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Attitudes towards the Use of Tok Pisin and Tolai as Languages of Instruction in Lower Primary Schools in Kokopo, East New Britain Province, Papua New Guinea

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Abstract

This paper examines the attitudes of teachers, parents and students towards the use of Tok Pisin and vernacular languages in lower primary schools based on a study conducted in the Kokopo District of East New Britain Province, Papua New Guinea. The research design was a descriptive survey selected because surveys gather information from relatively large areas by employing sampling procedures hence cutting down on costs. The study sample included six schools randomly selected from the vast number of schools in the Kokopo District. The instrument used for data collection was questionnaires. The data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results revealed that there was a general feeling of appreciation and support for the use of Tok Pisin more than for vernacular languages like Tolai in the education system. Children in particular embraced Tok Pisin far more than teachers and parents as it helps them enhance their understanding of English. This confirms Siegel's (1997) finding on Tok Pisin namely that it is a help and not a hindrance to students' learning.

1. Introduction

Papua New Guinea (PNG) has undergone a multitude of changes in its education system within the last three decades. According to Guthrie (2014), a total of eight different systems have been introduced but short lived. The education reform was one such system which saw the introduction of Tok Pisin and vernacular languages which was in line with the Matane (1986) report which promoted a culturally based curriculum for Papua New Guineans. The reform embraced the bilingual approach to education where the child's first language (L1) or mother tongue was used as the medium of instruction in a village-based, three-year vernacular elementary school level and the first three years of primary school (Grades 3-5). However, since its introduction, there has been a continuing nationwide debate on the use of indigenous languages in the school system which has been influenced largely by people's attitudes. Language attitudes shape language behaviour and this inevitably affects language proficiency and use in subsequent generations, particularly when attitudes are shaped by political and social events and driven by economic need in a multilingual nation like PNG.

1.1 Attitudes towards languages

There is a great amount of research on attitudes towards different languages and languages used in school systems the world over. Since this study focuses on attitudes towards languages

used in bilingual education in PNG, let us begin by exploring the definition that underpins this area of study. According to Richards et al. (1985), '*language attitude*' is:

“the attitude which speakers of different languages or language varieties have towards each other’s languages or to their own language. Expressions of positive or negative feelings towards a language may reflect impressions of linguistic difficulty, ease or difficulty of learning, degree of importance, elegance, social status etc. Attitudes towards a language may also show what people feel about speakers of that language” (p. 199).

The definition above associates well with multilingual and/or multicultural nations, especially school children attending bi/multilingual education programs where a number of different languages are used as mediums of instruction. Most research on language attitudes have concluded that students’ attitude is an integral part of learning and that it should, therefore, become an essential component of second language learning pedagogy.

1.2 Students’ Attitudes

Research on students’ attitudes towards learning is a very important phenomenon. First, attitudes towards learning are believed to influence behaviour (Kaballa & Crowley, 1985 cited in Weinburg, 1998), such as selecting reading books and speaking in a foreign language just to name a few. Second, a relationship between attitudes and achievement has been shown to exist. It is apparent that in language learning, as in many other areas of children’s learning, children are similar to adults in that they are strongly influenced by those who are significant to them; people such as their friends and family. However, children may also be influenced by their peers, their teachers and the general school environment. For instance, Cummins (1993) suggests that the use of a learner’s L1 at school strongly affects whether or not they maintain that language. Similarly, a family’s attitude to a language and their use of it in the home will influence a child’s success in that language.

1.3 Parents’ Attitudes

Parents are a key element in an educational setting, and successful bilingual education programs have involved parents in their design and implementation (Howard, Sugarman & Christian, 2003; Robledo & Danini, 2002; Senesac, 2002). There are subtle but important aspects related to parental involvement and participation with the school, such as their attitude and motivation toward language learning and bilingualism/biliteracy. For an educational program to be successful, certain elements must be in place. Apart from effective teachers, well-developed curriculum and efficient administrative staff, there must also be supportive parents and a supportive community (Luján & Armendáriz, 2002). Research clarifies that a very important element in program success is parent involvement (Epstein & Sanders, 2000; Li, 1999; Zelazo, 1995). Parents have an important and remarkable influence on a child’s school achievement. Parent involvement and attitudes show a positive difference in a child’s achievement, attitude, and school attendance regardless of social class, race or ethnicity (Henderson, 1987 as cited in Zelazo, 1995).

