

Workshop 2:  
**Foundations of Language Standardization**

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**When a standard language goes colonial: Language attitudes, language planning, and destandardization during German colonialism**

Various regions in Africa and the Pacific area were put under German colonial administration during the second half of the 19th century. Throughout the colonial period, diverse efforts were made to implement (Standard) German as the official language in numerous contexts (e.g., in administration and education). Behind this apparently uniform policy, however, contrasting tendencies surfaced in different settings. There were extended political discussions in the homeland, Germany, exhibiting two main standpoints: One position supported the dissemination of German in all colonial areas, while the other one warned against the presumed danger that knowledge of the colonizers' language could provide the colonized population with more power than the colonizers desired (cf. Sokolowsky 2004).

In practice, three scenarios of language use emerged in the colonial context: (a) a non-German (colonial or local) *lingua franca* was used (e.g., Pidgin English, Swahili); (b) simplified variants of Standard German were planned as artificial pidgins (Schwörer 1916, Baumann 1916); and (c) new variants of (Standard) German developed. Non-German *linguae francae* were mainly used for vertical communication between the colonizers and the colonized, and the same was intended for artificial German pidgins. The aim of the latter varieties was to spread an easy-to acquire version of German among the colonized population while avoiding uncontrolled "degeneration" of the standard. Thus, a new standard was provided for those who were not considered suitable to use the colonizers' standard language. (These planned pidgins were never put to use, though, since German colonial administration ended in 1918/9, at the end of WW I.)

New variants of Standard German (L1 and L2) originated in different settings, exhibiting an incipient destandardization in consequence of the colonial context. L1 varieties were used for horizontal communication among the German colonizers (e.g. Samoan German in Samoa, cf. Stolberg 2012; Namibian German in Namibia, cf. Shah 2007). They were looked down upon in the homeland as deviations from the 'pure standard' and repeatedly ridiculed in local newspapers but they held a certain in-group prestige within the local speech community. In addition, colonial L2 varieties of German developed; among these were Ali-Pidgin (Mühlhäusler 1979, 1984), a German pidgin spoken in New Guinea; Unserdeutsch (Volker 1991), a German-based creole also originating in New Guinea; and Kiche Duits (Deumert 2009), a German contact variety used in Namibia.

In the unprecedented situation of a colonial multilingual situation, the role and the functions of German as a fixed standard language were viewed from a new perspective, and language attitudes were expressed with strong emphasis. The focus of this presentation is a discussion of the contemporary appraisal of the different paths (the use of) Standard German took in the colonial context. The linguistic developments are compared to and contrasted with an analysis of the different positions on the language question in the German colonial empire as expressed in political debates in Berlin and in local administrative centers of the German colonial Pacific area.

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