



# LSPNG 2015 CONFERENCE

**“PROMOTING LANGUAGE TO  
EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT”**



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# **FIRST LANGUAGE INFLUENCE ON SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING: A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE**

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# Outline of presentation

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# Introduction

- Reflections made here are drawn from the eight (8) years that I taught English as L2 in three (3) different High Schools in the WHP.
- Schools include:
  - Notre Dame Girls' High School (1996-1998, 2000, and 2002- 2003)
  - Tambul High School (1999)
  - Paglum Adventist High School (2001)

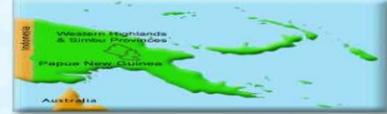
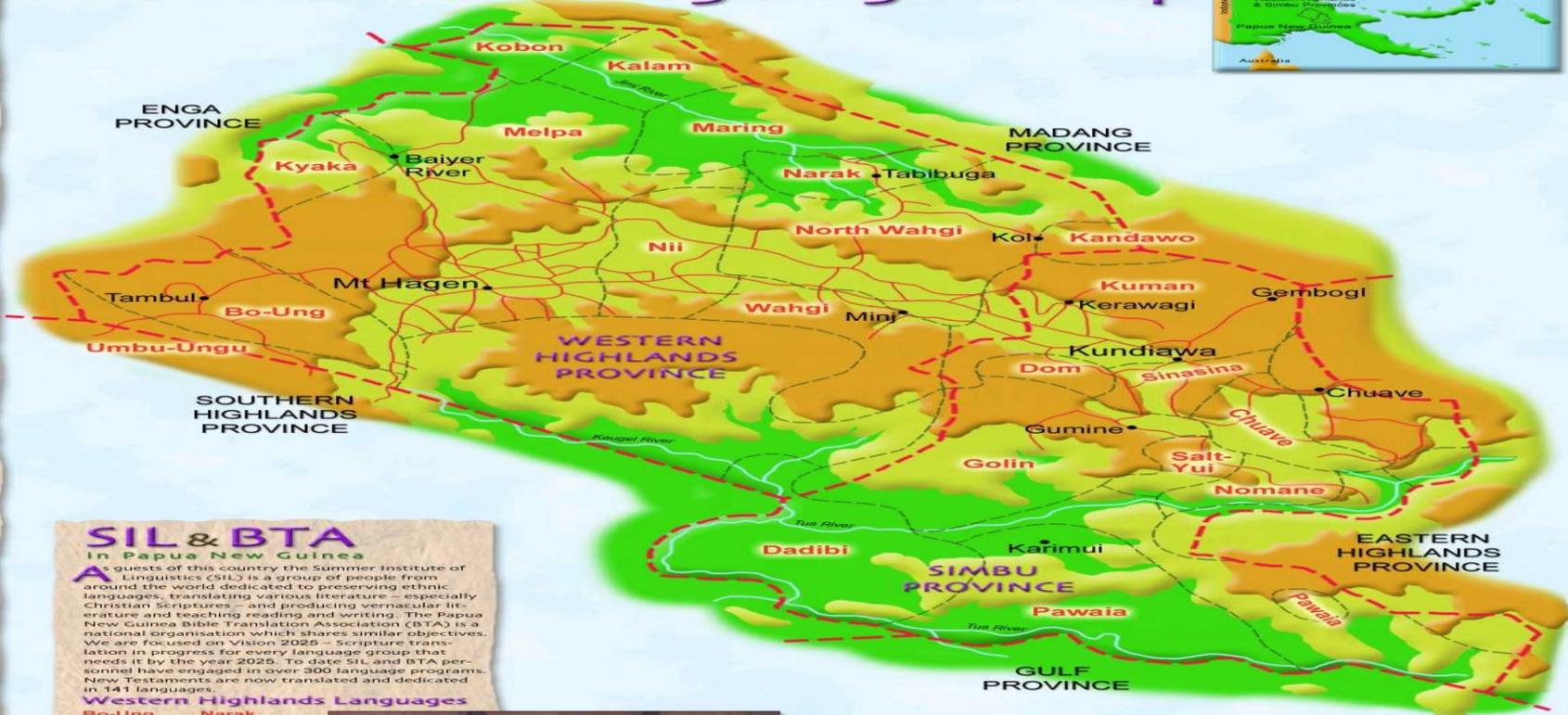
# Research Context

Secondary/high schools are located in the rural settings and the students involved were also from the rural setting who were born and raised in Melpa.

