

Documenting Unserdeutsch

Reversing colonial amnesia

Péter Maitz and Craig Alan Volker

University of Augsburg / James Cook University

Unserdeutsch, also known as Rabaul Creole German, is the only known German-lexifier creole. This critically endangered language has its origins in an orphanage in German New Guinea for mixed-race children, where Standard German was taught by mission personnel. Unserdeutsch was creolised in one generation, and became the in-group language of a small mixed-race community. It is now spoken by around 100 elderly speakers, nearly all immigrants to Australia. The current project is only the second documentation based on actual fieldwork and has a specific focus on the use and vitality of the language as used by the last generation of speakers. It has the aim of producing an Unserdeutsch corpus that will facilitate both future linguistic research and contact with the language for the descendants of Unserdeutsch speakers. Preliminary findings show variation among speakers along a continuum from heavily creolised basilect to an almost European German acrolect. Most of the lexicon is derived from German, while a number of basilectal grammatical constructions are the result of the loss of marked features in German and possible imperfect second language learning as well as relexification of Tok Pisin, the presumed substrate language.

Keywords: Unserdeutsch, Rabaul Creole German, Tok Pisin, German, Papua New Guinea, creole, pidgin, endangered languages, relexification, language documentation

1. Introduction¹

Although there have been several documented examples of pidgin German arising as a result of German colonialism, Unserdeutsch (also known as Rabaul Creole

1. Unless otherwise indicated, historical and other information in this article is based on oral and family histories of the Unserdeutsch-speaking community. We would like to thank the many people who shared these stories, while emphasising that any factual errors are, of course,

German) is the only known instance of a creole language with a German lexifier (Mühlhäusler 1984). Unserdeutsch ('Our German') is also unusual in that while most creole languages in the world have arisen in plantation, slave, or trade contact environments where a pidgin language of some sort was already spoken by people in a subordinate position with little contact with the imposed superstrate lexifying language, Unserdeutsch belongs to a small group of creole languages that were developed by children in a boarding school dormitory, such as Tayo in New Caledonia (Ehrhart 1993) and Roper River Creole in Australia (Sandefur 1979). It is also different from most other creole languages in that it has always been an in-group language, rather than an inter-ethnic lingua franca. As with a number of other creole languages (Garrett 2006:176), Unserdeutsch is in danger of disappearing by the middle of this century. Like some of those, such as Diu Indo-Portuguese (Cardoso 2006), Unserdeutsch has been disappearing as a result of emigration and geographic dispersal caused by events related to decolonialisation.

Unserdeutsch and the community that speaks it should be of great interest both to linguists and researchers in related disciplines. Nevertheless, until recently very little interest in the language has been shown by linguists or the general public. Indeed, the very existence of this language is unknown even to many specialists in the field of German and Melanesian studies. An extreme example of this is the reaction dramatist Marc Pohl (p.c.) received from an ethnologist specialising in the Bismarck Archipelago whom he asked for advice about making a play about and in Unserdeutsch. The ethnologist stated categorically that no such language had ever existed, adding, 'Du willst mich verarschen?' ('Are you bullshitting me?')

This paper describes the goals and preliminary historical and sociolinguistic findings of the University of Augsburg Unserdeutsch Research Project, an international research and language documentation project based at the University of Augsburg. This project is an effort by linguists in Europe and Papua New Guinea to work with the Unserdeutsch community to address the collective amnesia that seems to exist in Germany regarding this part of its colonial history and legacy, while at the same time creating a space where members of the Unserdeutsch community can share stories about their history and community among themselves and with other members of the multicultural nations of whom they are citizens, Australia and Papua New Guinea.

ours. We would also like to thank the Creative Unit for Colonial Linguistics at the University of Bremen for organising a visiting professorship for one of the authors during which this paper was written, and three anonymous reviewers who commented on an earlier version of this paper. Our research is funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft / German Research Foundation (MA 6769/1-1).

2. German colonial amnesia and linguistics

The modern nation of Papua New Guinea is in part a construct of German colonial history. Linguistically this is reflected in modern geographic names, such as Mt. Wilhelm or the Bismarck Archipelago, in the widespread use of Tok Pisin, with its genesis in German colonial plantations as a *lingua franca*, and in the use of a German-lexifier creole, Unserdeutsch, as the main language of a small language community. Of course, some historians such as Hiery (e.g. 1995a, 1995b, and 2001), Sack & Sack (1980), and Sack (2001) have written about German colonial history and examined its legacy in the South Pacific today. Nevertheless, there is little awareness in the wider German public about this history.

A number of authors (e.g. Kößler 2006) have characterised Germany's relationship with their overseas colonial legacy as 'colonial amnesia', since there is little public awareness or discussion in school texts, diplomatic relations,² or public monuments of the impact or even existence of an overseas German colonial empire.³ Even where issues related to German colonialism are discussed (such as in Davenas n.d.), the focus tends to be on Africa, centring in particular on German blame for atrocities such as the Herero and Namaqua genocide in German Southwest Africa, with little or usually no mention of the much less violent colonialism in German New Guinea or elsewhere in the South Pacific. This is undoubtedly due in part to the common feeling in the former German colonies of the Pacific today that German colonialism there was relatively more benign than that of other colonial powers or of the Germans in Namibia.⁴

This amnesia includes many linguists and philologists based in German-speaking Europe. This can be seen in the lack of scientific interest in Unserdeutsch, the only German-lexifier creole language. Although a few German scholars, most

2. This amnesia extends even to well-educated persons dealing with foreign affairs. Former Papua New Guinea Minister for the Public Service Ian Ling-Stuckey (p.c.) relates, for example, the surprise on a German Foreign Affairs official when Ling-Stuckey told him his family was from an island called New Hannover, that he had relatives who speak a creole German, and that because his country had been a German colony, the German embassy there should be reopened. The official said he had no idea of this historical connection.

3. The memorial for the victims of the German genocide of the Herero people of Namibia, located in Bremen, is an exception that proves the rule.

4. For example, in discussions related to the current Unserdeutsch Documentation Project, both indigenous and Unserdeutsch interviewees often make favourable mention of what they perceived as 'fair' German justice and 'extensive' infrastructure built in the New Guinea Islands in comparison to the perceived lack of development under subsequent Australian administration. In the authors' experience it is very rare to hear negative comments about the German colonial experience.

notably Peter Mühlhäusler, have written about aspects of Unserdeutsch, until the University of Augsburg Unserdeutsch Research Project began in 2014, their analyses were based solely on fieldwork conducted in 1979 and 1980 by Craig Volker, then a graduate student at the University of Queensland (Volker 1982, 1989a, 1989b, 1991). This was in spite of the paucity even then of middle-aged speakers and the very real menace that the language was already in danger of dying in the 1970s.

This lack of focused attention to Unserdeutsch by German linguists and philologists is part of a more general lack of appreciation for the fact that despite its short colonial history, Germany did come in contact with other languages overseas. This contact left a linguistic legacy that has until recently interested few German language scholars. Even Namibian Black German, the most widely spoken pidgin German and the only one whose documentation is not based solely on archive materials, was not described until the 1990s (Maho 1998: 170 and Deumert 2009: 350).

In recent years there have been some welcome steps to come to terms with colonial amnesia among German linguists. The University of Bremen, for example, established a Colonial Linguistics Initiative in 2010 and a Creative Unit in Colonial Linguistics in 2012 (Thomas Stolz p.c.), and in 2009 the Institute of German Language in Mannheim began a research project about 'lexical change under German colonial rule' and established a Colonial Linguistics Research Group in 2011 (cf. Dewein et al. 2012). This latter group has among its other activities been invaluable in reconstructing damaged recordings of interviews with Unserdeutsch speakers made in 1979.

3. The University of Augsburg Unserdeutsch Research Project

Until now most reports about Unserdeutsch have been in relatively inaccessible works. The first, and still only, attempt to describe the language in any depth is Volker's (1982) master's thesis, consisting of 71 typed pages, which has not yet been published, although a scanned copy is now available on the University of Augsburg Unserdeutsch Research Project homepage.⁵ The first published articles based on the fieldwork for the master's thesis (Volker 1989a, 1989b, 1991) were in publications to which few German linguists have easy access or reason to read (*Language and Linguistics in Melanesia*, *Journal of Asia-Pacific Issues*, *Working Papers in Linguistics/University of Hawaii*). Specialists in pidgin-creole studies did pay somewhat more attention to the language, as is shown by mention of

5. https://www.philhist.uni-augsburg.de/de/lehrstuehle/germanistik/sprachwissenschaft/Unserdeutsch/publikationen/volker_1982.pdf (Accessed October 26, 2017)

Unserdeutsch in the most important textbooks and handbooks about pidgin and creole studies published in the 1980s (cf. Mühlhäusler 1986 and Romaine 1988), both using information gleaned from Volker (1982). Unfortunately, however, no creolists followed up with further fieldwork-based research of their own with Unserdeutsch speakers.

