Book Reviews

Engelberg, Stefan and Doris Stolberg, eds.

In German linguistics and philology, language contact studies have focused mainly on the post-war period of labour migration and varieties of “Gastarbeiterdeutsch.” More recent research has concentrated on the “Kiezdeutsch” debate, i.e. on mixed varieties of urban German in cities like Berlin (Wiese, 2012). The study of language contact in times when German was spoken in the new worlds is still at an early stage. This third volume of the series Colonial and Postcolonial Linguistics (Koloniale und Postkoloniale Linguistik) offers contributions on “colonial linguistics”, a relatively new area of research in German linguistics. The present publication looks at language contact of various languages with German during the period of German colonialism. The themes treated in this book comprise language contact and language change, historiography of linguistics, discourse linguistics, language policy. This anthology includes papers from the second conference of Colonial Linguistics 2010 in Mannheim (Germany); the contributions deal, often programmatically, with different contact situations in former German colonies in Africa and the Pacific, also discussing various contact-related matters such as language policies and issues of applied linguistics from a wider perspective.

The book is organized into four parts. Firstly, the editors Stefan Engelberg and Doris Stolberg introduce the field, offering a brief discussion of how “colonial linguistics” is understood and defined by the group of researchers who set up this area of research at the Institute for the German Language (“Institut für Deutsche Sprache”, Mannheim). They define their approach as one dedicated to “the systematic comprehension, organization and interpretation of all linguistically pertinent phenomena associated with colonialism”1 (Dewein et al. (to appear), cited from Engelberg and Stolberg (2013: 5). They further state that “any outcome of language contact in colonial contexts, idiosyncrasies of

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1 Here and henceforth, all translations from German into English by HS.
colonial discourses, peculiarities of linguistic research and language policies and their impact may be explained only with regard to the specific historical conditions of colonialism” (Engelberg and Stolberg, 2013: 5).

In Part A, Thomas Stolz argues that orthography rules regarding standardization may change over time with advancements in what is today termed linguistic theory. He describes the phases of changing orthography rules in Chamorro (Guam; Austronesian, Malayo-Polynesian) by discussing potential factors such as language ideologies, academic traditions and idiosyncrasies. All these factors may have had an impact on the proposals concerning orthography made by the various authors from 1668 to the present. Stolz limits himself to the representation of the category ‘word’ in Chamorro, a language that counts as a prototypical polysynthetic language. Stolz treats not only the impact of academic traditions but also - in some detail - the aspect of how analytical interference of the descriptors’ mother tongue (German) could have biased the principles of segmentation in writing and morphological analysis.

In her article on Swahili (Bantu, Sabaki; Tansania, Kenya (L1)), Susanne Hackmack discusses the orthographic rules regulating the representation of word status and of referentiality vs. agreement properties of subject markers in Swahili pronouns and noun class prefixes. Starting from a typological comparison of German and Swahili with regard to the “pro-drop” parameter of generative typology, she looks at the “German perspective” in historical proposals for orthography. This is understood as the potential analytical interferences of German speaking bantuists in linguistic analysis and the subsequent construction of writing rules. Furthermore, she attempts to relate the analyses of early bantuists such as Meinhof and Doke to current issues in language typology and generative grammar.

In part B, Peter Mühlhäusler gives a historical description of the emergence of Pidgin German in New Guinea. By analyzing the impact of missionary language policies in the area of Kaiser-Wilhelmsland, he shows how a strict German-only policy led to imperfect language learning in formal education and the emergence of new pidgin varieties. The article illustrates features of language contact and gives examples of the contact variety, with data in the form of texts written in Pidgin German as well as historical documents related to language policy.

In the following article, Brigitte Weber describes the administrative imposition of German toponyms in the former German colony of Cameroon. When taking control of the new territory, the colonial administration required geographical surveys and terms for important landmarks and settlements. The article examines colonial naming practices in this multilingual
environment and demonstrates how these historical maps may be interpreted as indications of hot spots of intense language contact.

In the next part, Stefan Engelberg, Ineke Scholz and Doris Stolberg present a planned research project that aims to compile a linguistic atlas of German loanwords in the Pacific. They propose an approach that is designed to link historical conditions and possible original contact locations, such as schools or trading posts, with patterns of lexical borrowing. In her account of historical German second language education and lexical borrowing, Doris Stolberg offers a discussion on the conditions of formal second language education of German in the Pacific. She presents her findings on how quantitative measures such as numbers of pupils relate to the intensity of lexical borrowing. Her account also deals with the introduction of German in missionary run schools and how they possibly imposed lexical borrowings in the region.

