

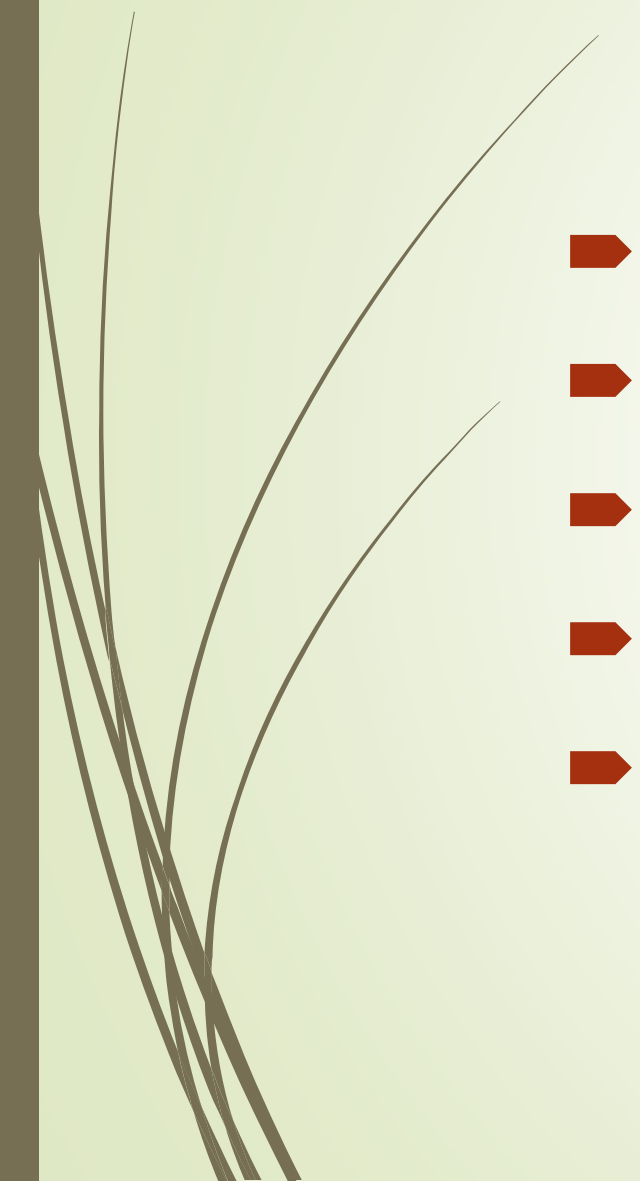
# **Topic: Translanguaging at higher education in Papua New Guinea: Progress or regress?**

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# Outline of presentation:

- Introduction
  - Literature review
  - Research methodology
  - Findings/discussions
  - Conclusion
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# Introduction



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- ▶ PNG has three official languages—Tok Pisin, Hiri Motu and English—and 840 living indigenous languages (Simons & Fennig, 2018), which accounts for twelve percent (12%) of the world's languages (Lewis, 2009; Volker, 2015).
  - ▶ This case study examined six students, four academic staff (2 lecturers & 2 tutors) & 3 academic administrators on translanguaging (switching between 2 or more languages) in tertiary education institutions in PNG.
  - ▶ The findings are somewhat thought-provoking because some research participants viewed translanguaging between English and Tok Pisin or native languages as beneficial while others have a second thought about it.



# Literature Review


- ▶ Linguistically diverse students normally have vocabulary difficulties; they are frequently flooded with words of those languages. Their English sentences are short, often incomplete, and seldom of compound or complex forms. They make errors in inflection, verb tenses, and uses of connectives, articles, and negative forms (Petty & Jensen, 1980; Yamuna, 2000; Gerry, 2010).
  - ▶ These students seem to engage in codeswitching (alternations between two or more languages), which is taking prominence in the academic setting at higher education. While in the process of codeswitching, students and educators can also engage in code-meshing and translanguaging.
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- ▶ Young and Martinez (2011) defined *code-meshing* as the process of blending minoritised dialects and world Englishes with standard English. Generally, code-meshing: act of blending minority dialects or languages with standard English to explain something.
  - ▶ “The term ‘translanguaging’ was created by Cen Williams, a well-known Welsh educationalist, in the 1980s, for the planned and systematic use of two languages for teaching and learning inside the same lesson” (Baker, 2003, 2011; Williams, 1994, 1996, as cited in Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012, p. 643).