- Students are competent speakers of Melpa
- English was never introduced to them until they started their formal education in the formal learning environment.

# Map of WHP & Simbu showing boundaries of Melpa

## Western Highlands & Simbu Provinces Language Map



**SIL & BTA**  
In Papua New Guinea

As guests of this country the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) is a group of people from around the world dedicated to preserving ethnic languages, translating various literature – especially Christian Scriptures – and producing vernacular literature and teaching reading and writing. The Papua New Guinea Bible Translation Association (BTA) is a national organisation which shares similar objectives. We are focused on Vision 2025 – scripture translation in progress for every language group that needs it by the year 2025. To date SIL and BTA personnel have engaged in over 300 language programs. New Testaments are now translated and dedicated in 141 languages.

**Western Highlands Languages**

Bo-Ung	Narak
Kandawo	North Wahgi
Kyaka	Nii
Maring	Umbu-Ungu
Melpa	Wahgi

**Simbu Languages**

Chuave	Nomane
Dadibi	Pawaia
Dom	Salt-Yui
Golin	Sinasina
Kuman	



Rob & Jane Hunt (SIL) worked with a large translator committee of *Abakulata* speakers to complete the *Abakulata* New Testament, a dialect of Umbu-Ungu, dedicated in June of 1999.



# Linguistic background

- i. Melpa - a member of the Hagen language family
  - & found within the Western Highlands Province (WHP and Jiwaka) of PNG.
  - *Melpa- Lingua Franca* of WHP and has about 120,000 speakers & occupies a linguistic area of about 4000 kilometers square
  - (Stucky and Ruby, 1990).

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- **Stucky and Ruby (1990) in their study noted that :**
  - **Melpa has five (5) dialects but the central dialect is the one that all the other dialects can understand**
  - **Stucky and Ruby's study underpins the use of Melpa (L1) to be used in this experience of teaching of a second language (L2) in a formal learning environment.**

# Literature Review

- **Gibson (2003)** expresses that learning becomes a real challenge for students whose primary language (L1) is not English.
- **Vizconde (2006)** expresses a similar argument that use of English as the language of instruction not only makes learning challenging but serves as a cognitive problem for the learners who are non-native English speakers .



**Such was the case in my experience which prompted me to use Melpa (L1) as a teaching strategy only where necessary to enhance effective learning (L2).**

# Rationale

- Viewed in the light of the brief literature review presented, it can be seen some studies have been done the facilitating role of L1 (mother tongue) in ESL) teaching and learning environments in other countries but very few studies have been done for PNG.

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- **This creates a need for studies on use of L<sub>1</sub>(mother tongue) in L<sub>2</sub>(English) teaching environments within PNG context. Hence, this paper aims to make a contribution towards filling this gap by arguing that use of L<sub>1</sub>(mother tongue) in ESL teaching in PNG context facilitates teaching and learning English as a second language and can be considered as a an effective teaching strategy for achieving the learning goals.**

# Methodology

- Lesson evaluations, together with personal observations, made on the use of L1 (Melpa) in L2 (English) teaching context aims to answer one research question and that is:
- How does my L1 (Melpa) influence my teaching of L2 (English) as a TESOL educator?  
(TESOL=Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages)

# Method

- Narrative account (reflection) of how I used L1 (Melpa) and its impact on L2 (English) teaching.
- Qualitative data analysis (thematic and content) collected from my eight (8) years of teaching in the WHP.

# Findings

- Four (4) main themes:
  1. Checking for comprehension,
  2. Giving instructions,
  3. Giving feedback and
  4. Explaining meaning of words and concepts.

# Findings

## Theme 1: Use of Melpa in checking for comprehension

Example of Melpa used to check for comprehension for my instructions to grade sevens (7s):

*“Complete activity on page of 25 of the Create and Communicate Book. However, when you finish the activity, exchange your books and do peer correction instead of bringing your books to me”*

# Theme 1: Comprehension check Question

- I asked the class **'Do you know what to do ?'**  
Some students nodded their heads, indicating 'yes', some smiled, some put their heads down , some orally answered 'yes' while others just stared at me.
- I then asked two students from the class, one weak student and one bright student to explain the instruction in Melpa as how they had understood it.

