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GERMAN CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE TOK PISIN LEXICON
AN ONLINE DICTIONARY PROJECT

http://lwp.ids-mannheim.de/dict/tokpisin
A DICTIONARY PROJECT IN TWO WAYS:

Data base:
dictionaries, word lists, etc., of Melanesian Pidgin English/Tok Pisin

Goal:
producing a dictionary of German-based words in Tok Pisin
PACIFIC

Each dot represents the geographic center of a language.

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TOK PISIN

• one of the national languages & the most important lingua franca of Papua New Guinea

• ca. 3-5 mio. speakers (mainly L2 speakers; 500,000 L1 speakers [Smith & Siegel 2013])

Lexifier languages of Tok Pisin:

English (77-79%), Tolai/Kuanua (11%), other New Guinean languages (6%), German (4%), (Latin (3%)), Malay (1%)

(Mühlhäusler 1985b:179; Tryon/Charpentier 2004:385f.)
THE GERMAN-TOK PISIN CONTACT SETTING: A COMBINATION OF FACTORS

• German colonial period (1884 – 1914)
• German missionaries in New Guinea (from 1886)
• German = language of administration & local mission lingua franca (*Societas Verbi Divini*, in GNG from 1895/6)

and

Tok Pisin was developing and in use
STAGES OF TOK PISIN DEVELOPMENT

1. **Jargon (White man's speech):** influence of English (lexis, morphology), restricted sentence length, grammatical multifunctionality, no copula

2. **ca. 1890+:** Stabilized Tok Pisin (speakers of TP: native); "a language in its own right", not some form of English; standard pronunciation (simplified) different from English; coordination, subordination, and causative are used

3. **ca. 1930:** expanded Tok Pisin (regions close to the coast); "classical" Tok Pisin; lexical and grammatical autonomy in relation to English

4. **Creolized Tok Pisin:** rapid and extensive restructuring; increased speech tempo

(Mühlhäusler et al. 2003:9-11)
PERIODS OF LEXICAL INFLUENCE

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

APPENDIX: The sources of the Tok Pisin lexicon (Mühlhäusler 1985)
“[E]tymologising in Tok Pisin cannot reasonably be carried out unless sociohistorical and, above all, temporal factors are taken into consideration. A mere analysis of present-day Tok Pisin vocabulary in terms of the origins of its lexical inventory is bound to be quite misleading.”

(Mühlhäusler 1985b: 215)
IDENTIFYING RELEVANT LEXICAL ITEMS

(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)
IDENTIFYING RELEVANT LEXICAL ITEMS

• Fairly easy (word form + semantics): group 1 (clearly German origin)

• Interesting but difficult: group 2 (ambiguous origin E/G)
  ❖ multiple etymologies (cf. 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* ‘forked branch’
LOCATING SPECIFIC LEXICAL ITEMS

Unusual spelling

- *rouse* ‘out’ /ˈraʊs/ (Churchill 1911)
- *tèke maout* ‘arracher’/‘pull out, take out’ (Pionnier 1913)

Variation in entries

- E *pineapple* – TP *ananas, painap*
- TP *ananas* – E *pineapple* (Murphy 1966)

“Hidden” item

- no entry for *mas(t)* ‘mast(pole)’
- but: *plakmas* (under the entry *plak* ‘flag’) (Baing et al. 2008)
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
LEXICAL DYNAMICS: MULTIPLE ETYMOLOGIES

– (near-)homophones with some semantic relationship (often at a rather abstract level) can lead to a merged word form (lexical conflation)

– the new lexeme encompasses all of the meanings of its components

Example:

Tok Pisin: blut / bulut / bulit 'blood; sap; glue'

common denominator: 'liquid life source' (blood, sap) + extended meaning ‘glue’ (derived from the stickiness of sap)

Origins:

English blood + German Blut + Tolai, Mioko, Molot bulit

(Franklin 1998:21, Mühlhäuser 1985a:77, Mühlhäuser et al. 2003:26)
AMBIVALENT ASSIGNMENTS: EXAMPLES

**raus**: clearly of German origin; a highly established and widespread lexical item in TP

**beten**: clearly of German origin; getting out of use for most speakers of TP; some association of higher register (‘the proper word in TP’), but by now mostly replaced by *pre*

