

**Chapter 5**  
**SHARED DISCOURSE OF GRIEF:**  
**A Linguistic Universal**

In the previous chapters, I have argued that cemeteries serve as a micro-museum of the culture that surrounds them; that the individual gravestones primarily reflect the thoughts of the grieving family; that the messages are written in three linguistic styles; and that the messages (as written for 150 years) do not substantially vary through time.

In this chapter, then, I shall build upon these arguments and demonstrate that throughout measurable time and within all Texas ethnic cultures, the grieving families, no matter which style or register they use, express their mourning through the use of a predictable linguistic pattern of grief. In other words, a universal discourse of grief overrides cultural conventions. That socio-biological linguistic universal whispers silently to all of us from each and every cemetery we choose to visit.

Within this universal discourse of grief, the grieving families place primary emphasis on the NAME of the deceased. Of secondary importance, the families want us to know the DATE OF DEATH. Third in importance, they tell us the AGE of the deceased, at the time of death. Fourth, they want us to know of family relationships, of KINSHIP

ties. Fifth, and finally, they may give us a PERSONALIZED EPITAPH.

If financial or other concerns interfere, the list grows shorter. Some families only inscribe the name of the deceased.

I wish to begin my arguments with a detailed discussion of the Texas German cemeteries. I will then give examples from various other Texas ethnic gravemarkers, showing an identical discourse of grief.

### **Pragmatics**

For more than 150 years the central and south Texas German community has accepted and used two linguistically recognized language codes: German and English.

In the following chapter, we will discuss the combined use of these two codes within a Mixed Code. For the purposes of this chapter, we will use examples from selected gravemarker photographs to illustrate that English is the dominant language, German the dominated language. Figure 5.1 displays the chronological range of our selected

**Figure 5.1: German and English Texas German Gravemarkers, by years**

<b>German</b>	<b>year</b>	<b>English</b>
	<b>1847</b>	Rudinger
	<b>1868</b>	Hoffman
Steinmetz, Horne	<b>1870</b>	Muller
Horne	<b>1880</b>	Fritz
Olhereiser	<b>1890</b>	Baumberger
Hollas	<b>1900</b>	Schulze
Niesner	<b>1910</b>	Schmidt

Wagner	1920	Geiss
Skolaut	1930	Vorden Baum
Skolaut	1940	Schulze
	1950	Rittiman
	1960	Mader

photographs. Note that on the oldest (1847) legible gravemarker the German surname<sup>i</sup> is written within an all-English message. Note also that no German language gravemarkers appear after the 1940s. Thus English appeared on gravemarkers earlier than did the German and remains long after the German ceased, illustrating English as the dominant language.

From a sociolinguistic viewpoint, each of the two language codes on Texas German gravemarkers differ in all four of the standard substructures of language: phonology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. The *phonology* (or its written equivalent, spelling), the *syntax*, or grammar, and the *semantics*, or word meaning, of the two gravemarker language codes are easily measured by comparison with the conventions of standard English and of standard German.

The *pragmatic* substructure of gravemarkers, however, offers more problems than the other three substructures. Pragmatics, constitutes the conventions of discourse—who says what and when. It can be found, for example, in the established conventions for greeting people.

Among friends, exchanging conventional phrases, like “Hello”; asking about each other’s health; asking about each other’s family; and exchanging complains about how

busy everyone is; all constitute a ritualized pragmatic for *greetings* in English.

The pragmatics for greeting strangers, however, varies from culture to culture. In English conversations, people exchange names and then gently move towards a crucial disclosure of occupations: whoever has the prestigious occupation then controls the conversation. The automobile mechanic, no matter what age, usually defers to the medical doctor, no matter what age.

In Japanese and Chinese conversations, however, people exchange names and then gently move toward a different social control: age. The younger, no matter what occupation, usually defers to the elder, no matter what occupation.<sup>ii</sup>

The importance of this cultural distinction of greetings bears upon gravemarker messages. Gravemarker messages, in essence, constitute greetings among strangers. Families in mourning have expressed their grief, engraved in stone, to passing strangers. Unfortunately, I know of no scholars who have discussed the pragmatics of these gravemarker messages.<sup>iii</sup>

My own analysis leads me to believe that the full pragmatics of gravemarkers contain eleven pieces of information. In addition to the five listed above (name, death date, age, kinship, personalized epitaph), anyone can, of course, find the two semantic items discussed in the opening chapter [(6) place of birth and (7) place of

death)]. In addition, however, various gravemarkers messages utilize (8) stylized epitaphs, (9) occupation, (10) lodge or religious affiliation, and (11) manner of death.