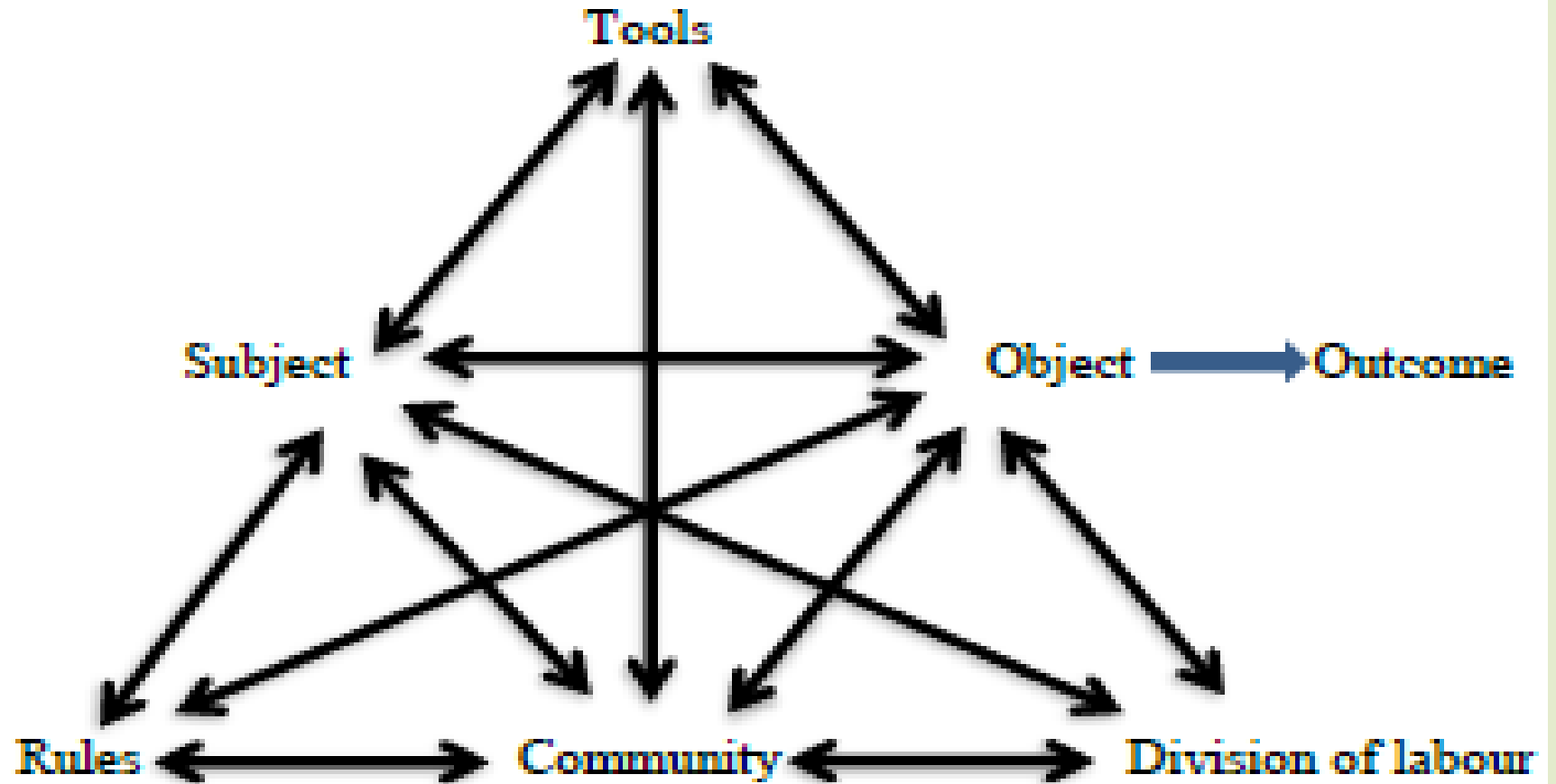
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- As García (2009, p. 140) added, “translanguaging is the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximize communicative potential.”
  - Translanguaging can be beneficial in some situations like educators clearly explaining difficult or complex words and concepts in the language students understand best instead of using English (see e.g., King & Chetty, 2014; Mokgwathi & Webb, 2013).