In an attempt to rectify this lack of attention, the recently established Unserdeutsch Research Project at the University of Augsburg has as its goal the linguistic and sociolinguistic documentation of Unserdeutsch (Rabaul Creole German) in forms that are suitable for both researchers and the Unserdeutsch community itself. The Project has already begun by using Volker's previous work and contacts with the community as a basis for preliminary fieldwork in Papua New Guinea and Australia in 2014 and 2015 by Péter Maitz from the University of Augsburg to ascertain the current sociolinguistic ecology of the language, in particular the extent to which the language is endangered today. As more recordings are made of the remaining Unserdeutsch speakers, it is hoped that these and a re-examination of earlier fieldwork results will enable a detailed documentation and analysis of the phonological and grammatical structure of the language, including of the extent of linguistic variation in the community. With archival research in Germany, Papua New Guinea, and Australia, it should also be possible to establish a more accurate understanding of genesis and historical development of the community and its language.

4. Limitations of previous work

As mentioned above, until the first fieldwork in 2014 as part of the University of Augsburg Unserdeutsch Research Project, all previous work has been based on fieldwork by Volker in the 1970s and 1980s. Unfortunately, many of the recordings made for Volker's fieldwork were lost by the University of Queensland Library, and the few copies that still exist total less than an hour of actual Unserdeutsch speech.⁶ Better and longer recordings are needed for a more complete documentation of the language.

There are obvious problems when the results by one researcher cannot be confirmed or investigated further by other researchers in the field. This is particularly so in this situation where the sole researcher was a young student with no previous fieldwork training or experience.

6. These are available to the public at https://www.philhist.uni-augsburg.de/en/lehrstuehle/germanistik/sprachwissenschaft/rabaul_creole_german/ (Accessed October 26, 2017)

From the very beginning it was obvious that despite overall structural stability in the language, there was extensive variation in the speech of different individuals and even in the speech of any individual in different environments. As Volker's was the first investigation into the language, some kind of benchmark was needed. For this reason, his analysis was based on a description of identifying those characteristics in people's speech that differed most from Standard German. This was done on the assumption that these were the basilectal features of the language, meaning that his description was a generalisation of basilectal features, rather than the description of any one person's speech. This ignoring of linguistic variation resulted in an oversimplification of the description of the language, but it set a benchmark against which we can now describe variation. For example, in describing the basilect Volker (1982:36) states, 'The verb morpheme system in Rabaul Creole German is much less complex than that of Standard German. As in Tok Pisin there is no subject-verb agreement', i.e. the verb is invariable without the person and number suffixes required in Standard German. This is quite true for some of the presumably basilect speakers interviewed for the current project, as shown by the examples in (1).

- (1) a. alle gross-e Knabe immer geht herum und schneid-en ...⁷
 PL big-ATTR boy always go around and cut-VERB
 'the big boys always went around and cut...'
- b. wir anfang wein-en.
 1PL.EXCL begin cry-VERB
 'we began to cry'
- c. die wid sag-en, ooh, du will ein gross-e Stick Brot
 3PL PAST.HAB say-VERB oh 2SG want a big-ATTR piece bread
 'they would say, oh, you want a big slice of bread.'

These contrast with the examples in (2) from a presumably more acrolect speaker, in which the verbs are conjugated for subject agreement (-Ø for first person singular and -t for third person singular):

- (2) a. ich hab-Ø ein Grossvater ich hab-Ø ge-troff-en
 1SG have-1SG a grandfather 1SG have-1SG PART-meet-PART
 'I have a grandfather I met.'

7. Unserdeutsch examples are written here in a slightly modified Standard German orthography in which <ß> is written as <ss>. For an explanation of the abbreviations used in glosses, please see the Appendix.

- b. mein Grossmutter komm-t von Tabar Island. Ich hab-Ø sie
 My grandmother come-3SG from Tabar Island 1SG have-1SG she
 niemals ge-troff-en.
 never PART-meet-PART
 'My grandmother comes from Tabar Island. I have never met her.'

The first examples in (1) come from a story about boarding school life in the past. Although it is in the past, there is no overt past tense marking. This contrasts with the sentences in (2), where there is a grammatical difference in tense. A description of this variation, first addressed in Maitz (2017), will be a major focus of the University of Augsburg Unserdeutsch Research Project. With the goal of recording a total of 50 hours of speech from at least 20 speakers, the project should result in recordings of a variety of acrolectal, mesolectal, and basilectal speakers, including a few who had formal education in Standard German before World War II and a majority who had no formal exposure to Standard German. This quantity of recordings will enable a fuller description of Unserdeutsch phonology than was possible with Volker's data as well as a description of the grammar of the language at this time when virtually all of its speakers are retired and have been living in Australia for several decades.

At this stage there is no expectation that apart from segmental phonology (cf. Maitz/Volker *forthc.*) Volker's structural analysis as a whole will need extensive revision. Indeed, some of the more unusual characteristics of the language reported by Volker (1982) have already been confirmed. For example, in Volker (1982: 47), Unserdeutsch is described as having a passive, in this case similar to English with the copula, a past participle, and a prepositional phrase using *bei/by* as in (3).

- (3) De Chicken war ge-stohl-en bei alle Raskol.
 DEF Chicken COP.PAST PART-steal-PART AGT PL criminal
 'The chicken was stolen by the criminals.'

This construction has been recorded in the corpus now being collected.

Nevertheless, preliminary examination of the data collected in the 2014 fieldwork (cf. Lindenfelser & Maitz *in press*) shows that some of the analyses in Volker's (1982) earlier fieldwork, and those based on it, such as Frowein (2005), Klein (2006), Velupillai (2015: 124–129), will need to be revisited and possibly revised. One such analysis is the existence reported of the same first person plural inclusive/exclusive difference that exists in Tok Pisin and the Oceanic languages spoken in the New Guinea Islands, as in (4) and (5).

- (4) Uns bis neben Salz-wasser.
 1PL.INCL COP near salt-water
 'We (including you) are near the ocean.'

- (5) Wir alle geht Rabaul.
 1PL.EXCL all go Rabaul
 'We (but not you) are going to Rabaul.' (Volker 1982:32)

This differentiation has not yet been recorded in the speech of most persons interviewed for the Augsburg Unserdeutsch Research Project, although two speakers do make this distinction, as in (6) and (7):

- (6) Uns zwei am sprech-en so schön.
 1PL.INCL two PROG talk-VERB so beautiful
 'The two of us are talking so beautifully (together).'
- (7) Dann wir hat Mittag-essen.
 then 1PL.EXCL have midday-eat
 'Then we (but not you) had lunch.'

However, when specifically asked, most speakers have rejected a difference in meaning between *uns* and *wir*. Interestingly, those same speakers also rejected a difference in meaning between the well attested Tok Pisin equivalents, *yumi* and *mipela*, respectively. At this stage, it is not possible to tell whether this particular finding is evidence of an over-generalisation in Volker (1982:32), or the result of subsequent language change caused by decades of residence in English-speaking Australia and a convergence of pronominal categories to match those of English. In the material analysed so far, only basilectal speakers make an inclusive *uns*/exclusive *wir* distinction.

5. The genesis and sociolinguistic history of Unserdeutsch

The few publications that have appeared about Unserdeutsch have generally dealt with the historical circumstances surrounding the creation of the language or the language policies related to that time (for example, Voeste 2005; Volker 1989b, 1991). These are either based on Volker's earlier fieldwork or on rather limited archival work.

Unserdeutsch is unusual among the languages of the world in that we can establish a decade (the 1890s) and exact place (the Vunapope Mission on the island now called New Britain in the nation now called Papua New Guinea) for the beginnings of the language. The roots of the language go back somewhat earlier, to the arrival of German missionaries with the formal establishment of German New Guinea in 1884 (see Map 1). While these missionaries had as their first priority the conversion of indigenous people to Christianity, they were also active in the establishment of the first educational and health services in the new colony, much more



Map 1. Melanesian German New Guinea with Simpsonhafen (Rabaul), Neu-Pommern underlined (Brockhaus 1911)

in fact than the colonial government itself. They also helped establish a European capitalist economy as they set up plantations, ship building, carpentry, and other business enterprises to support their missionary work. All of these activities were established and maintained in collaboration with the German colonial administration, which saw missionaries as instrumental in the introduction of German culture and language to the colony (see Gründer 2004, Mühlhäusler 2001).

