of DMs based on Matras' (1998) pragmatic detachability scale (cf. Table 1), the order for *but/aber* and *you know/weisst(e)/ weisst du* would be reversed.

Next, consider the distribution of German-origin DMs such as *ja*, *mal*, and *doch*, which 'do not have easy English equivalents that could replace them' (Fuller 2001: 365). Their infrequent use in Pennsylvania German is explained by the fact that they are 'fairly low on the pragmatic-detachability scale', which in turn lends further support to Fuller's hypothesis that 'there is a general trend away from the use of German-origin DMs in PG and that an English discourse-marking system is taking over the language' (2001: 366). Similarly, Salmons (1990: 462) claims that such DMs 'have been lost or radically reduced in function and frequency for even the most fluent speakers in central Texas and southwestern Indiana.' However, a search of our corpus data does not confirm Salmons' and Fuller's claims. For example, contrary to Salmons' (1990: 462) assertion that *doch* 'is essentially nonexistent among Texas and Indiana Germans', we find 118 tokens of it in our corpus. Other German-origin DMs that we found in our

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<sup>9</sup> Both *well* and *so* occur at a much higher frequency (796 and 2211 instances, respectively) in our corpus than any other DMs analyzed in this paper. As such, their distributions are similar to those reported by Salmons (1990) and Fuller (2001) vis-à-vis other English DMs. Note, however, that it is problematic to compare the properties and frequencies of *well* and *so* with those of other English DMs that have German equivalents. The former have virtually no 'competition' from pre-existing DMs in the recipient language, whereas the latter are capable of occurring in the same contexts and are thus susceptible to turnover of the type reported by Fuller.

corpus, but which are claimed to have been almost completely abandoned, include *mal* (138 tokens) and *ja* (142 tokens), besides others.<sup>10</sup> The frequency of these German-origin DMs in present-day TxG thus shows that they have not yet been lost completely, but are rather unexpectedly well represented.

## 6 Conclusions

Our analysis of present-day TxG has demonstrated that *you know* and its German counterpart *weisst du/weisst(e)* occur in similar pragmatic contexts, namely (1) to indicate awareness of shared knowledge, (2) to clarify common knowledge, (3) to indicate hesitation, (4), to appeal for the hearer's understanding, and (5) as a self-repair strategy. Based on data from a large electronic corpus we have shown that the distribution of the two DMs is similar to that reported by Fuller (2001) for Pennsylvania German.

Besides these similarities, we have also shown that our data differ significantly from those reported by Salmons (1990) and Fuller (2001). The first difference concerns the frequency of English and German DMs. For example, we found that TxG *you know* accounts for an overwhelming 99.17 percent of the *you know/weisst(e)* tokens in our corpus, compared to 58 percent *you know* tokens in Fuller's Pennsylvania German data. This high frequency has led us to hypothesize that TxG *you know* may be more pragmatically detachable than its Pennsylvania German counterpart. This, in turn, would suggest that the turnover from the recipient language discourse-marking system to that of the donor language (English) has progressed further in TxG than in Pennsylvania German. However, we have been unable to confirm our hypothesis as we also found frequency data on TxG *but* and *aber* that could be interpreted as counter evidence. More specifically, these DMs do not conform to Fuller's proposal that they are located at the same mid-level position on Matras' (1998) pragmatic detachability scale as *you know* and *weisst du/weisst(e)*. Furthermore, German-origin DMs such *ja* and *mal*, which are supposed to have basically dropped out of use in both TxG and Pennsylvania German appear with a surprisingly high frequency in our corpus despite their location at the very bottom of Matras' pragmatic detachability hierarchy.

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<sup>10</sup> Examples of *mal* and *ja* include the following:

- (i) And hat sie gesagt, ich will mal wissen, wie freundlich Neu Braunfels ist.  
'And the she said I'd like to know how friendly New Braunfels is.' (1-59-1-18-a)
- (ii) Und denn denn habe ich ja ein hübsches Mädchen gesehen un uh hab getanzt  
'And then I saw a beautiful girl and danced.' (1-92-1-11-a)

At this point, our preliminary analysis suggests that Matras' (1998) hierarchy is not universally applicable to language contact situations across the board, because it does not appear to make the correct predictions about the distribution of bilingual DMs in TxG. The divergent properties of DMs in the donor dialects forming the basis for TxG and Pennsylvania German (cf. Raith 1992, Trudgill 2004, Boas 2005) could be one possible explanation for this discrepancy. Another would be to propose that some DMs in TxG are perhaps more resilient to being replaced than others. If this were the case, we would have to develop ways of measuring different synchronic and diachronic factors that influence the turnover of individual DMs. Clearly, further research needs to address the different questions raised in this paper in order to arrive at a better understanding of (1) the distribution of DMs in TxG and (2) the universal applicability of Matras' (1998) pragmatic detachability scale.



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