An ideal (ideal because I have yet to find a single gravemarker with all eleven semantic items) version of such a gravemarker might be:

Mother  
AUGUSTA MESS HIGHTOWER  
Wife of  
WILLIAM HENRY HIGHTOWER  
Born May 16, 1839, in Braunfels, Germany  
Died July 19, 1886, in New Braunfels, Texas,  
While giving birth  
Devoted Teacher at  
St. Marks Lutheran Church  
Beautiful in appearance and in spirit  
REST IN PEACE

### **South Texas Germans**

The intense German population settlement of Central and South Texas began with immigration in 1820, when Texas was a Mexican state.<sup>iv</sup> Major German immigration continued through the Texas Republic years (1836-1845), not slowing down until about 1860. When Texas became the twenty-eighth state to join the United States, in 1845, the Germans had settled mostly between Houston, fanning out as far south as present-day Victoria and as far north and west of present day Austin (see Fig.2). According to some estimates,

**Figure 5.2:Map of German Texan population**  
(INSERT Markers Figure 5.1)

Texans of German descent make up the fourth largest ethnic group in the state.<sup>v</sup> Two present-day towns, Fredericksburg and New Braunfels, both located in the hill country between Austin and San Antonio, have become the major cultural focus for these German Texans.

The Geographical Names Information System survey of cemeteries in Texas lists 138 cemeteries that include the major German population.<sup>vi</sup> Few family graveyards are included in the survey, and only one or two ranch graveyards area listed.

The most comprehensive study of the Texas German graveyards is the one published by Terry Jordan.<sup>vii</sup> Jordan studied mostly family graveyards in his German work. However, he estimates that about forty-five public, church, and fraternal German graveyards exist in the four counties that include the major German population. This estimate means, then, that roughly one out of three graveyards in these four counties has German influence. Jordan was especially attracted to that German influence:

The cultural imprint of these Germans remains clearly discernible in modern Texas, and their distinctive architecture, customs, dialects, work ethic, and foodways are still much in evidence. Perhaps nowhere is that imprint more vivid (and less researched) than in their traditional graveyards. In no other part of the United States, of for that matter of Germany itself, have I seen gravemarkers so beautifully expressive of German folk

culture. Certainly Texas German funerary art far outshines that of the more heralded Pennsylvania “Dutch.”<sup>viii</sup>

With the aid of colleagues and students<sup>ix</sup>, I have mapped twenty-five cemeteries in the four-county area with German concentration. In addition I have mapped eleven cemeteries (with German gravemarkers) outside the four-county area, south and east of San Antonio. The discussion below summarizes the findings of that research.

The discussion will follow the chronological history, as revealed by death dates in Figure 5.2, above.

**Illustrations: German language code**

In our original research on German Texas gravemarkers, Annelise Duncan and I relied upon a collection of over one hundred photographs Annelise had taken on a research visit to her native Germany. Because German laws restrict the time that a gravemarker may remain in place, she was not able to find many nineteenth-century stones. We were, however, able to use the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century gravemarkers to establish the five-item, core pragmatic pattern of monolingual German messages. See, for example figure 5.3. In this message the family has

**Figure 5.3: Germany German**  
(INSERT SLIDE Duncan, German, Aug, 83, #9)

Hier ruht unsere liebe mutti  
ELSE CHOLEWA

Geb-Modrock  
\*6-4-1905 in Schlesien  
+17-4-1978

utilized two common Catholic Church symbols (found on both German and Spanish language Catholic gravemarkers): the star (\*) for birth and the cross (+) for death.

The discourse appears in all five semantic elements: Name *Else Cholewa*; death date (in German language order of date, month, year) *April 6, 1905*; age 73; and kinship terms included in a personalized epitaph *Hier ruht unsere liebe mutti* [Here rests our beloved mom]—as well as the maiden-name kinship term *geb-Modrock* [born Modrock].