The development of the Unserdeutsch language and the 'mixed-race'⁸ community in Vunapope and Kokopo (then called Herbertshöhe) are closely tied to the Sacred Heart Missionaries (Missionarii Sacratissimi Cordis or MSC), the largest Catholic missionary institution in New Britain (then called Neu-Pommern). It owned 3,465 hectares of land, of which about a third was cultivated, mostly for coconut plantations. At any given time, these plantations had over 500 indigenous workers recruited from many different ethnic groups in the colony (Gründer 2004: 112ff). MSC missionary Louis Couppé (1850–1926) was appointed bishop and apostolic vicar by the Vatican in 1889, serving until 1923. In 1891 he set up

8. While possibly considered pejorative in many other English-speaking countries, *mixed-race* (or Tok Pisin *hapkas*, from English *half-caste*) is quite accepted in Papua New Guinean English to describe people of any mixed ethnic heritage, even those with parents from two different indigenous Melanesian groups. Indeed, this is the self-descriptive term used by the family of one of the authors, with most members of the Unserdeutsch-speaking community calling themselves *Vunapope* (or *German*) *mixed-race*. As this article is written according to Papua New Guinea stylistic norms and out of respect to the emic prevalence of mixed-race by Unserdeutsch speakers themselves, this term is used here.

his headquarters at Vunapope (Kuanua⁹ for 'the Pope's land') (Ischler 1932: 180f). This was within walking distance of the German New Guinea colonial capital in Herbertshöhe. Within a few years, Vunapope had become an educational and commercial centre for the new colony. Its boarding school for mixed-race children was the place where Unserdeutsch began and continued to be spoken for many years.

Impatient with the slow pace of christianising the indigenous people and, indeed, with the active resistance of many indigenous people to the Church, Bishop Couppé saw raising a critical mass of the younger generation into a European and Christian environment as the best way to spread a Christian way of life in the colony. With this in mind, around the turn of the century he had the Mission take and, following local custom, even buy young children from their families and then adopt them (Gründer 2004: 114). Most of these children were mixed-race, both from extra-marital liaisons and from stable relationships or formal marriages between indigenous mothers and German and other non-indigenous fathers. In the eurocentric ideology of the missionaries of that time, 'half-caste' children whose fathers had left the colony were much better off in the 'sanctuary' of the mission than among their 'uneducated' indigenous relatives. The racist ideology underlying these actions can be seen in the explanation of Father Arnold Janssen, an MSC missionary who was director of the Vunapope School for 20 years:

As long as the mother and child remain among whites, the child will receive European nutrition and thrive. But such a child has not grown up among the pure natives and his way of life and will by necessity waste away in that circumstance. Besides that, there is no concept of any real education, so that the child will deteriorate both spiritually and physically. In those cases where the child has inherited the least attractive traits of both races, [...] the education of these young mixed-race is a most arduous task, so the Mission prefers to take them as soon as they can be weaned from their coloured mother. At a later age, they bring vile habits with them that are difficult to stamp out. Moreover, learning a new language is that much slower the older they are. (Janssen 1932: 150, authors' translation)

In 1897 a 'sanctuary' for mixed-race children was officially founded, where children lived in dormitories and attended a school where Standard German was the language of instruction and interaction with teachers and other European mission staff. Those children came to the Mission with no knowledge of German. Many and perhaps even most of the older children spoke Tok Pisin as either their only language or as one of their first languages, even if some who were old enough to speak also knew their mother's native language. While most sources usually date the first native speakers of a creolised Tok Pisin as dating from 'after World War

9. Kuanua is the Austronesian language spoken by the Tolai people of the Gazelle Peninsula of New Britain Island, where Vunapope is located.

II' (Mühlhäusler 2003: 4) or even the 1970s (Slobin 2002: 386), in actual fact, these mixed-race children at the beginning of the twentieth century seem to have been the very first speakers for whom Tok Pisin was a native language:

The Mission could not remain indifferent to the sad state of these children. It began to collect them, and when the number started to level off, it founded an institution in 1897 specifically for them, where they would be raised by the sisters. This turned out to be quite a difficult endeavour. For the most part whites do not learn the language of the natives and instead use Pidgin English with them, a business language that is a jumble of corrupted English and native dialects. The half-breeds usually speak only this Pidgin English along with a few phrases in their mother's native language, which of course is different depending on where they come from. For this reason, when they come to the Mission they can hardly be understood.
(Janssen 1932: 150, authors' translation)

Unlike post-World War II instances of Tok Pisin creolisation, these children acquired Tok Pisin as a native language at a time when Tok Pisin was not yet proliferated to the same extent as after World War II. Moreover, they were cut off from their parents' native languages much more completely than later groups.

Few Unserdeutsch speakers seem to have learnt Kuanua, either as children or adults, speaking instead in Tok Pisin with the Tolai majority around them, a pattern also followed by most European and Australian inhabitants of the Gazelle Peninsula. Certainly, no speakers interviewed for the current Augsburg Unserdeutsch Research Project claimed to speak more than a few words of Kuanua. Great effort was made by teachers and dormitory staff to maintain a social distance between the children and indigenous workers or nuns at the Mission. Any substrate influence from Kuanua would therefore have been indirect via Tok Pisin (see Mosel 1980 for a broader description of the Kuanua substrate influence on Tok Pisin).

The children came to the school from a variety of backgrounds:

This group of pupils makes for a multicoloured picture of racial mixtures. Half-bloods of Germans, English, Australians, Spanish, French, Swedes, Norwegians, Danes, Finns, Filipinos, Micronesians and Indians with coloured women from all the tribes of the most far-flung islands of former German New Guinea.
(Janssen 1932: 153, authors' translation)¹⁰

Hymes' (1971) classic prerequisites for a pidginised language were therefore in place. There was a group of people speaking many languages with a dominant group, the missionary staff, speaking a language with social and political prestige.

10. Unserdeutsch speakers also trace their families to fathers from China, Japan, and Ambon Island in what is today Indonesia. The Melanesian heritage of most families is from what is today New Ireland Province, with only a few claiming Tolai and other New Britain heritage.

The children were in social isolation from their families and, given the rather strict educational practices of the time, without intimate emotional ties to their teachers.

It is likely that there may have been some kind of simplified German spoken by the first generation of children with workers at the mission or with newly arrived children who were in the process of learning German, but there is as yet no evidence for such a language. Oral accounts passed down by the oldest speakers recorded in the 1980s state that *Unserdeutsch* itself was started as word-play and conscious or unconscious relexification of Tok Pisin among children, reinforced by the need for a group identity in a socially isolated and racist environment that reminded the children that they were neither 'kanakas'¹¹ nor quite 'real' Germans. Of course, the fact that students were punished when teachers heard them speaking Tok Pisin would have been an incentive to use German rather than Tok Pisin words amongst themselves so that any overheard conversations would sound more German.

The exact details of this development and how it led to the emergence of *Unserdeutsch* will need to be the subject of future research. The most extensive explanation available at this time is given by a second-generation speaker described in Volker (1991: 146), and more or less confirmed by oral history accounts remembered by some older speakers from other families. According to this account, in the evenings older children would tell stories to younger children in the dormitories, sometimes using picture books from the school library, but explaining the stories in a joking way by playing with German words in sentences that were grammatically Tok Pisin and devoid of 'difficult' German grammatical marking. This may have been on purpose as a way of releasing the stress of using Standard German in a formal, classroom setting all day long. This explains grammatical features that *Unserdeutsch* has in common with Tok Pisin, such as the use of the pre-nominal plural marker *alle* (cf. Tok Pisin *ol*, from English *all*), the Tok Pisin-like use of the serialised directional (locomotive) verbs *geht* and *komm* as in (11) (cf. Tok Pisin (*i kam/(i) go*) (cf. Verhaar 1995: 98–102) and the optional marking of past tense as in (1). Tok Pisin also seems to be the source of some probable calques that have been found in the current recordings, such as (8) and (9):

- (8) *Unserdeutsch*:
 Frau . Kakaruk
 female chicken
- Tok Pisin*:
 kakaruk meri
 chicken female
 'the hen'

11. A pejorative word for indigenous Pacific Islanders (German *Kanaken*).

- (9) Unserdeutsch:
 de klein-e Haus
 DEF small-ATTR house
- Tok Pisin:
 liklik haus
 small house
 'toilet'

The grammar of Unserdeutsch may also have been the result of imperfect second language learning, where certain grammatical constructions in Standard German had not yet been learnt by some students. This would explain those grammatical features that are common with many L2 varieties of German, including learner varieties or contemporary so-called 'guest worker German' (Gastarbeiterdeutsch; cf. Keim 1978), such as a lack of subject-verb agreement suffixes and grammatical gender in the basilect.