**abrusim**: most likely of German origin (form/meaning) but never assigned as such (except for Grant 1997)

**puy** ‘naked’: etymological explanation by Mühlhäusler (1979) primarily extra-linguistic

**ananas**: could be of German or Dutch origin; extra-linguistic knowledge of historical and cultural setting needed to determine etymology

**maski**: was repeatedly assigned German origin (< ‘macht nichts’ – never mind, doesn’t matter) but for phonological reasons unlikely; much more plausible: origin from Spanish/Portuguese ‘mas que’ – fits the meaning better, too

⇒ reference to a range of different sources is needed to find satisfactory explanations; not all sources are reliable

⇒ compare, cross-check & scrutinize sources for linguistic, historical and cultural contact plausibility
EXTRALINGUISTIC INFORMATION NEEDED

*puy* ‘naked’

< missionaries’ use of G *pfui!* (expression of disapproval/disgust) ‘tut!’ (Mühlhäusler 1979)

*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:v fn.1)
MALAY CONTRIBUTIONS TO TOK PISIN

— influence of Malay on Tok Pisin by Dutch loan words
— about 70 items in Tok Pisin correspond to German-Dutch(-English) cognates; probably mediated by Malay, e.g.

• Tok Pisin \textit{sup} - English \textit{soup} - German \textit{Suppe} - Ambonese Malay and Coastal Malay \textit{sup} (< Dutch \textit{soep})

• Tok Pisin \textit{anka} - German \textit{Anker} – English \textit{anchor} - Ambonese Malay \textit{angkar} - Coastal Malay \textit{djangkar}

(for Ambonese Malay cf. van der Sijs 2015, for Coastal Malay cf. Hindorf 1913)
ANANAS

- Tok Pisin *ananas* ‘pineapple’ recorded in dictionaries since the beginning of the 20th century
- cannot be borrowed from English (*pineapple*)
- attributed to German in Tok Pisin lexicography (Steinbauer 1969: 12–13; Mihalic 1971: 59; Garnier 2006: 14)
- origin apparently New Guinea coast (← earliest lexicographic recordings: Dempwolff [not dated b], van Baar 1930) (not Bismarck Archipelago; there: *painap* preferred)

=> Malay (< Dutch) origin more likely (supported by combined evidence regarding laborer migration, cultivation of pineapples and lexicographic recording patterns) (cf. Engelberg/Stolberg 2017: 49-50)
maski documented for Tok Pisin as early as 1911 (Neuhof 2015: XXXI), lexicographically recorded from 1926 on (Borchardt 1926) and up until today

- an established lexeme in Tok Pisin, with a concessive or downtoning meaning (‘never mind’, ‘ignore’, ‘forget about’, ‘nevertheless’, ‘in spite of’, ‘although’)


- no mention of the difficulty in explaining the phonology of maski if it were derived from German macht nichts.

- Mühlhäusler (1985a: 200), like Baker (1987), mentions doubts regarding a German etymology of maski
Franklin (2015) suggests an etymology from 19th century Chinese Pidgin English; already Nevermann (1929: 252) had pointed out that maski is a shared lexical item between Chinese Pidgin English and Tok Pisin, offering as a German translation das macht nichts ‘that doesn’t matter’

- independent discussion of maski regarding Spanish and Portuguese based pidgins and creoles where it is widespread (Veiga & Fernández 2012)

- in sum: maski was assigned a German etymology in several sources, but is highly unlikely to be of German origin

  - well-established in various pidgin languages (for example, Chinese Pidgin English) as well as in Malay (Veiga & Fernández 2012: 197) = contact varieties of Melanesian Pidgin English and, later, Tok Pisin

  - German influence cannot be completely excluded but a Spanish / Portuguese origin (via other pidgin/creole languages + via Malay) seems much more likely

  (cf. Engelberg/Stolberg 2017: 38-40)
CONCLUSION

Online dictionary of Tok Pisin words of German origin:

- attempts to pull together as many relevant sources & resources as possible
- offers a starting point for further investigations
- allows for new comparisons and insights regarding connections between lexicon, contact history and cultural history

⇒ aim: to contribute to a better understanding of (historical) lexical processes in Tok Pisin

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THANK YOU


Garnier, N. 2006. *Dictionnaire Français/Tok Pisin. Buk bilong ol nem long Tok Pisin na Tok Franis*. Port Moresby: L’Alliance Française de Port Moresby & The University of Papua New Guinea