In central and south Texas we have found several Texas German gravemarkers with 1860s death dates. These gravemarkers match the Germany-German language code. In our photograph collection, however, the oldest legible Texas gravemarker that uses the German language code has an 1873 death date (Figure 5.4). The casual register charmingly

**Figure 5.4. Steinmetz (1873), German, New Braunfels**  
(INSERT Markers photograph #2)

Hier  
Ruht im  
Hebbn  
L.  
Steinmetz  
Geb: 1802  
Gest: 1873

reveals only a last name, with a single initial for a first name. (The use of initials for a given name, common in the United States South, occurs, however infrequently, on the gravemarkers in our Germany photographs.) We do not know L. Steinmetz's sex. She or he was born *geb:* in 1802; died *gest:* in 1873. We know nothing else. The predictable name, death date, and age, however, fit the universal discourse of grief. In addition, we find a stylized epitaph: *Hier ruht in Hebbn* [Here rests in heav'n].

In 1875 a gravemarker was placed for a married couple, in the same New Braunfels cemetery (Figure 5.5). The second

**Figure 5.5: Anna Maria Horne (1875) and Johannes Peter Horne (1883), German, New Braunfels**  
(INSERT Markers photograph 3)

death date occurs in the next decade (1883). Again, the language on the gravemarker is similar to the language found in Germany, but this time the formal register is used. Both the woman's name and the man's name are spelled out in entirety—all three names in both cases. The woman was born in 1801, the man in 1803.\* For both people, then, we have name, death date, and age—but no kinship terminology nor any personalized epitaph.

In addition, the message tells us that both were born in Nassau Germany. (We assume that they died in New Braunfels, Texas). We know that they were married--

partially because they share the same surname, written on the same gravemarker, and partially because her maiden name is written in the typical German style: *geb Reininger* [born Reininger]. The gravemarker also has four stylized epitaphs: two occurrences of *hier ruht*, and one each of *sanft ruhe ihre asche* and *friede seiner asche*.

Thirteen years after Johannes Peter Horne's death in 1883, another Texas German, Francisca Ohnheiser, was buried more than a hundred miles away, in the High Hill cemetery (Figure 5.6). The complete five-part universal discourse

**Figure 5.6: Ohnheiser, 1896**  
(INSERT SLIDE RDME-SBSL-3.1, apr.90,#22)

of grief tell us that the little girl was only fourteen months old when she died on October 10, 1896. The personalized epitaph tells us that the good child has left the family to become one of God's angels.

In 1906—ten years later—again in the New Braunfels graveyard, an elaborate gravemarker memorialized a woman (Figure 5.7). While the gravemarker has no personalized

**Figure 5.7 Margarethe Guenther (1906), German, New Braunfels.**

(INSERT Marker photograph 7)

epitaph, it does have the first four semantic items on the universal discourse of grief pattern: name + death date + birth date (age) + kinship terminology. The woman's name

is spelled out and her maiden name is also given. The dates are in German order, with German spelling. *Geb.* and *gest.* are used to indicate birth and death dates and maiden name. The formal kinship term MUTTER is used. The stylized epitaph, *RUHE SANFT*, follows the dates.

In the next decade another young girl died in High Hill (Figure 5.8). This message, however, breaks from the

**Figure 5.8: Neisner, 1914**

(INSERT SLIDE RDME-SBSL-2.8, High Hill, Apr.90,#12)

expected discourse of grief: We have name, *Louisa Neisner*; death date, *15 DEC 1914*; birth date, *1 July 1912*; and a personalized epitaph. But we have no kinship terminology.

Even though the months are spelling in English (thus really making this a Mixed Code message), I wish to include it mainly because it does break the predictable pattern of the universal discourse of grief.

I am afraid at this point in my arguments that I may be overstating the presence of the pragmatic pattern. So I wish to take time out to reiterate that in sociolinguistic research scholars depend upon a statistically relevant number of occurrences, rather than upon complete presence or complete absence of linguistic elements. I estimate, in fact, that the presence of the

universal discourse of grief appears on about eighty percent of the gravemarkers.

**(A theoretical linguistics aside)**

My argument for the presence of a universal discourse of grief rests on how non-sociolinguists interpret eighty-percent. In sociolinguistic research, statistical relevance bears the burden of proof. Eighty percent is statistically relevant.

