



The Linguistic Society of Papua New Guinea 49th Annual Conference

June 15-17, 2015

University of Papua New Guinea
Port Moresby

Conference Theme:

“Promoting Language Education for Sustainable Development”



Hosted by
UPNG

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Linguistic Society of Papua New Guinea 2015 Conference Communiqué

The 2015 conference of the Linguistic Society of Papua New Guinea (LSPNG 2015) generated a significant exchange of ideas on language education policy between experts in the field of language education, national language policy, and linguistics, with active participation of linguistics students from the University of Goroka and the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG).

Papers on language education policy revealed substantive differences of opinion on the issue. The apparent dissonance between the research results obtained so far by SIL linguists, on the one hand, and those presented by the Linguistics Department of the University of Papua New Guinea, on the other, generated some heated debates. The former argued that, because early fluent literacy is crucial for success at all levels of education, home-language literacy needs to be taught at the earliest stages of formal schooling, with oral English being introduced only as a subject. The latter held that, because of age constraints in learning a second language, and because English proficiency is crucial for success at higher levels of education, English language and literacy should be introduced from the earliest stages of formal schooling, with vernacular languages taught as a subject. These debates emphasized the urgent need for further research into literacy and language education in Papua New Guinea.

Effective language education has huge implications for responsible and sustainable development in PNG. That is why the collaborative research project between SIL and UPNG linguists, conceived as a result of conference discussions, is viewed as one of the main achievements of LSPNG 2015. This expanded study aims to determine the most effective language education policy for achieving the Vision 2050 national development goals in Papua New Guinea. The details of this research proposal will be presented to the government agencies that supported this conference by the end of November 2015.

Another achievement of this conference was the unanimous decision to work towards establishing a **National Language Institute**. Descriptive analysis of Papuan and Austronesian languages has provided us with a vast amount of detailed information about hundreds of them. However, many vernacular languages of PNG have not yet been documented, and many are severely endangered by rapid socio-economic change. Therefore, there is an urgent need to facilitate the work of indigenous Papua New Guinean linguists, the native speakers of these languages. The proposed National Language Institute will contribute immensely to the study, preservation and documentation of many endangered languages of Papua New Guinea.

LSPNG 2015 also stressed the importance of sharing the results of research work conducted by Papua New Guinean linguists and educators through publication in linguistic journals, and particularly in *Language and Linguistics in Melanesia*, the online journal of the Linguistic Society of Papua New Guinea (www.langlxmelanesia.com).

The Proceedings of LSPNG 2015 will be published in LLM Vol. 33/2 before the end of December 2015.