In any case, Unserdeutsch quickly became the in-group language among the children, used in everyday situations when they were not with teachers. Although there is a great deal of variation in the extent to which people use Unserdeutsch or Standard German features at any given time, the core features of Unserdeutsch seem to have stabilised quite early and are common to at least basilect speakers, such as the use of *alle* (German 'all' and phonologically similar to the Tok Pisin plural marker *ol*) as a plural marker and the absence of obligatory tense marking as in (1), *fi* (from German *für* 'for') as a complementiser as in (10), and sentence-final WH-interrogatives as in (11):

- (10) das ni genuch fi fill-en auf mein Bauch
 that not enough for fill-VERB up my stomach
 'That was not enough to fill my stomach up.'
- (11) Du lauf-en geht wo?
 2SG run-VERB go where
 'Where are you running to?'

The common use of Unserdeutsch allowed the language to be used as a marker of group identity that set the group against the sometimes inhospitable and racist adult outer world (Volker 1989b:22). It was not used by Standard German-speaking personnel at the Mission. While a few indigenous workers at the Mission did learn Standard German, none learned Unserdeutsch. Mixed-race people normally used Tok Pisin when speaking with indigenous people.

In the beginning the language was not yet a creole language because it was still no one's native language. This happened as the first generation of children grew into adulthood. Strict racial categories prevented most of them from marrying

indigenous partners, while at the same time they could not marry European partners. Before World War II, when children finished school in their late teens, mission staff acted as matchmakers and told them which other mixed-race person at the school they should marry. The new groom usually took up employment with the mission, either at Vunapope or on one of the mission's plantations. The young couple then usually raised their children with Unserdeutsch as the main, although usually not only, home language. At the same time, many members of the first generation worked together at the Mission as tradesmen, plantation managers, or household helpers after leaving school (Janssen 1932:154). The first members of the second generation (i.e. the first creole generation) were born soon after the Australian invasion at the beginning of World War I. It should be noted that because successive waves of children were collected and brought to the school by the missionaries, the language was learnt by new groups of Tok Pisin-speaking children as a second language even as it was being creolised in the families of older speakers.

During the interwar years, the Gazelle Peninsula was very multilingual. While the majority were still the indigenous Tolais, there were increasing numbers of plantation workers from elsewhere, especially the New Guinea coastal mainland. In addition to the now English-speaking European elite, there was a sizeable Chinese community speaking Cantonese and a 'Malay' community speaking mainly Ambonese and Malay. Tok Pisin and, among those with education, English acted as languages of inter-ethnic communication. Only a small number of immigrants learned Kuanua. The mixed-race community had a quadglossic situation where Standard German (called *Hohe Deutsch*, *Normaldeutsch* or *Proper German*) was used even after the end of World War I as a school language (together with English) and when speaking with Mission staff. It was also used for reading and writing, together with English. Older persons relate that before World War II, Standard German was taught as a school subject in the upper primary grades, with emphasis on the proper use of Standard German grammar. English was used when speaking with Australian colonial officials or business people and increasingly as a language of instruction at the school. Tok Pisin was used with indigenous people, while Unserdeutsch was used in informal and intimate situations among members of the mixed-race community. All members of the small mixed-race community before World War II spoke all four languages to some degree (English less so at the beginning of the Australian rule). A few had some basic competence of Kuanua or Cantonese, but most spoke Tok Pisin with Chinese shopkeepers or with the Tolai majority around them.

World War II was a catastrophic event for everyone in the Bismarck Archipelago, including the mixed-race community. Those with Chinese ancestry suffered the greatest. Although Germany was an ally of the Japanese, the Japanese occupation authorities accused the German missionaries and others at the Mission

of having 'collaborated' with the Australians. Many were interned in difficult circumstances. At the same time, Vunapope, Kokopo, and Rabaul were completely destroyed by American bombing, as the Japanese had made this area their military headquarters for the region.

When the Mission began to rebuild after 1945, it looked more towards the United States than Germany as a source for teaching missionaries, as it found itself under pressure from the re-established Australian colonial administration to make the school completely English-speaking. German was forbidden at the school even with German staff, so that new generations of children at the school might use or learn Unserdeutsch on the playground or in the dormitory, but without access to Standard German as a target or classroom language. Teachers went to Unserdeutsch-speaking homes and told parents to use English and not 'German' with their children. Different families followed this command to different extents, with those families with German ancestry being understandably the most resistant to using only English at home. One woman recalled how her mixed-race German mother would denigrate Australians, their language, and their culture after such visits and how her father reacted by insisting the children speak Standard German at home. But even in families such as these, the pressure to use only English at school meant that increasingly, children developed either only a passive knowledge of German or no knowledge at all.

At the same time that the American nuns were successful in establishing strong competence in English among the children at the mixed-race school, a few had a more relaxed attitude towards Unserdeutsch outside of school. Older persons relate that one nun from Pennsylvania even learned to speak Unserdeutsch, although it is not clear how fluent her Unserdeutsch actually was.

The era after World War II until just before Papua New Guinea Independence was a time when racial barriers were only very slowly dismantled. For the increasingly middle-class mixed-race community, exclusion from white-only social clubs, such as the Kokopo Sports Club and Rabaul Yacht Club, was particularly humiliating. Members of the mixed-race community reacted by founding two multi-racial clubs, the Combio Club in Rabaul and later the Ralum Club in Kokopo, both of which allowed a non-indigenous person of any background to join. While the Combio Club had a very mixed membership, including many Chinese and 'Malays' (descendants of settlers from Ambon Island) who did not speak Unserdeutsch, the Ralum Club quickly became the centre of social activity for Unserdeutsch speakers and offered a social space where Unserdeutsch could be used.

The 1960s brought rapid social change in both Australia and what had now become the combined territories of Papua and New Guinea. A gradual relaxing of the White Australia policy permitted mixed-race and Chinese residents of the Territory of New Guinea, a United Nations trust territory under Australian administration,

to move to both Papua, then officially actual Australian territory, and to Australia itself. Formal racial segregation and restrictions were gradually eliminated, and marriage between racial groups was permitted, although often still discouraged. Mixed-race and Chinese residents of New Guinea were given Australian citizenship, which included the right of children to go to boarding school in Australia at government expense. At the same time, the Rabaul area became the centre of the Mataungan Association, a sometimes violent Tolai-led anti-colonial movement (see Kaputin 1970), and the colonial government made it clear that a policy of 'localisation' would mean that employees with Australian citizenship would eventually be expected to give their positions to Papua New Guineans. All of these developments led most Unserdeutsch speakers to move to Australia after Papua New Guinea was granted independence in 1975 and mixed-race people had to make a choice between Australian and Papua New Guinean citizenship. Often this migration was led by teenage children first going to boarding school there, followed later by their parents.

Today this geographic dispersion together with increasing exogamy means that there is no longer the need for an identifying language. Many people born after World War II, and it seems all people born after Independence, have grown up with English and/or Tok Pisin as their home languages. Today the youngest speaker is a semi-fluent person born in the early 1960s. Most fluent speakers are much older, born before 1950. Without successful and aggressive language revitalisation, by the middle of the twenty-first century and within three to four generations after its genesis, Unserdeutsch will undoubtedly no longer be spoken.

6. Unserdeutsch: a creolised jargon?

Unserdeutsch today is a completely creolised language. There are no persons who learn it as a second language and it is not a language today for communication between different ethnic groups. In this it differs from Tok Pisin, for example, which is spoken by millions of people as a second language, even though it is increasingly becoming a creolised first language (often the only first language) of children, especially in urban or other ethnically mixed environments. Unlike Tok Pisin, Unserdeutsch was quickly creolised in one generation, with no large community of second language speakers existing more than one generation after its genesis.

In that first generation, however, Unserdeutsch was used by people who had other languages as first languages and for whom Unserdeutsch became part of their linguistic repertoire in late childhood. Mühlhäusler (1997) described the process of development of pidgins from simple to complex systems in which there are four stages:

jargon → stable pidgin → expanded pidgin → creole

He states, without offering evidence, that Unserdeutsch might be one of the few creoles that creolised in its jargon stage (Mühlhäusler 1997:9 and 2001). He defines jargons as individual solutions to problems of communication between speakers of different languages. They are used only in restricted contexts and therefore have highly reduced lexicons as well as a minimum of grammatical elaboration, usually in the form of one and two word sentences (Mühlhäusler 1997:128). We are of the opinion that rather than being a jargon in its pre-creole stage, Unserdeutsch seems to have become the normal means of communication among children at Vunapope Mission after only a short time, even before it was creolised and even though the children acquired a good command of Standard German in the classroom.