In 1982, William Labov had succeeded in making a concept known as the *principle of accountability* a working code among those linguists concerned with social input into linguistic theory. The principle of accountability, in simplified terms, requires that researchers attempt to include ALL occurrences of a linguistic variable in their analyses—not just those occurrences of a linguistic variable that tend to confirm their present arguments.<sup>xi</sup>

While to non-linguists such an obvious statement may seem just that—obvious—to anyone who has tried to collect language data the argument has enormous significance. The sheer volume of language data simply overwhelms those sampling techniques used in other sciences. The prevailing wisdom in non-sociolinguistic (i.e. cognitive linguistic) camps, in fact, eschew data collecting of any type; their mantra is Noam Chomsky famous 1965 mandate:

“Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance.”<sup>xii</sup>

**(Putting the Aside Aside)**

In the decade after the Niesner girl’s death, another young girl died (Figure 5.9). Her gravemarker, in St.

**Figure 5.9:Wagner, 1920**  
(INSERT slide Plantersville.#16

Mary’s Catholic Cemetery, near Plantersville, utilizes the first three semantic elements in the Universal Discourse of Grief: name, *Veronika Wagner*; death date, *17.Mai.1920*; and birth date *2.April.1919*. The gravemarker has no kinship terminology nor personalized epitaph. It does, however, include a stylized epitaph and the Latin religious symbol *IHS*.

For the final Texas German, German language example, I wish to use a photograph of another couple (Figure 5.10).

**Figure 5.10: San Fernando #3, Marie Skolaut (1933) & Albert Skolaut (1944)**

(INSERT slide SF#3, Alamo Photolabs, German, Mar92, #28)

Marie Skolaut illustrates the use of the German language code during the 1930s and Albert Skolaut illustrates illustrates its use during the next decade. In addition to the names, we have the predictable death dates and birth dates. Outside the core discourse information, we have birth places for both Marie (Austria) and Albert (Germany). They share a stylized epitaph.

### **Illustrations: English Language Code**

Again, using the history tree outlined in Figure 5.2, we will illustrate the Texas German's use of the English language code. Moreover, we will show that even though the languages switch, the core discourse of grief remains the same: name, death date, age, kinship, and personalized epitaph—in that order of prominence.

Figure 5.11 displays the simple gravemarker found in

#### **Figure 5.11: Rudinger (1847)**

(INSERT slide Epitaph.D'Hanis.#29)

Mary Ann Rudinger  
Age 18 years  
The first death upon arrival of settlers at D'Hanis  
May 25, 1857  
Carrying smaller children overstreams she  
Became ill and died on above date  
Her father and mother also buried here

Joseph - Maggie (nee Brown)

the small church cemetery near D'Hanis. This geographical area due west of San Antonio was settled by Alsatians. Their present-day families love to use their Alsatian background as grounds for celebrating Bastille Day every June—and to lead the rest of Texas in our celebration of that French holiday. Their gravemarkers, however, utilize no French. We can find only English and German.

Personal communication with Bertha Bowen, a member of the Castro Colonies Heritage Association, reveals that this particular gravemarker was erected in the 1970s. It is, however, an exact replica of the original gravemarker (including the blended spelling of *overstream*, and is placed in the same location as the original.

At any rate, the message contains the universal discourse of grief in its entirety: name, death date, age, kinship, and personalized epitaph. We also (unpredictably) know the circumstances of Mary Ann's death; her father and her mother's given names; and her mother's maiden name.

We have to jump two decades before we can find another English language, Texas German gravemarker (Figure 5.12).

**Figure 5.12: Hoffman, D'Hanis**  
(INSERT slide Bohemia.Sheriff.D'hanis.#28)

Alexander Hoffman  
Born in Bohemia  
Killed by Indians in Uvalde Co.  
March 23, 1860  
Served in Mexican War  
First Sheriff Bandera Co.

Coincidentally (or maybe not) this gravemarker is another product of the Castro Colonies Heritage Association. In spite of the interesting information concerning place of birth, place of death, occupation(s), and means of death, the universal discourse is still precisely in place. With name and death date (but without age, kinship, and personalized epitaph).

In the following decade, infant Marie Louise Muller's family erected her gravemarker in San Antonio's San Fernando Cemetery #1 (Figure 5.13). Her message follows

**Figure 5.13: Muller (1872)**  
(INSERT 11.J.70-missing)

Marie Louise Muller  
Infant daughter of Fred  
& Caroline Muller  
Aug 20, 1872 aged 9  
Days  
The Angels called her

the expected pattern (name, death date, age, kinship—with only the personalized epitaph missing). In addition we find a stylized epitaph.