# Example of Theme 1

- Weak student's response in Melpa:  
*“kongon buk namba 25 ela petim etek pora dong mek ik bo amp morom wai”* which means *complete work found on page 25 and bring it to teacher*
- Bright student's response in Melpa:  
*“kongon buk namba 25 ela petem etek pora dong dam, wagl engin to ngana kumb ranga. Ik bo amp ngui mon”* means *“if you finish the work on page 25, give it to your friend to read. “Don't give it to teacher”*.

# Teaching strategy: Theme 1

- Based on the differing responses from the responding students, I affirmed the bright student's explanation by restating the instruction in mepla as "*kongon buk 25 ela petem etek pora dong dam, nemga buk o wagl engin to ngana kumb ranga;wete nem nte wagl to nga buk o kumb rui . Na mek ong ngui mon*" meaning *When you finish the activity on page 25 of the text book, exchange your exercise books and do peer correction. Don't bring it to me.*

## Theme 2: Use of Melpa in Giving instructions

- Beside each instruction in English, I restated the instruction in Melpa as:
  - **1. Think of a story to tell** = *'ik korrerem ring onga tek mintei'*.
  - **2. Write out the topic** = *'ik peng wint kadak tek rong mana dei'*.
  - **3. Brain storm information about your topic** = *'ik peng ela nga ik mong mat noman ela om o rok mana dei'*
  - **4. Use the brainstormed information to tell the story in one paragraph in your exercise book** = *'ik mong rok mana dong kelg tek tenta etek ik korrerem mong tenta to enmenga buk ela rok mana dei'*.

## Theme 3: Use of Melpa in giving feedback

- Used Melpa to explain teacher comments made on their written work in English symbols.

Examples of symbols given out at the beginning of year:

***vbf*** = verb form,

***wvf*** = wrong verb form

***snc*** = sentence not clear, ***PP*** = Punctuation Problem

***sp*** = spelling

***oot*** = out of topic

***mnc*** = meaning not clear, ***ms*** = Missing word

***nc*** = no conclusion

***nis*** = no introduction sentence

# Teaching Strategy: Theme 3

- During class time when students work on new writing task, I called for students to come for conferencing with me regarding comments made on previous work. It is during this time that I used Melpa in explaining what they could have done or words they could have used while at the same time providing the English equivalent too. In that way, they understood what their error was and tried to minimize it in their subsequent written work.

## Theme 4: Use of Melpa in explaining meaning of words and concepts

- “For learners whose first language is closely related to second language, the learning burden of most words will be light. For learners whose first language is not related to the second language, the learning burden will be heavy” (Nation, 2001, p.24).
- This is true for students in my context and I used Melpa as a teaching strategy .

# Theme 4: Example of theme 4

- Words such as proud, shy and lonely are some words covered in Unit 1 of Create and Communicate Book 1 for grade sevens.
- Students were told to note the words as they read.
- Then we listed them on the board as a class and I helped them with the pronunciation of words initially.

# Teaching strategy: Theme 4

- After pronunciation of the words, I defined the words for students using Melpa by providing the Melpa word while at the same time, used them in example sentences in Melpa as well as in English as in the example done for *proud* below:

Word in English	Melpa definition	Use of word in Melpa	Meaning in English	Use of word in English
<b>proud</b>	'kai pili'	Kai pili ulg kanda mon	'Not good to be proud'	I am very proud

# Conclusion

- Positive impacts of L<sub>1</sub> in L<sub>2</sub> teaching and learning contexts implicated are noted as:
- It helped to develop self confidence,
- Created a friendlier environment and encouraged peer interaction as well as teacher.
- Gave students sense of security in a new environment, especially for Grade sevens.
- Helped them to understand instructions in class & comprehension passage at their level.

- Based on these positive impacts implicated from the reflections on the use of L1 (Melpa) in teaching L2 (English), supported by arguments put forth based on researched evidence by Brooks and Donato (1994), among others, who say that L1 helps to comprehend information, I would like to draw a conclusion to say that the use of Melpa in the classrooms aided the teaching and learning of English and was considered an effective teaching strategy for achieving learning goals, especially when L1 was used by a competent L1 speaker as a teaching strategy.

# Way Forward

- The significance of this paper is to put forth an argument that :
  - a. There is need for empirical studies to be done in PNG context on the use of mother tongues as ESL teaching strategies
  - b. Use of L<sub>1</sub> (mother tongue) in teaching English as a second language has implications with regard to the current curriculum changes in PNG which makes it relevant to achieving our national goals in terms of human resource training and development.

# Bibliography

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**Thank you**