The continual formal teaching of the superstrate language (that is, Standard German) until World War II and the access to native speakers among the mission staff even after that explains why the speech of acrolect speakers can approach that of native speakers from Europe. A number of the oldest speakers are even able to shift between the basilect and an acrolect that is very close to Standard German. This retention of superstrate grammatical features by a group that was bilingual in the superstrate language and the apparently conscious creation of a creole language as a marker of in-group identity is reminiscent of the early history of Pitcairn-Norfolk Creole, which Laycock (1989) has characterised as a cant. Like Pitcairn-Norfolk Creole, Unserdeutsch was already at least a stable pidgin when it was creolised with the first parents using it at home and children in the second generation hearing it at home as well as from their classmates at school. Indeed, its everyday use in the pre-creole generation, its relative grammatical complexity, and its marker as a sign of in-group identity are the characteristics Romaine (1988:138) uses to define an expanded pidgin.

7. The Unserdeutsch lexicon

In its lexical origins, the pre-creolised Unserdeutsch cant was obviously a single-source pidgin. The Standard German the children learned at school and in communication with the European missionaries was the only superstrate language and the source for almost all the lexicon. The most important substrate language appears to have been Tok Pisin, as seen by grammatical similarities that Unserdeutsch shares with Tok Pisin as discussed above. Future research will be needed to identify any elements that might have come independently from indigenous or non-German immigrant languages such as Swedish, Kuanua, Chinese, Japanese, or Malay, which were spoken by the parents of the first generation of Unserdeutsch speakers and therefore perhaps heard at home by this first generation. While a number of high frequency lexemes of Tok Pisin origin have been recorded, both content and

function words such as *kakaruk* 'chicken', *maski* 'never mind, despite', and *orait* 'all right', the total contribution to the Unserdeutsch lexicon is rather minimal.

The pre-creole Unserdeutsch seems to be typical for single-source pidgins in that there was an unequal power relationship between one dominant group (here the German missionaries) that contributed most of the lexicon, whereas the grammatical structure has its origin mostly in the languages of the subordinate group. But most such single-source languages arise in colonial situations where there is extreme oppression and even slavery. Unserdeutsch and other school dormitory-based creoles show that such extreme oppression is not necessary for a single-source pidgin to develop. A certain social distance, such as that of nineteenth century German educators towards their pupils, may be a necessary criterion for the creation of such pidgin languages, but actual oppression is not.

8. Unserdeutsch and other German high-contact varieties

Unserdeutsch may be the only known example of a German-based creole language, but it is certainly not the only colonial high-contact variety of German. Mühlhäusler (1984, 2012) has discussed various forms of pidgin German that were used in Papua New Guinea and other German colonies. Of more relevance are the (more or less) longer lasting second language varieties of German spoken by indigenous Namibians, Namibian Black German (Küchendeutsch) (Deumert 2009), and by migrant workers in central Europe, Gastarbeiterdeutsch (see Keim 1978), both of which share structural similarities with Unserdeutsch. These include the elimination of target language grammatical redundancies and irregularities, e.g. a lack of subject-verb agreement, obligatory tense, and noun gender marking. These are often explained as the result of imperfect second language learning and spontaneous simplification, which among second language learners are characterised by extreme variation.

What differentiates Unserdeutsch from these examples of imperfect second language learning is its structural stability, the existence of social conventions, and the language repertoire of its early speakers. These are important in distinguishing between pidgins (and their creole descendants) and the results of imperfect second language acquisition.

In his definition of pidgin languages, Peter Mühlhäusler (1997: 6) states:

Pidgins are examples of partially targeted second language learning and second language creation, developing from simpler to more complex systems as communicative requirements become more demanding. Pidgin languages by definition have no native speakers – they are social rather than individual solutions – and hence are **characterized by norms of acceptability.** (emphasis by the authors)

Thus although the processes of simplification in Namibian Black German, Gastarbeiterdeutsch, and Unserdeutsch may have produced some similar simplifications, Unserdeutsch is noticeably different in that, although there is notable variation between speakers, at the same time there is relative stability and a sense of linguistic social convention within the community.

A more important difference lies in the linguistic repertoire of Unserdeutsch speakers. Speakers of Unserdeutsch in the earlier generations generally had a good command of Standard German, while speakers of Namibian Black German and Gastarbeiterdeutsch do not. Indeed, those immigrant workers who gain a command of Standard German normally try to stop using those features of Gastarbeiterdeutsch that they used initially. For them, Gastarbeiterdeutsch is a temporary bridge to the acquisition of Standard German. For the Vunapope mixed-race community, the reduced and standard varieties were different linguistic codes used for different purposes and so fluency in one code was consistent with fluency in the other.

9. Linguistic variation in the Unserdeutsch community

In spite of its relative stability, there is considerable variation in Unserdeutsch, both between speakers and within the speech of any individual speaker. Some of this may be the residual result of differences between the varieties used in different families during the first period of creolisation. This is similar to the inter-familial variation reported by Mühlhäusler (2015) for Norf'k on Norfolk Island.

But more likely this is the result of Unserdeutsch speakers having had differing amounts of access to the superstrate language, Standard German, even after the language was creolised. Standard German remained the most prestigious language at the Vunapope Mission until the end of World War II since unlike other Germans, the German missionary personnel were allowed to remain in New Guinea even after the Australian administration was formally established under a League of Nations mandate at the end of World War I. Moreover, in the interwar years, even though the Australians required English to be the official language of education, German remained a formal subject and an informal oral means of instruction in other subjects. This was because only a few of the missionaries had a good command of English and new textbooks in English were not always available (Volker 1982: 11). Even after World War II, when the number of German missionaries declined and German was no longer taught at school, some parents insisted on using Standard German at home. Thus, among speakers alive today, there is variation in the amount of exposure they had to Standard German growing up,

or endangered (see Figure 2). Each factor is given a score from 1 to 5 according to set criteria:

- 5 'safe'
- 4 'unsafe'
- 3 'definitely endangered'
- 2 'severely endangered'
- 1 'critically endangered', and
- 0 'extinct'

Figure 2. Evaluative factors of the language vitality of Unserdeutsch (based on UNESCO 2003:7–14)

Factor	Unserdeutsch level
1. Intergenerational language transmission	2
2. Absolute number of speakers	1
3. Proportion of speakers within the total population	1
4. Shifts in domains of language use	1
5. Response to new domains and media	1
6. Availability of materials for language education and literacy	0
7. Governmental and institutional language attitudes and policies	3
8. Community members' attitudes toward their own language	2
9. Amount and quality of documentation	2

These are then used to give an aggregate score and overall rating. In Figure 2, the ranking of Unserdeutsch is given for each factor. The first six are the factors UNESCO has identified as major and the last three are factors UNESCO has identified as minor factors. Using these factors, we assess that in 2015 Unserdeutsch has an overall Language Vitality rating of 1 to 2 and is therefore 'severely' to 'critically' endangered. Our reasons for this assessment are described in the discussions below for each of the nine factors.

10.1 Factor 1: Intergenerational language transmission

The pre-World War II generations lived in social and geographical isolation in and near the Vunapope Mission. Due in part to the rigid racial segregation in New Guinea at that time, the group had a strong internal cohesion and was somewhat closed to both the colonial minority and indigenous majority. The missionaries' policy of choosing marriage partners for graduates of the Vunapope school so they would not marry indigenous persons, led to endogamy that in turn meant

that Unserdeutsch was quickly creolised and remained the everyday language of most families.

This changed in the post-World War II years, especially as Papua New Guinean independence approached, and members of the community spread throughout the territory of New Guinea and later with the relaxing of the White Australia Policy to both the territory of Papua and Australia itself. This led to exogamy for most speakers and to most people born after 1960 growing up with English and/or Tok Pisin as their home language(s). Some people did grow up in the 1960s and 1970s with Unserdeutsch in the household due to grandparents who spoke the language, and for some it was their dominant language before entering school. But even for these children, English became the dominant language after they started school. They can understand Unserdeutsch, but their active use of it is quite limited. Today Unserdeutsch is not handed down to younger persons. For them it is only a heritage language.

According to UNESCO (2003:7) criteria Unserdeutsch is therefore 'severely endangered': 'The language is spoken only by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may still understand the language, they typically do not speak it to their children.' This is level 2.

