

Stefan Engelberg

## LEXICOGRAPHY'S ENTANGLEMENT WITH COLONIALISM: THE HISTORY OF TOK PISIN LEXICOGRAPHY AS COLONIAL HISTORY

**Abstract** Tok Pisin is a pidgin/creole language spoken since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in most of the area that nowadays constitutes Papua New Guinea where it emerged under German colonial rule. Unusual for a pidgin/creole, Tok Pisin is characterized by a extensive lexicographic history. The Tok Pisin Dictionary Collection at the Leibniz Institute for the German Language, described in this article, includes about fifty dictionaries. The collection forms the basis for the sketch of the history of Tok Pisin lexicography as part of colonial history presented here. The basic thesis is that in the history of Tok Pisin, lexicographic strategies, dictionary structures, and publication patterns reflect the interest (and disinterest) of various groups of colonial actors. Among these colonial actors, European scientists, Catholic missionaries, and the Australian and US militaries played important roles.

**Keywords** Pidgin; Tok Pisin; colonialism; history of lexicography; lexicography and war; missionary linguistics; colonial linguistics

### Contact information

Stefan Engelberg  
Leibniz-Institut für Deutsche Sprache  
engelberg@ids-mannheim.de