In the next decade, thirty-five-year-old Eusebia Froboese died and was subsequently buried in the same Fernando #1 Cemetery (Figure 5.14). Her simple gravemarker

**Figure 5.14: Froboese (1883)**  
(INSERT SF#1.4N4.missing)

Eusebia Froboese  
Mar 5, 1848  
Oct 22, 1883

consists solely of the first three semantic items of the universal discourse of grief. That is all: name, death date, birth date. No extra information. None. Nein. Nada. Daremo...nai.

Eight years later, in 1891, Maria A. Barrera [Spanish maiden name] Baumberger [German married name] died and was also buried in San Fernando #1 (Figure 5.15). Once again we

**Figure 5.15: Baumberger (1891)**  
(INSERT SF11.N.11-missing)

Maria A. Barrera de  
Baumberger  
Born Jan 21, 1863  
Died Jul 28, 1891  
Rest in Peace

find the first three semantic items in the Universal Discourse of Grief. We also find a stylized epitaph; and learn of Maria's maiden name.

Part of the sadness that permeates graveyard research can be found in our next photograph (Figure 5.16). In such

**Figure 5.16: Max Schultze (1908) & Emma Schultze (1949)**

(INSERT slide CC2.#03)

SCHULTZ	
Emma	Max
Oct. 09, 1867	Oct. 19, 1866
Oct. 16, 1949	Feb. 11, 1908

cases one spouse supersedes in death, by several decades, the other spouse. In this example, photographed in San Antonio's City Cemetery #2, the husband dies in 1908, forty-one years before his widow (1949). In both messages we see nothing but the basic three elements in the universal discourse of grief: name, death date, and birth date.

Moving on the chronological chart to the 1910-1919 decade, as well as the 1920-1929 decade, we can see an example of the English language on Schmidt gravemarker (Figure 5.17). Once again the three-part message consists of the predictable name, death date, birth date, for

**Figure 5.17: Franzis Schmidt (1917), Otto (1922)**  
(INSERT slide Oct.90.CC#3.#8)

Franzis Schmidt
Jan. 10, 1862
July 13, 1917
Otto Schmidt
1857-1922

Franzis and for Otto—as well as for Henry and Minnie Vordenbaum, in the 1930s (Figure 5.18).

**Figure 5.18: Henry Vordenbaum (1935), Minnie (1936)**  
(INSERT slide cc2.18.Nov90D)

Henry F.	Minnie D.
Mar. 26, 1859	July 4, 1862
July 18, 1935	Feb. 19, 1936

VORDENBAUM

A second look at the data in Figure 5.16 (1948 death date) plus a first look at the new data in and Figures 5.19, 5.20, and 5.21, illustrate the continued use of the

**Figure 5.19: Linda Rittimann (1952), Benno (1982)**

(INSERT slide Wetmore.3/92.#31)

RITTIMANN

Linda L.	Benno F.
Dec. 30, 1900	July 19, 1902
Apr. 17, 1953	Mar. 28, 1982

The Lord is my Shepherd

**Figure 5.20: Richard Mader (1949), May (1969)**

(INSERT slide CC3.sept90.#35)

MADER

Richard	May E.
Oct. 19, 1886	Jan. 1, 1867
Aug. 29, 1949	Nov. 6, 1969

Our Beloved at Rest

**Figure 5.21: Schwenke 1979**

(INSERT slide RDME-SBSL-6.3,High Hill, Apr90.#16)

Our Little Angel  
Erica Marie  
Infant Daughter of  
Larry & Bernadette  
Schwenke  
April 16, 1979

English language, through the 1980s. Such use of English for Texas German gravemarkers continues today.

The Rittimann's gravemarker (Wetmore Cemetery), the Mader's gravemarker (City Cemetery #3) and the Schwenke's

gravemarker (High Hill Cemetery) all have stylized epitaphs. In regard to the universal discourse of grief, all have names; all have death dates; and all have ages at death. The Schwenke's have added the fourth predictable element, the kinship terminology.

This collection of photographs in this chapter only one example (Figure 5.12) of only two semantic items—name and death date. The collection contains no examples of only one semantic item (the name). While rare, such occurrences do exist. Figures 5.22 and 5.23 illustrate name only occurrences in German and in English. In Figure 5.22, the name is sandwiched between two stylized epitaphs.