10.2 Factor 2: Absolute number of speakers

Before beginning fieldwork in 2014, we assumed there were no more than a dozen speakers of Unserdeutsch. We were pleasantly surprised to learn of around 100 speakers, although not all of these are fluent. Fewer than 10 live in Papua New Guinea, the rest live in the urban areas of the eastern states of Australia.¹² While this relatively larger number of speakers is encouraging, there are still not enough speakers to be able to say that in an Australian environment the language has a secure future.

As UNESCO states, a 'small language group may also merge with a neighbouring group, losing its own language and culture'. In Papua New Guinea itself there are many language communities with such a small number of speakers. Of the more than 830 languages spoken today in the country, only 7 (Enga, English, Hiri Motu, Huli, Kuman, Melpa, and Tok Pisin) have more than 100,000 speakers, while over 400 languages have less than 1000 speakers and of these, 250 languages are spoken by fewer than 500 people (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig 2014). In a stable situation where children grow up learning the language, this does not mean that

12. This number is based on information gathered from 2014 to 2016 through interviews in Australia and Papua New Guinea. The estimate of 1500 Unserdeutsch speakers by Mühlhäusler (2001:247) during the Unserdeutsch 'heyday' appears to be somewhat unrealistic.

the language is in imminent danger. This is, in fact, still the case for some small isolated language groups in Papua New Guinea. It was also the case for Unserdeutsch in the first half of the twentieth century, when its speakers were socially isolated.

Today, however, most speakers live in Australia, where they are geographically dispersed and successfully integrated into mainstream society. In Australia, such a small number of speakers, especially with a high level of exogamy, is not enough to ensure a viable language community, so we have assigned this factor level 1.

10.3 Factor 3: Proportion of speakers within the total population

In both Papua New Guinea and Australia as a whole and in any one local area in particular, Unserdeutsch speakers form an infinitesimal percentage of the total population. In UNESCO (2003:9) terms, 'very few speak the language', giving it a rating of 1.

10.4 Factor 4: Shifts in domains of language use

In some large language communities, such as English in Australia and many others in Europe and Asia, it is possible to use only one language for all linguistic domains. In such societies, one can be monolingual and participate fully in all aspects of the society. This has never been true for Unserdeutsch. All active speakers have always been multilingual. Unserdeutsch was one of the first languages of all of today's active speakers, along with at least two other languages, Tok Pisin because they all grew up in Papua New Guinea and English, the language of education from pre-school. A small number of them also speak Standard German with varying degrees of fluency. Few speakers today claim to speak a local Papua New Guinea language, although a few say that their parents did.

As described above, before World War II and for some years afterward, Unserdeutsch was for most an in-group language: the language of the home and family and informal socialisation with peers both as children and adults. For many it was also the language of romance and marriage. Other languages were used as out-group languages for other domains, such as German (and/or later English) for education, literacy, or talking with Europeans, and Tok Pisin for communicating with fully indigenous colleagues, relatives, and neighbours.

Today the number of domains in which Unserdeutsch is used is even more limited and, in the terminology used by UNESCO (2003: 11), the language does not 'serve a meaningful function in culturally important domains'. For several decades Unserdeutsch speakers have usually lived far apart from one another, and most are married to people who do not speak Unserdeutsch. In such situations, Unserdeutsch is rarely the language of either the home or social life. Because the

language is already a heritage language for younger family members, Unserdeutsch is used only when older people who live in the same Australian city (Brisbane, Gold Coast, Cairns or Sydney) meet for extended family or other social gatherings, such as funerals or weddings. Today there is great variation in the degree of confidence and fluency speakers have. The most fluent are those few remaining speakers born before 1950, although even among these speakers, a lack of active use of the language has resulted in language attrition, with a reduced vocabulary, code switching, and phonological, grammatical and lexical borrowing from English and Tok Pisin.¹³ Those born after 1950 tend to have a restricted passive understanding of the language, with an active use limited to set phrases and simple sentences. Very few of these can be called fluent speakers.

Given this situation, the language can be described as being at best in level 1, 'limited or formal domains', which UNESCO (2003: 10) describes as '(t)he language is used only in a very restricted number of domains and for very few functions'.

10.5 Factor 5: Response to new domains and media

UNESCO (2003:11) gives 'schools, new work environments, new media, including broadcast media and the Internet' as examples of new domains and media that can reinforce the use of a potentially endangered language or strengthen the dominance of a language of greater social power. None of these has been a source of support for Unserdeutsch in the past. Although Unserdeutsch developed within a boarding school environment, the language was never used for classroom instruction or discussion. Similarly, although other East New Britain languages have been used in radio broadcasts after World War II, there was never a perceived need to use Unserdeutsch, since all its speakers were also native speakers of English and Tok Pisin, and there was little knowledge of the existence of the language among the administration. Even missionaries in constant contact with the community thought of Unserdeutsch as only a kind of broken German, not a language in its own right.

Given the pressure after World War II for families to give up 'German' for English when speaking with their children, media in Standard German became a kind of support for any variety of German, as well as a remaining conduit for Standard German in the home after the language of all school instruction was changed completely to English. For example, one speaker now in his seventies

13. 'Code switching' is used here in the same sense as in Auer (1999). As opposed to code mixing and fused lects, codes are switched primarily at the syntagmatic or lexical level and often indicate a pragmatic shift. Code switching is especially used to fill in gaps in a speaker's Unserdeutsch lexicon.

remembers his parents listening to *Deutsche Welle* shortwave broadcasts in the evenings in the 1950s. This was a source of Standard German exposure for the entire family; it is not surprising that this particular speaker still has a good command of spoken Standard German even though he cannot read or write Standard German at all.

One interesting development has been the recent wave of enthusiasm among both actual speakers and their descendants for a Facebook group page developed by the University of Augsburg Unserdeutsch Research Project. Initially thought of as a way for Project researchers in Europe to communicate their findings to the Unserdeutsch community, it has become a forum for people to share stories and old photos and is now entirely driven by discussions among members of the Unserdeutsch community. Given the age of most speakers, their enthusiasm for this new medium is surprising. In fact, there are elderly speakers who said that they specifically learned how to get a Facebook account so they could take part in online conversations with old friends living in other cities in Australia. At present, conversations are mostly in English, with the exception of a few phrases or words, especially names for family relations, greetings, and formulaic expressions, usually written in an ad hoc English-based orthography.

Linked to the interest in the Facebook group is access by the community to the Unserdeutsch documentation webpage set up on the University of Augsburg website. At the moment, only articles, photographs and fieldwork recordings by outside researchers are available on the site, but there is scope for members of the community to contribute in the future if they wish. Some Facebook discussions already deal with questions or comments about materials on that page.

In 2003 a play partially in and about Unserdeutsch and its speakers was produced and performed in Germany and the Netherlands (Unger 2009). A documentary about the play and the visit to Germany of Unserdeutsch speaker Harry Hoerler was produced at the same time (Knapp 2009). Copies of this video have been distributed among some Unserdeutsch speakers. This represents the only extended use of the language in any modern electronic medium, except for short examples of Unserdeutsch sentences in German and Australian news reports about the play in 2009 or, more recently, the University of Augsburg Unserdeutsch Research Project.

Thus, while there is belated interest in Internet material in or about Unserdeutsch and its speakers, there is as yet almost no actual communicative online or broadcast use of the language. The UNESCO (2003: 11) level for new media use of the language is at best 1: 'The language is used only in a few new domains.'

10.6 Factor 6: Availability of materials for language education and literacy

There are no known publications in Unserdeutsch. The only public writing in Unserdeutsch that we have found to date are gravestone inscriptions in the Vunapope Mission cemetery. An example is shown in Photo 1. This inscription ends in *meine Liebling* 'my darling'. In Standard German *Liebling* has masculine gender and therefore 'my' has the masculine nominative form *mein*.

Very few Unserdeutsch speakers living today are able to read Standard German and even fewer would use Standard German orthography to write Unserdeutsch. There is no effort currently being made to produce materials for language education or literacy and at this stage it is not possible to know whether these would even be seen as important to the Unserdeutsch community. This factor must be rated as 0 on the UNESCO (2003: 12) scale: 'No orthography available to the community'.



