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Texas Czech Legacy Project: Corpus Building and Language Documentation

This presentation focuses on the *Texas Czech Legacy Project* and its main initiative, the building of an open-access digital *Texas Czech Dialect Archive*. Texas Czech dialect is a product of over a century and a half of contact between Moravian Czech and English spoken in Texas. Although its life cycle is rather typical of diasporic dialects, its resilient life span represents decades of self-sufficient existence in a rather enclosed sociolinguistic space organized around farming and small business ventures periodically rejuvenated by religious and fraternity activities without the need for an outside social world. While we cannot reverse language shift, we *can* document the life of this dialect – and of the community – preserving the voices of Texas Czech speakers for generations to come.

Following a brief sketch of the socio-historical background of ethnic Czechs and Moravians in Texas, I will discuss the process of building *TCLP*, specifically its digital open-access repository of speech recordings and the complexities involved in designing a product that serves community members, educators and students of the Czech language and culture, and a diverse group of researchers. Using examples of both typical and idiosyncratic features of this diasporic dialect, I will demonstrate the Project's purposes and practical value for its multiple audiences. Populated by timeless voices of Texas Czechs, the *TCLP*'s searchable oral archive will be a virtual sociolinguistic space for both reflection and active learning, facilitating a stronger sense of ethnolinguistic belonging that the real life can no longer nurture and enabling comparative, collaborative research by international scholars with complementary interests.

References:

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