German words in Tok Pisin dictionaries
Tracing the effects of colonial contact

The (original) research question:
What was the lexical influence of German on Tok Pisin at the time and in the contact area of German missions and under German colonial rule in New Guinea?

→ What (and how many) German-origin lexemes were in use in Tok Pisin and when?
→ What (and how many) German-origin lexemes are recorded in Tok Pisin dictionaries? (= traces of contact)

The contact setting (I)

• German colonial claims in the Pacific (1884 – 1914)
• German missionaries in New Guinea (from 1886)
• ...

German colonial claims in the Pacific (1884 – 1914)

• German New Guinea (1884)
  (Kaiser-Wilhelmsland, Bismarck Archipelago, Northern Solomon Islands)
• Marshall Islands (1885)
• Nauru (1888) (administratively included in the Marshall Islands)
• Marianas (excl. Guam) (1899)
• Caroline Islands (with Palau) (1899)
• (Western) Samoa (1900)
The contact setting (II)

- German colonial claims in the Pacific
- German missionaries in New Guinea (from 1886)
- roughly 700 languages > German was established as mission lingua franca
  - most influential: Societas Verbi Divini, in GNG from 1895/6
  & Tok Pisin was developing and in use

The contact setting: Lexical outcome

- Estimate of German-origin lexemes in Tok Pisin: up to 200 (Romaine 2001)

The variety: Tok Pisin et al.

- A continuum
- Terms used in the investigated dictionaries:
  - Beach-la-mar / Jargon / Trade Speech (1911)
  - Pigeon English / Bichelamar (1913)
  - Tokboi (1926)
  - Melanesian Pidgin English (1943f.)
  - Pidgin English (1943)
  - Neo-Melanesian (1957)
  - Pidgin (1969)
  - Melanesian Pidgin (1971)
  - New Guinea Pidgin (1978)
  - Tok Pisin (New Guinea Pidgin) (1985+)

The study

- The focus: lexical / linguistic & methodological (& etymological, historical, sociolinguistic)
- The items: 14 lexemes of (possibly) German origin, attested by several authors in secondary literature
- The dictionaries/word lists (29): 1911 – 2008+, handwritten / in print / on-line

Items & dictionaries

- **List of items:**
  - Alkohol (alcohol)
  - Ananas (pineapple)
  - beten (pray)
  - Flagge (flag)
  - Mast (mast)
  - Meter ((unit) metre/meter (yard))
  - Pause (break)
  - Pflaster (bandage)
  - Pudding (sweet pudding)
  - raus (out)
  - Ring (ring)
  - Rucksack (backpack)
  - Strafe (punishment)
  - vorbei (over, past)

- **Time distribution of dictionaries:**

"Complications"

- Language-related problems
  - Identification of relevant items
- Methodological problems
  - Limited comparability of sources
  - Locating specific lexical items
Language-related problems:
Identification of relevant lexemes

(1) clearly German origin (raus, bros/brus ‘chest’, popeia)
(2) ambiguous origin (E/G): ring, house/haus, ros ‘rust’
(3) clearly non-German origin (i.e., English or other)

Identification of relevant lexemes
- Fairly easy (word form + semantics): group (1)
- Interesting but difficult: group (2)
  - Multiple etymologies (e.g., Mühlhäusler 1985, 2003:26, etc.)
    - Example: sanga ‘fork in a branch, tongs, open jaws of a crocodile, catapult’
      < (B)English shanghai (slingshot) + German Zange ‘pliers’ + Malayan tjang tjang ‘forked branch’
  - Time & context of integration into Tok Pisin
    - Example: ananas (Dutch/German) ‘pineapple’

Methodological/lexicographical problems (I):
Limited comparability of sources
- Differences in focus (e.g., sports dictionary, New Testament dictionary, medical terminology)
- Differences in approach (time of compilation, geographical area, length of study, L1 of lexicographer)
- Differences in spelling:
  - Etymological (English-based)
  - L1-based (E, F, G)
  - Standardized