Photo 1. Gravestone with Unserdeutsch inscription AUFWIEDERSEHN MEINE LIEBLING

10.7 Factor 7: Governmental and institutional language attitudes and policies including official status and use

Neither Papua New Guinea nor Australia has given any recognition or status to Unserdeutsch as a vernacular or heritage language. It is not used in any official way, but neither is its use prohibited or discouraged today. This is in contrast to the immediate World War II era, when Australian teachers at the Vunapope Mission

school told parents to use only English at home with their children. In both countries, however, government institutions do assume that Unserdeutsch speakers will be fluent in English, which they are. In the UNESCO (2003: 13) scale, this is level 3: 'The dominant group is indifferent as to whether or not minority languages are spoken, as long as the dominant group's language is the language of interaction.'

10.8 Factor 8: Community members' attitudes toward their own language

Unserdeutsch speakers have always had an ambivalent attitude toward their language. On the one hand, most have warm feelings for a language they associate with memories of their older family members and their former homes in Papua New Guinea. Most are very proud of their German cultural heritage, even those with no actual German ancestry, and Unserdeutsch is a tangible sign of that link. On the other hand, for many there is a reluctance to share their language with others, perhaps for fear of it not being accepted or for being ridiculed for speaking what most speakers themselves call *Kaputtene Deutsch* 'broken German' or *Falsche Deutsch* 'wrong German'. Undoubtedly for some this is the legacy of school years, when they were told either to speak 'proper' German or, after World War II, to speak only English at school.

Members of the community often do express nostalgia about the language and many have given much support to the University of Augsburg Unserdeutsch Research Project efforts to document Unserdeutsch. The intense interest in the Unserdeutsch Facebook page shows that there is a positive interest in the language and in exchanging information about it. Nevertheless, although many say they wish their children spoke Unserdeutsch, no one has expressed any actual need for their grandchildren to learn Unserdeutsch or even Standard German, and no fluent speakers have made an active effort to speak it on a regular basis to their children or grandchildren. Interestingly, the youngest speaker of the language is an eloquent advocate for the documentation and use of Unserdeutsch. She herself, however, does not have any children. This is similar to UNESCO (2003: 15) level 2 for this topic: 'Some members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss'. In summarising the importance of speakers support for language maintenance, UNESCO (2003: 16) state that

For language vitality, speakers ideally not only strongly value their language, but they also know in which social domains their language is to be supported. A positive attitude is critical for the long-term stability of a language.

Such a conscious evaluation of the Unserdeutsch linguistic ecology has not yet been made by its speakers as a group.

10.9 Factor 9: Amount and quality of documentation

As UNESCO (2003: 16) state, it is important to document a language so that members of a speech community can identify specific tasks, have access to language styles no longer current, and design research projects with outside specialists. While some documentation was made in the 1970s and 1980s and more recently in the first stages of the current University of Augsburg Unserdeutsch Research Project, it is still inadequate to give a full description of the language. It is best to describe the documentation currently available as 'fragmentary', the UNESCO level 2, which is explained as:

There are some grammatical sketches, word-lists, and texts useful for limited linguistic research but with inadequate coverage. Audio and video recordings may exist in varying quality, with or without any annotation.

11. Conclusion: Unserdeutsch and language death

Unserdeutsch has always been an in-group language. In the face of racism and exclusion from many fields of social and professional interaction in the colonial period, the mixed-race community did not see a need to explain all aspects of its life to outsiders. The language itself became a marker of in-group membership and a means for members of the community to communicate in a language that others could not understand easily. Indeed, speakers relate how under Japanese occupation in World War II using Unserdeutsch was a way to communicate in safety away from the prying ears of the occupation troops, some of whom could understand Standard German.

This strong in-group feeling is reflected in the very name by which some speakers call their language, which translates as 'Our German'. At the same time that speakers had an emotional attachment to the language, they feared ridicule from speakers of Standard German. During the time of Volker's first fieldwork, it therefore often took time to establish trust with speakers.

The situation has changed since then. Almost all speakers now live in Australia, where an official policy of multiculturalism encourages ethnic communities to be proud of their roots, and where there are no social barriers that require the community to keep a rigid boundary against potentially hostile outsiders. This helps speakers to be more open to outside researchers. The advanced age of most of the speakers is another factor encouraging language documentation; many are keenly aware of the importance of passing on oral history and aspects of their community's former life in Papua New Guinea while they still can. The enthusiasm with which an Unserdeutsch Facebook set up by the Project is used by members of

the community to share stories and photographs is evidence of an openness and desire to work with the Project to provide documentation that will be available to their descendants.

Unserdeutsch is now in what Sasse (1992: 19) has described as the final stages of language death. Transmission of the language to new generations has been broken, probably irreparably, so that it is spoken only by older persons. Even amongst its oldest speakers, those born before 1950, it has been replaced as an everyday means of communication by English and, for those few still in Papua New Guinea, Tok Pisin. It is important today as a marker of group identity and as a visible social bonding at events such as weddings, funerals, and family meetings. Switching to Unserdeutsch or, for those born after 1960, using a few remembered phrases creates an intimate and trustworthy atmosphere, especially suited to joking and social play. As one speaker stated three decades ago, while Unserdeutsch is no longer used for communicative purposes, it is 'a fun language, something just for us' (Volker 1989b: 22).

The University of Augsburg Unserdeutsch Research Project has already been able to build on earlier research conducted to describe the origins and historical development of Unserdeutsch as well as to give an overall view of the linguistic ecology of the language as it is spoken by its last speakers in the early twenty-first century. The next step will be to provide as complete a grammatical and phonological analysis of Unserdeutsch as possible and to support any efforts by the Unserdeutsch community itself to document or support this unique language that is, as one of its speakers stated, 'the last drop of German in the Pacific'.

References

- Auer, Peter. 1999. From code-switching via language mixing to fused lects. *International Journal of Bilingualism* 3. 309–332. doi: 10.1177/13670069990030040101
- Brockhaus, F. A. (ed). 1911. *Brockhaus Kleines Konversations-Lexikon* (5th Edition). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_New_Guinea (30 January, 2016).
- Cardoso, Hugo. 2006. Challenges to Indo-Portuguese across India. In R. Elangayan, et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the FEL X* [Foundation for Endangered Languages], 23–30. Mysore: Central Institute for Indian Languages.
- Davenas, Marion. n.d. Kolonialrassismus im Schulbuch? Nordrhein-Westfalens Geschichtsbücher auf dem Prüfstand. <http://www.whitecharity.de/Marion.pdf> (14 June, 2015).
- Deumert, Ana. 2009. Namibian Kiche Duits: The making (and decline) of a Neo-African language. *Journal of Germanic Linguistics* 21(44). 349–417. doi: 10.1017/S1470542709990122
- Dewein, Barbara, et al. 2012. Forschungsgruppe Koloniallinguistik: Profil – Programmatik – Projekte. *Zeitschrift für germanistische Linguistik* 40(2). 242–249. doi: 10.1515/zgl-2012-0015

- Ehrhart, Sabine. 1993. *Le créole français de St-Louis (le tayo) en Nouvelle-Calédonie*. Hamburg: Buske.
- Frowein, Friedel Martin. 2005. Prozesse der Grammatikalisierung, Reanalyse und Analogiebildung in Pidgin- und Kreolsprachen. Was Konjunktionen, Cheeseburger und völlige Verblödung gemeinsam haben. http://www.uni-koeln.de/gbs/unseredeutsch/papers/frowein_grammatikalisierung.pdf (19 July, 2015).
- Garrett, Paul B. 2006. Contact languages as 'endangered languages': What is there to lose? *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* 21(1). 175–190.
- Gründer, Horst. 2004. "... diese menschenfressenden und niedrigstehenden Völker in ein völlig neues Volk umwandeln" – Papua-Neuguinea: eine letzte christliche Utopie. In Franz-Joseph Post, Thomas Küster & Clemens Sorgenfrey (eds.), *Christliche Heilsbotschaft und weltliche Macht. Studien zum Verhältnis von Mission und Kolonialismus. Gesammelte Aufsätze*, 105–125. Münster: LIT.
- Hiery, Hermann Joseph. 1995a. *Das Deutsche Reich in der Südsee (1900–1921). Eine Annäherung an die Erfahrungen verschiedener Kulturen*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Hiery, Hermann Joseph. 1995b. *The neglected war: The German South Pacific and the influence of World War I*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Hiery, Hermann Joseph. 2001. *Die deutsche Südsee 1884–1914. Ein Handbuch*. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh.
- Holm, John. 2000. *An Introduction to Pidgins and Creoles*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hymes, Dell. 1971. *Pidginization and creolization of languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ischler, Paul. 1932. Die Zentrale Vunapope. In Josef Hüskes (ed.), *Pioniere der Südsee. Werden und Wachsen der Herz-Jesu-Mission von Rabaul zum Goldenen Jubiläum 1882–1932*, 180–184. Hilstrup: Missionare vom Heiligsten Herzen Jesu.
- Janssen, Arnold M.S.C. 1932. Die Erziehungsanstalt für halbweiße Kinder. In Josef Hüskes M.S.C. (ed.), *Pioniere der Südsee. Werden und Wachsen der Herz-Jesu-Mission von Rabaul zum Goldenen Jubiläum 1882–1932*, 150–155. Hilstrup: Missionare vom Hl. Herzen Jesu.
- Kaputin, John R. 1970. *The Mataungan Association and the need for political organisation for greater indigenous economic development*. Port Moresby: Waigani Seminar.
- Keim, Inken. 1978. *Gastarbeiterdeutsch. Untersuchungen zum sprachlichen Verhalten türkischer Gastarbeiter*. Tübingen: Narr.
- Klein, Thomas. 2006. Creole phonology typology: Phoneme inventory size, vowel quality distinctions and stop consonant series. In Parth Bhatt & Ingo Plag (eds.), *The structure of Creole Words: Segmental, syllabic and morphological aspects*, 3–21. Tübingen: Niemeyer. doi: 10.1515/9783110891683.3
- Knapp, Regina (Director). 2009. *Unserdeutsch, a South Pacific docu-fairytale: The film*. KUNST-STOFF, e. V. Film.
- Kößler, Reinhart. 2006. La fin d'une amnésie? L'Allemagne et son passé colonial depuis 2004. *Politique Africaine* 2(102). 50–66. doi: 10.3917/polaf.102.0050
- Laycock, Donald C. 1989. The status of Pitcairn-Norfolk: Creole, dialect, or cant? In Ulrich Ammon (ed.), *Status and function of languages and language varieties*, 608–629. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter. doi: 10.1515/9783110860252.608
- Lewis, M. Paul, Gary F. Simons & Charles D. Fennig (eds.). 2014. *Ethnologue: Languages of the world*, 17th ed. <http://www.ethnologue.com> (19 February, 2015).