# Theoretical framework – Activity theory

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- ▶ The word ‘activity’ in activity theory or system refers to the practices in a system and the different roles and responsibilities that different actors or players perform to achieve certain results.
  - ▶ This study uses the activity system which identifies how ESL tertiary education students can participate effectively in various institutionally bounded literacy practices (Starfield, 2007), with support from other key elements such as educators, peers, teaching and learning pedagogies and curriculum materials and resources.
  - ▶ The use of the activity system enables the researcher to clearly understand the ecology of academic writing practices at the tertiary education level in PNG.
  - ▶ Activity system is represented as a triangle model that was developed by Engestrom (1987).

# Activity system model





Source: Engestrom (1987, 2000)



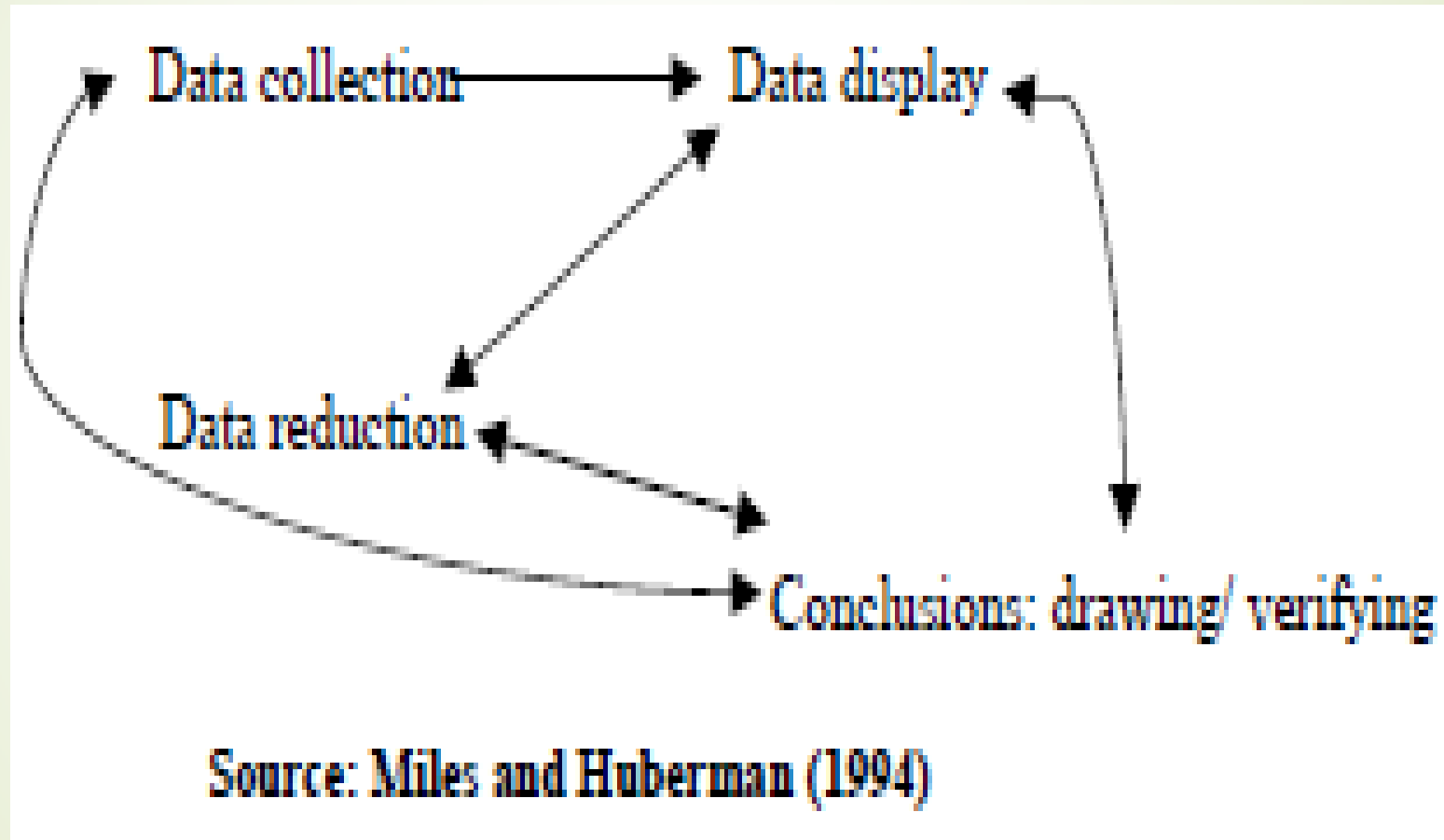
# Research Methodology



- Qualitative research which involves a case study.
- Participants: some university students, their lecturers, tutors, and academic administrators.
- Stratified sampling was used: 6 B.Arts year 1 & 2 students from a public university in PNG.
- The university is the case of the study and the students and educators are part of the system or the community of practice.