**Figure 5.22: Schragger (German)**  
(INSERT slide RDME-SBSL-2.6.Apr90.21)

Hier Ruhet in  
Gott  
J. Schragger  
Ruhe Sanft

**Figure 5.23: Kollmann (English)**  
(INSERT slide T3.Mar94.24)

Lotta  
Kollmann

One might reasonably argue that the Kollmann gravemarker uses the German language code. Native English speakers, however, would not have trouble reading the gravemarker; they would have difficulty with the Schragger one. The

Schrager gravemarker is found in the High Hill cemetery; the Kollman gravemarker in the Taylor, Texas, city cemetery.

### **Universalizing the Universal Discourse of Grief**

Claiming that the documental presence of a universal discourse of grief (a five-point continuum prioritized by *name* then *death date* then *age* then *kinship terminology* then *personalized epitaph*) exists in two different languages on Texas German gravemarkers has minimal credence. If, however, the some documental presence exists with other languages, then the credence gains considerably.

Such documental evidence does indeed exist. The same roughly eighty percent predictability of occurrence exists with literally every one of the several thousand gravemarkers we have scrutinized over the past two decades.

The real proof of course, exists in the cemeteries all over Texas—as well as (we claim) the rest of the United States.

In the meantime, however, take a second look at the photographs used in the previous chapters. Table 5.1 displays the use of the universal discourse of grief as found on those photographs. Note that eighty-two percent of the photographs display the universal discourse of grief, while eighteen percent do not. The photographs that do utilize the Universal Discourse of Grief include three

other language codes: **French**, **Italian**, and **Spanish**. In addition the **English** language gravemarkers indicate the same universal discourse of grief with surnames other than German–Cunningham, Johnson, Jackson, Granville, Cliver, Cook, Fernandez, and Julian, for example.

Texas cemeteries include gravemarkers that utilize the same universal discourse of grief in **Czech** (Figure 5.24), **Polish** (Figure 5.25), **Norwegian** (Figure 5.26) **Swedish** (Figure 5.27), and **Chinese** (Figure 5.28). The Czech example in figure 5.24, found in Taylor City Cemetery,

**Table 5.1: Universal Discourse of Grief in Chapters 1,2,3**

- one = name
- two = name, death date
- three = name, death date, age
- four = name, death date, age, kinship
- five = name, death date, age, kinship, personalized epitaph
- not = broken sequence (not universal)
- 1.10 = chapter 1, figure 10 etc

	one	two	three	four	five	not	totals
English			1.2,1.8,1.9, 1.10,3.7, 3.10,3.13, 3.19,3.19, 3.30	1.8,1.11, 2.11,3.10, 3.12,3.14, 3.15,3.16, 3.20,3.21, 3.22,3.24, 3.26,3.27, 3.28	2.15 (16) 3.8(9)	1.7, 2.15(17), 3.17,3.18, 3.22,3.24, 3.25,3.27, 3.28	36
Spanish			1.1	2.9, 2.9, 2.10, 2.10	2.7, 2.8, 2.12, 2.12		9
German			1.3				1
French			1.4				1
Italian				1.5, 1.5			2
totals						9 (18%)	49 (82%)

Note: 1.5, 1.8, 2.9, 2.10, 3.17, 3.19, & 3.24 appear more than once. These figures refer to gravemarkers that memorialize more than one person.

Note: 2.15(16), 2.15(17) & 3.8(9) refer to single gravemarkers, displayed in more than one photograph.

includes name, death date, birth date, and kinship

[father]. The Polish example in figure 5.25 (San Antonio's

**Figure 5.24: Pokorny (Czech Language)**

(INSERT slide T7.Czech.#1)

**Figure 5.25: Drzymaly (Polish Language)**

(INSERT slide mps64.Polish.Mar92.#29)

Mission Park South Cemetery) includes the same four semantic items, plus a stylized epitaph. The Norwegian example in Figure 5.26, from St. Olaf Lutheran Cemetery in

**Figure 5.26: Mickelson (Norwegian Language)**  
(INSERT slide TUSL90.PLC-NOR-9,#5)

Clinton, Texas, uses the first three items: name, death date and death date—plus a stylized epitaph. The Swedish example in Figure 5.27 (3-Points Cemetery) uses the first

**Figure 5.27: Anderson (Swedish Language)**  
(INSERT slide 3points.Swedish.Sept90.#5)

three Names, death dates, and birth dates (CHECK OCH...) Our only photograph of a Chinese language gravemarker, Figure 5.28) breaks the universal pattern. The marker

**Figure 5.28: (Chinese Language)**  
(INSERT slide MissionSouth.Chinese.2/90.#32)

gives (in addition to place of birth) the name and age (98 years) at death—but not date of death. (We shall see in the next chapter, however, other evidence that substantiates the universal discourse of grief within the Texas Chinese community.)