- Lindenfelser, Siegwalt & Péter Maitz. In press. The creoleness of Rabaul Creole German. In Péter Maitz & Craig A. Volker (eds.), *Language contact in the German colonies: Papua New Guinea and beyond* (Special issue 2017 of *Language and Linguistics in Melanesia*).
- Maitz, Péter. 2017. Dekreolisierung und Variation in Unserdeutsch. In Helen Christen, Peter Gilles & Christoph Purschke (eds.), *Räume – Grenzen – Übergänge. Akten des 5. Kongresses der Internationalen Gesellschaft für Dialektologie des Deutschen (IGDD)*, 225–252. Stuttgart: Steiner.
- Maitz, Péter & Craig Alan Volker. forthc. Unserdeutsch (Rabaul Creole German). In Hans C. Boas, Ana Deumert, Mark L. Loudon & Péter Maitz (eds.), *Varieties of German Worldwide*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Maho, Jouni F. 1998. *Few people, many tongues: The languages in Namibia*. Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan.
- Mosel, Ulrike. 1980. *Tolai and Tok Pisin: The influence of the substratum on the development of New Guinea Pidgin* [Pacific Linguistics B-73]. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.
- Mühlhäusler, Peter. 1984. Tracing the roots of pidgin German. *Language and Communication* 41(1), 27–57. doi: 10.1016/0271-5309(84)90018-1
- Mühlhäusler, Peter. 1986. *Pidgin and Creole Linguistics*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Mühlhäusler, Peter. 1997. *Pidgin and Creole Linguistics*. Expanded and revised edition. London: University of Westminster Press.
- Mühlhäusler, Peter. 2001. Die deutsche Sprache im Pazifik. In Hermann J. Hiery (ed.), *Die deutsche Südsee 1884–1914. Ein Handbuch*, 239–260. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh.
- Mühlhäusler, Peter. 2003. Sociohistorical and grammatical aspects of Tok Pisin. In Peter Mühlhäusler & Thomas E. Dutton (eds.), *Tok Pisin texts: From the beginning to the present* [Varieties of English around the world T9], 1–34. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. doi: 10.1075/veaw.t9.01muh
- Mühlhäusler, Peter. 2012. Sprachliche Kontakte in den Missionen auf Deutsch-Neuguinea und die Entstehung eines Pidgin-Deutsch. In Stefan Engelberg & Doris Stolberg (eds.), *Sprachwissenschaft und kolonialzeitlicher Sprachkontakt. Sprachliche Begegnungen und Auseinandersetzungen*, 71–100. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, doi: 10.1524/9783050062884.69
- Mühlhäusler, Peter. 2015. From despised jargon to language of education: Recent developments in the teaching of Norfolk (Norfolk Island, South Pacific). In Craig Alan Volker & Fred E. Anderson (eds.), *Education in languages of lesser power: Asia-Pacific perspectives* [IMPACT Studies in Language and Society 35], 223–241. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. doi: 10.1075/impact.35.13muh
- O'Donnell, William R. & Loreto Todd. 1980. *Variety in contemporary English*. London: Allen & Unwin. doi: 10.4324/9780203308288
- Romaine, Suzanne. 1988. *Pidgin and creole languages*. London/New York: Longman.
- Sack, Peter & Bridget Sack. 1980. *The land law of German New Guinea: A collection of documents*. Port Moresby: University of Papua New Guinea Press.
- Sack, Peter G. 2001. *Phantom history, the rule of law and the colonial state: The case of German New Guinea*. Canberra: ANU Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies.
- Sandefur, John R. 1979. *An Australian creole in the Northern Territory: A description of Ngukurr-Bamyili dialects* (Part 1). Darwin: Summer Institute of Linguistics, Australian Aborigines Branch.
- Sasse, Hans-Jürgen. 1992. Theory of language death. In Matthias Brenzinger (ed.), *Language death: Factual and theoretical explorations with special reference to East Africa*, 7–30. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter. doi: 10.1515/9783110870602.7

- Slobin, Dan I. 2002. Language, evolution, acquisition and diachrony: Probing the parallels. In T. Givón & Bertram F. Malle (eds.), *The evolution of language out of pre-language* [Typological Studies in Language 53], 375–392. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. doi: 10.1075/tsl.53.20slo
- UNESCO Ad hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (Matthias Brenzinger, Arienne M. Dwyer, Tjeerd de Graaf, Collette Grinevald, Michael Krauss, Osahito Miyaoka, Nicholas Ostler, Osamu Sakiyama, María E. Villalón, Akira Y. Yamamoto & Ofelia Zapeda). 2003. Language vitality and endangerment. Document submitted to the International Expert Meeting on UNESCO Programme Safeguarding of Endangered Languages, Paris, 10–12 March 2003. <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/doc/src/00120-EN.pdf> (25 June, 2015).
- Unger, Nicola (Director). 2009. *Unserdeutsch, a South Pacific docu-fairytale*. Premier Berlin, then Hamburg, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Dresden. KUNST-SToFF, e. V. Dramatic performance.
- Velupillai, Viveka. 2015. *Pidgins, creoles and mixed languages: An introduction*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. doi: 10.1075/cll.48
- Verhaar, John W. M. 1995. *Toward a reference Grammar of Tok Pisin: An experiment in corpus linguistics*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Voeste, Anja. 2005. Die Neger heben? In Elisabeth Berner, et al. (ed.), "Ein gross vnnd narhafft haffen" – Festschrift für Joachim Gessinger, 163–174. Potsdam: Universitätsverlag.
- Volker, Craig. 1982. *An introduction to Rabaul Creole German (Unserdeutsch)*. St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland MLitSt thesis.
- Volker, Craig. 1989a. Rabaul Creole German syntax. *University of Hawai'i Working Papers in Linguistics* 21(1). 153–189.
- Volker, Craig. 1989b. The relationship between traditional secret languages and two school-based pidgin languages in Papua New Guinea. *Horizons. Journal of Asia-Pacific Issues* 3. 19–24.
- Volker, Craig. 1991. The birth and decline of Rabaul Creole German. *Language and Linguistics in Melanesia* 22. 143–156.

Appendix. Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in glosses.

1	first person	HAB	habitual
2	second person	INCL	inclusive
AGT	agent	PART	participle
ATTR	attributive	PAST	past
COP	copula	PL	plural
DEF	definite article	SG	singular
FUT	future	VERB	verb
EXCL	exclusive		

Authors' addresses

Péter Maitz
University of Augsburg
Lehrstuhl für Deutsche Sprachwissenschaft
Universitätsstraße 10
86159 Augsburg
Germany

Craig Alan Volker
James Cook University
The Cairns Institute
PO Box 6811
Cairns, Queensland 4870
Australia