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- Semi-structured interviews & classroom observations were used.
  - Individual interviews: 3 B.A year 1 students & 3 B.A year 2 students; 2 lecturers & 2 tutors & 3 academic administrators.
  - 2 tutorials were observed for B.A year 1 & B.A year 2.
  - Informed by the activity theory, interactive analyses were conducted through thematic analysis using the NVivo computer-based research tool.


# Data analysis – Interactive model






# Findings and Discussion

- ▶ Student interviewees: use English in class and use English and/ or Tok Pisin outside of class. Also translanguage between English and Tok Pisin both in and out of class.
- ▶ Mixed responses: one student says, “English is not my mother tongue. As a Papua New Guinean, I normally speak Tok Pisin and my own dialect” (Year 2 Student 1, 26/10/16: 9am). Another student indicates, “Tok Pisin doesn't help me. Because when I use a lot of Tok Pisin in class, I feel that, it's like, it makes things a bit complicated, it's not helping me to improve my English” (Year 1 Student 1, 25/10/16: 9am). Another student mentions, “English helps me. Tok Pisin doesn't help me in my study. Because many people around me use Tok Pisin so I have no way to escape from using Tok Pisin” (Year 1 Student3, 25/10/16: 1pm). Two students said they are confident in using English therefore they do not switch between languages in class but they use Tok Pisin and native languages outside of class time.
- ▶ These mixed responses indicate that students are not settled with a language to use in and out of class because there is no language policy to restrict them from using a language. Therefore, they have the option of translanguaging between English and Tok Pisin or native languages . These data assume that how and what students write are sometimes influenced by the languages that they speak both in and out of class.



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- Concerning lecturers and tutors, most of them switch between English and Tok Pisin both in and out of class. Nevertheless, one student clarifies, “some lecturers and tutors translanguage and others no” (Year 2 Student 2, 26/10/2016: 11am). Another student confirms, “some of my tutors and lecturers don’t do that but others they do switch between English and Tok Pisin” (Year 1 Student 3, 25/10/2016: 1pm). As alluded by all the students, translanguageing between English and Tok Pisin is only done by educators in class to further clarify, elaborate or explain certain words, information, ideas, or concepts.
  - This is an indication of educators switching between languages through the process of *translanguageing* which can be viewed as the use of English and Tok Pisin or native languages as diverse languages that form educators’ and students’ repertoire as an integrated system (Canagarajah, 2011). Simply put, students and educators are able to switch between the languages that they are quite familiar with so, they do not encounter problems in using these languages.

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- ▶ Lecturers and tutors: students mostly use English in and out of class though their English is not up to the standard expected or even if they get stuck. However, they translanguage between English and Tok Pisin when necessary. One educator adds that they translanguage frequently between English and Tok Pisin. He elaborates, “May be because they are not confident enough to speak to me in English. May be, they are scared; they might make mistakes” (Lecturer 2, 24/10/2016: 3pm).
  - ▶ All the educators confirm that there are no clear policies to guide their language of instruction.
  - ▶ This educator seems to imply that although English is the target language in the formal education system in PNG, there are no strict policies that govern the language of instruction in the formal education system. As a result, students are not well prepared in the English language to meet the academic writing demands of higher education when they are admitted into universities and colleges in PNG.