### **Conclusion**

To summarize: our research indicates that on roughly eighty-percent of the several thousand gravemarkers that we have studied in Texas cemeteries a universal discourse of grief exists. This discourse consists of a core set of

semantic items that give highest priority to the deceased persons names, then their date of death, then their age at death, then any kinship ties they may have, and finally a creative epitaph. Other semantic items, such as places of death and birth, of occupation, of religious or lodge affiliation, of means of death, etc. do not appear in any predictable pattern. We have illustrated this universal discourse of grief on photographs of gravemarkers using English, German, Czech, Polish, Norwegian, Swedish, Spanish, French, Italian, and Chinese language codes.

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<sup>i</sup> To verify the German language origin of all surnames used in the English language photographs see Hans Bahlow's Dictionary of German Names, translated by Edda Gentry, Madison, WI:1993); Patrick Hanks and Flavia Hodges' A Dictionary of Surnames (New York, 1992); and George F. Jones' German-American Names 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Baltimore: 1995).

<sup>ii</sup> For an interesting and wide-ranging discussion of the pragmatics of greetings, see the collection of articles from the conference on discourse analysis, held in Finland in 1985, in Kari Sajavaara, ed., *Discourse Analysis: Openings*. Reports from the Department of English, University of Jyväskylä, (Jyväskylä, Finland: 1987).

<sup>iii</sup> Scholars have, of course, discussed the content and effects of the communication involving gravemarkers. Any and all articles published in *Markers*, the journal of the Association for Gravemarker Studies, for example, discuss this type of communication. But scholars have not, to the best of my knowledge, tried to define the pragmatics of gravemarkers, in the linguistic sense of pragmatics. For an excellent summary of the linguistic concept of pragmatics, I recommend Anthony Wootton, *Dilemmas of Discourse: Controversies about Sociological Interpretation of Language* (London: 1975). Recent books on pragmatic theory are those of M. Stubbs, *Discourse Analysis* (Oxford: 1983); S. Levinson, *Pragmatics* (Cambridge: 1983); and Francois Latraverse, *La Pragmatique* (Brussels: 1987).

<sup>iv</sup> This capsule history of German immigration should not lead novices into underestimating the lasting impact the Germans have had upon the character of Texas. My own understanding has benefited from Gilbert Giddings Benjamin, *The Germans in Texas* (New York: 1910); Moritz Tiling, *History of the German Element in Texas from 1820-1850* (Houston: 1913); Rudolph L. Biesele, *The History of the German Settlements in Texas, 1831-61* (Austin: 1930); Chester W. Geue and Ethel Harder Geue, *A New Land Beckoned: German Immigration to Texas, 1844-47* (Waco: 1966); Sam and Bess Woolford, *The San Antonio Story* San Antonio: 1970).

<sup>v</sup> Terry Jorden, "Chapter 5: The Texas German Graveyard." *Texas Graveyards* (Austin:1983). Also Glenn Gilbert, *Linguistic Atlas of Texas German* (Austin: 1972).

<sup>vi</sup> *Cemeteries in Texas* (Geographical Names Information Management Branch of Geographic Names, Office of Geographic Research, National Mapping Division, U.S. Geological Survey, 1987).

<sup>vii</sup> Jorden (note 24).

<sup>viii</sup> *Ibid*, 89.

<sup>ix</sup> I am especially indebted to the contributions of Elizabeth Albert, Nicole Bates, Rob Devlin, Annelise Duncan, Mike Elliot, Mary Arnold Fox, Cathy McBride, Thom McElroy, Ellen Read, Debbie Spurgeon, Linda Taylor, and Kristene West.

<sup>x</sup> Astute readers will note that this gravemarker should be listed in the “Mixed Code” examples. The family uses the English spelling *July* instead of the German *Juli*. The remainder of the gravemarker is written in such flawless German, however, that I wanted to include it here as an example of formal German style—as opposed to the informal style of the previous examples.

<sup>xi</sup> William Labov, “Building on empirical foundations.” In W. P. Lehmann and Y. Malkiel, eds., *Perspectives on Historical Linguistics* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: 1982) 79-92.

<sup>xii</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1965).