Methodological/lexicographical problems (II):
Locating specific lexical items
...can be difficult because (of):
- unusual spelling
- variation in entries between directions of translation
- item is not listed as a lexeme but “hidden” within another entry

Items & dictionaries
- List of items:
  Alcohol, Ananas, pineapple, beten, flag, flag, Mast, Mast, Meter, meter, raus, raus, Pudding, punishment, vorbei, over

Time distribution of dictionaries:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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</table>
**List of items**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Tok Pisin (Mihalic 1971)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alkohol</td>
<td>alcohol</td>
<td>alcohol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ananas</td>
<td>pineapple</td>
<td>ananas, panaan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beken</td>
<td>pray, give honor to</td>
<td>beten</td>
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<td>Flieg</td>
<td>fly</td>
<td>pik</td>
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<td>Maat</td>
<td>most</td>
<td>max</td>
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<td>Meter (m)</td>
<td>meter/meter</td>
<td>meter (Maeter, metar/nanam sili)</td>
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<td>Pane</td>
<td>break</td>
<td>(pase), malolo</td>
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<td>Pillaster</td>
<td>foundation</td>
<td>plasta</td>
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<td>Pudding</td>
<td>pudding</td>
<td>pudding</td>
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<td>Ruf</td>
<td>took</td>
<td>rawn, take/throw away</td>
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<td>Rinng</td>
<td>ring</td>
<td>ng</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rockback</td>
<td>backpack</td>
<td>rockbak ‘army pack’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stock</td>
<td>punishment</td>
<td>steel, steelen punishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vorbei</td>
<td>over, past</td>
<td>popina ‘miss the mark’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Non-straightforward findings**

- Same item with different spelling
- Hidden information
- Background / etymological knowledge required

**Example: Spelling**

- ‘mother’ / ‘father’ (G fam. Mama / Papa)
  - maman / papa (Pionnier 1913)
  - mumma / puppa (Helton 1943)
  - mama, papa (standard spelling after 1981)

**Example: Hidden information**

- Ananas ananas  
  - (d.Eingeb.) blume
  - blume flauer, palawa

- Gruß z.B. gutbai (…)  
  - “gris God”
  - (Gruß der Katholiken im Vorbeigehen) (van Baar 1930)

**Example: Background / etymological knowledge**

- puy ‘naked’
  - < missionaries’ use of G pfui (expression of disapproval/disgust) “tuft” (Mühlhäusler 1979)

- didiman (pl. didiman) ‘agricultural officer’
  - < Dr. Bredemann (senior curator of the Rabaul Botanical Gardens, prior to WW I)
  - (or Mr. Dietmann (German surveyor who laid out the original Rabaul Botanical Gardens) (Godbold 2010: fn. 1)
The (original) research question:
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Results: Can (lexical) effects of colonial-time contact be traced in dictionaries?

• Yes: in the recorded existence of lexical items at different times (lexical traces)

• Yes: in the attitudes that are revealed by the selection of lexemes and by translations / interpretations (traces of eurocentric perspective)

How to deal with the (lexical/methodological) limitations of the data sources (I)

• Reflexive awareness of
  – Author’s perspective & goal with the word list/dictionary
  – Author’s L1
  – Variation within and across varieties

• Taking dictionaries as „pointers“ to extralinguistic context:
  – interpreting authors’ presuppositions and backgrounds

• Drawing on additional historical and cultural background information

How to deal with the (lexical/methodological) limitations of the data sources (II)

• Dictionaries / word lists record and judge Tok Pisin at the same time;
  → if working with them, it is essential to tease these two aspects apart

• They are time- and context-bound historical documents:
  – offering a time-specific record of the variety at one given point
  – not providing objective linguistic information
  – reflecting a subjective view from a historical perspective we cannot reconstruct without these sources.

References