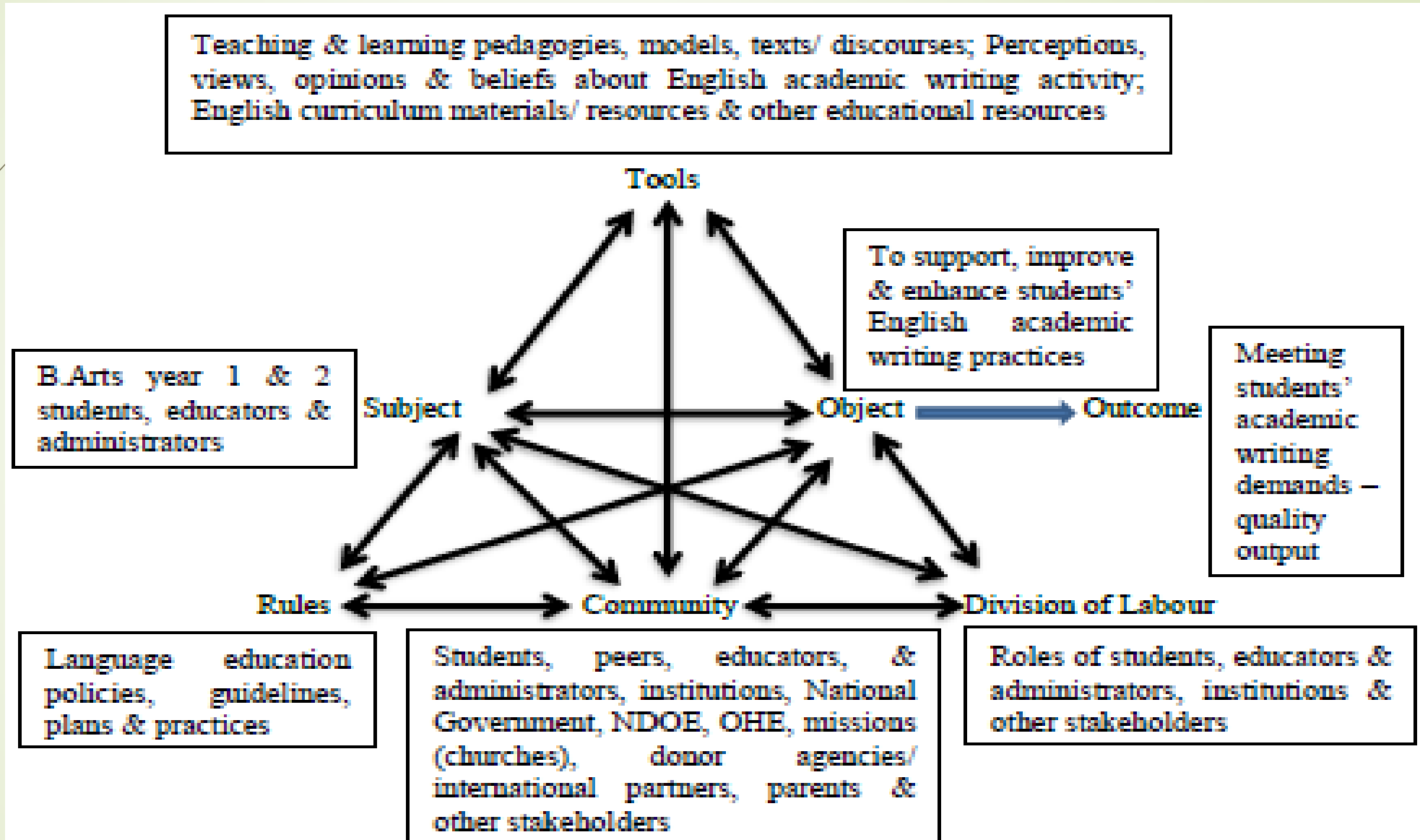
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- These data is consistent with Cahyani de Courcy and Barnett (2018), who state that educators and students' translanguaging occurred as an intentional strategy for teaching in bilingual classrooms, integrating two languages to achieve better communication and engagement in teaching and learning.
  - By engaging in the process of translanguaging between English and Tok Pisin or indigenous languages, it can perform two functions. First, it can act as a useful tool in the University's activity system to allow effective teaching and learning to occur. Second, it can create confusion in students' minds when they want to translate information from Tok Pisin/indigenous languages into English, which can affect the outcome of their written academic texts.
  - Academic administrators: One academic administrator admits that "sometimes the students' style of writing and the written English is like Tok Pisin version of English" (Academic Administrator 1, 01/11/2016: 10am). He further emphasizes that students use Tok Pisin and local vernaculars more often than English where they supposed to be practising English outside of class times.

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- However, one of the academic administrators states that some of her year four students write so well - good language structures, choice of words, and structure of the essay. She expects that other students are in the middle; they vary from good to very good, and others are just absolutely poor (unfortunately, year four students are not participants of this study).
  - The onus is also with the educators to adequately guide and instruct their students on what and how to write using academic language by differentiating it from everyday language. As Valde's (2004) states, to succeed in tertiary education studies particularly in their academic writing practices, students must be given the opportunity to acquire academic, rather than everyday language.