The third part C deals with the impact of colonialists’ language attitudes and ideologies. Julius Riese argues that the German newspaper, *Samoanische Zeitung*, give insights into colonial discourse in the German colonies. After offering an introduction to the composition of the editorials and the role of these editorials in the colonial press, he reviews the newspaper articles and the stereotypes of the Samoan peoples expressed within them. Furthermore, he shows that the published articles offer insights not only into the discourse and ideologies of German expatriates and officers, but also that they may be seen as a historical source of ethnographic documentation. Ingo H. Warnke and Daniel Schmidt-Brücken offer a general account of the functional aspects of numerals in language description and discuss the potential influence of language attitudes and political discourse on their usage. They argue that a ‘racist attitude’ may be detected in the linguistic analysis of numerals in Seidel (1900) and Meinhof (1917).

Part D examines didactic aspects of teaching colonial linguistics in higher education. Since the impact of German on local languages can only be studied by the analysis of historical sources, Stefan Engelberg surveys the existing documents and proposes principles of categorization. He starts with a brief description of the general historical situation and continues with a discussion of the reliability and credibility of source documents. He lists available document types that may serve for text analysis and debates which kinds of contact phenomena may be found for which type of document. He then offers a detailed survey on archives, libraries and other collections that store historical sources needed for an understanding of colonial linguistics. Lastly, Birte Kellermeier-Rehbein discusses the issue of how and why colonial linguistics should be included in the B.A and M.A. curricular of German linguistics at universities. Introducing her approach to research-based learning, she
suggests possible learning objectives and the content of university courses by studying contact varieties of German spoken in colonial Namibia. She further presents a model of how to integrate colonial linguistics as a subject into an existing linguistic study program.

**Evaluation**

Establishing ‘Colonial Linguistics’ as a new field in German linguistics is undoubtedly a step forward in this discipline. For the reviewer, however, the question arises as to what kind of results might contribute to general theories of language contact. It must be kept in mind that the history of German colonies was relatively short, ending abruptly with the Treaty of Versailles. In the pre-colonial period, only a few German city states maintained trading outposts in various parts of the world and, with Germany achieving nation status relatively late, it never had the position of a leading maritime nation – despite its all efforts. It is therefore hardly surprising that, in the field of pidgin and creole studies, in contrast to Dutch or even English and French, there is no contact variety of German playing any noticeable role in the new worlds. Furthermore, lexical borrowing from German was generally very limited, even in those times. Only few contact varieties of German are documented, none of which has survived, nor had any such varieties gained any functional importance in historical times. In the context of colonialism, the period of German influence on other languages is therefore short and the impact – with some exceptions such as Namibia – more or less negligible.

Thus it must be said that the English subtitle of the series may raise false expectations since the analysis of the impact of colonialism in creating specific kinds of contact situations is restricted to the German case. No consideration of other cases of “colonial contact” in French or English colonies is provided. Furthermore, there is very little reference to general language contact theory. The authors state that the outcome of language contact is peculiar to its historical context and conditions (Engelberg and Stolberg, 2013: 5). Thus they seem to imply that theoretical models such as Thomason and Kaufman (1986), Myers-Scotton (1993), Van Coetsem (2000), Winford (2007) or Matras (2009) need not be considered. Strictly speaking, therefore, only part B is dedicated to what is considered elsewhere as the study of language contact. From a theoretical perspective, the occasional lexical borrowing of cultural vocabulary from German is in no way surprising. Nevertheless, the contribution of Stefan Engelberg, Ineke Scholz and Doris Stolberg is interesting from a methodological point of view with regard to the proposed geolinguistic approach and the
identification of hot-spots of contact-induced diffusion. This could be supplemented by historical sociolinguistic methodology such as social network analysis or approaches which have an epidemic perspective on lexical diffusion (Enfield, 2008). In the discussion of contact varieties of German by Mühlhäusler, methodological issues are unfortunately not raised. It would have been interesting to know by what criteria a more widely used pidgin variety could be distinguished from a contextually restricted simplified interlanguage pidgin in the educational context under scrutiny. The paper would have benefitted from a general discussion of whether deficient formal language acquisition is a necessary condition for the emergence of these kinds of pidgin varieties. The data provided by Mühlhäusler offer no coherent structural patterns, but case marking, nominal agreement and functional cross-reference are not necessarily expected in a pidgin language.

From a more general viewpoint, in the elusive programmatic research of “colonial linguistics” and therefore in the papers contained in the book, there is hardly any reference to interdisciplinary orientations and to present research in German colonial history. Scholars working in linguistic disciplines that have emerged from studying indigenous “colonial” languages may be irritated by the fact that their critical work on related topics (e.g. Wolff 1986) are almost completely ignored in this volume. Moreover, publications such as the biography of Gottlob Krause by Sebald (1972) offer vivid insights into the conditions of language documentation, the role of linguistics and controversies during the colonial area. Nevertheless, for German linguistics the book may be valuable for the area of “(post-)colonial linguistics” and for academics teaching critical discourse analysis or the sociology of language. Historians may well be interested in the presentation of historical sources by Engelberg in part D.

References


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