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- ▶ Tutorial observations: throughout the tutorials, the tutors used English except for one who translanguaged a few times to explain certain things. For the students, they communicated in English, but a few translanguaged between English and Tok Pisin (indigenous languages) when not in the presence of the tutor. This data is consistent with Canagarajah (2011), who confirmed that translanguaging occurs surreptitiously behind the back of the tutor in class.
  - ▶ As implied here, translanguaging can be viewed as a viable communicative tool for effective knowledge transmission. In fact, translanguaging between English and Tok Pisin (indigenous languages) is the demonstration of educators working with students to explore concepts, add to their knowledge, make connections between ideas and help them learn (García, 2009).
  - ▶ Conversely, translanguaging can be a barrier to participants in their academic writing practices.

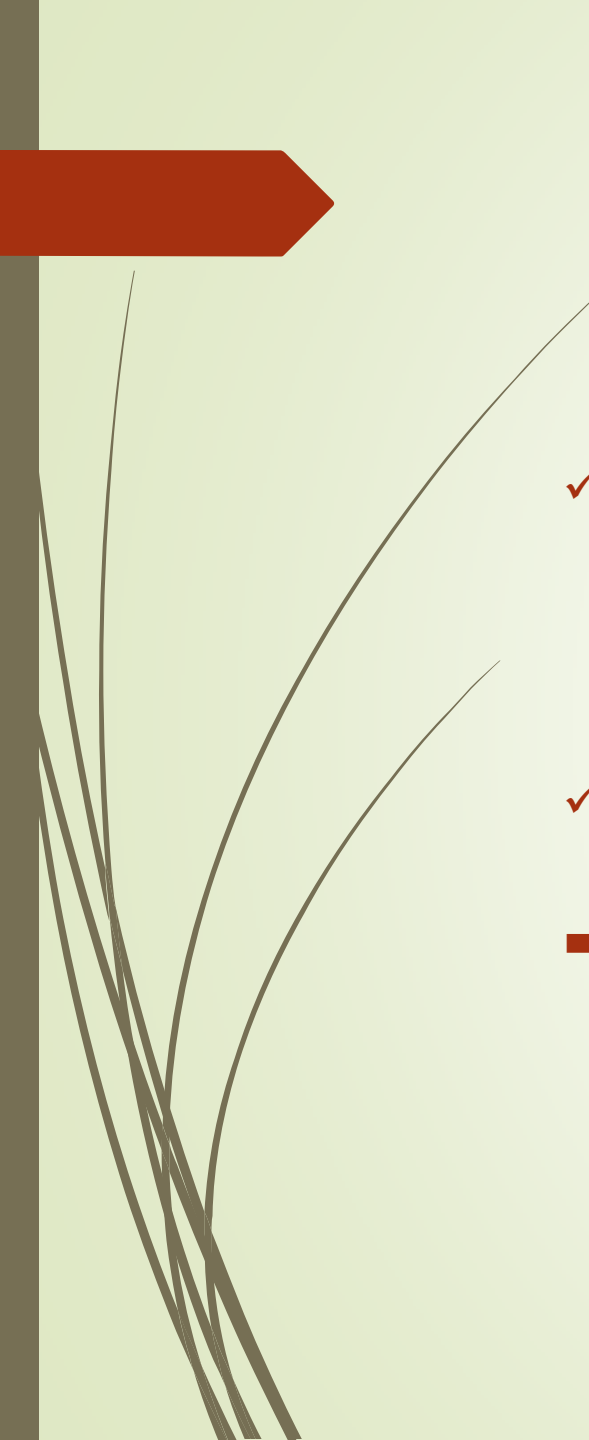
# Addressing some of these issues: Activity System



Adapted from: Engestrom (1987, 2000)

# Conclusion

- This study discloses that:
  - ✓ both students and educators switch between English and Tok Pisin (native languages) in and out of classrooms and that there is no control over this practice.
  - ✓ though translinguaging is defined as the use of different languages together, which can be a powerful tool for learning, it can also problematise the process for language educators who are used to supporting students to master the intricacies of a single language (García, 2009).

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- ✓ students still have issues with writing grammatically correct sentences, choosing appropriate words, structuring sentences and developing paragraphs correctly, learning how to correctly reference different sources in their written texts, learning and mastering academic writing skills, and mastering and correctly using disciplinary-based registers.
  - ✓ there are concerns regarding the influence of Tok Pisin/indigenous languages on written English.
  - ▶ Question: are we progressing or regressing in our academic practices if we continue to translanguage in our PNG tertiary education institutions? This is an interesting issue of debate that can be further studied.



# End of presentation



Questions and comments