1.4 Teachers' Attitudes

Research on teachers' attitudes and beliefs are important to study if one is to implement a new bi/multilingual program successfully. When policies (such as the one stated in PNG's education system) are adopted that affect curriculum and instruction, teachers are the key components in the implementation of such reforms (Stritikus, 2002). Teachers are the ones that are closest to the students, and their influence on students is crucial to the success these students have in their educational careers (Silin & Schartz, 2003). Some studies have directly examined teachers' attitudes towards bilingual education (Lee & Oxelson, 2006; Ramos, 2007; Shin & Krashen, 1996). When examining bilingual teachers' beliefs, Flores (2001) related their attitudes to self-reported practices and found that prior experiences influenced bilingual teachers' attitudes and beliefs about how their students learn.

1.5 Attitudes towards languages in PNG

Studies on language attitudes are rare in PNG. Among the few studies that have been carried out are: Nidue (1988) who surveyed the attitudes of teachers towards the use of Tok Pisin in PNG primary schools. The survey showed that teachers agreed that using Tok Pisin would facilitate teacher-student communication, improve students' understanding of subject matter, enable parents to participate in their children's education and promote traditional cultural activities in the schools. Yet over 90 percent of teachers surveyed were strongly in favour of English-only medium schools.

A study by Buschenhofen (1998) investigated the attitudes towards English among 537 year 12 school students (in four national high schools in PNG) and 734 first-year university students at the two largest universities in PNG: UPNG and the University of Technology (Unitech). Using almost identical survey questionnaires for both groups, the findings were contrasted in terms of the students' tolerance towards the use of English in a variety of contexts. The study found that the students generally had positive attitudes towards English even though there were some significant attitudinal differences in terms of specific English language contexts between the two groups. While the first-year university students strongly expressed the view that the use of English plays a crucial role in the country's development, neither the national high school nor the university students associated the use of English with threats to their ethnolinguistic identity. Buschenhofen (1998) attributes the patterns of differences to the changing social, educational, and linguistic conditions which characterise the transition from year 12 to university education.

Swan and Lewis (1990) conducted a study on university students' attitudes towards the usage of Tok Pisin at UPNG and Unitech. The findings of this study confirmed that there is widespread use of Tok Pisin by students at PNG's two universities. The study found that Tok Pisin is used widely, not only for social purposes, but also to some extent for study purposes. Swan and Lewis (1990) also state that there was no sign of antipathy to Tok Pisin among students who participated in this study (p. 224).

This brief review demonstrates that more research is needed in the area of language attitudes in PNG and this study contributes to international scholarship in terms of providing evidence that Papua New Guineans have conflicting views on the use of indigenous languages in the school system.

2. The Study

The study involved 413 respondents in a questionnaire survey undertaken at six schools in the Kokopo District of East New Britain Province. The questionnaire data was collected from primary teachers (n=85), parents of children in participating schools (n=86), and Grade 3 students (n=242) from the six participating schools namely: Takabur, Kabagap and Raluana, Kalamanagunan, Kabaleo and Kokopo.

2.1 Selection of Participants

Teachers

All teachers in the six participating schools were invited to participate in the questionnaire survey. These teachers were categorized under two labels, namely Tok Pisin teachers and Tolai teachers. *'Tok Pisin teachers'* were those who claimed they used mostly Tok Pisin in their lessons and taught in a Tok Pisin dominated classroom. *'Tolai teachers'* on the other hand, were those who claimed they used mostly Tolai in their lessons and taught in a Tolai dominated classroom. It was also important to distinguish between traditional ESL teachers who were educated and taught in the previous English only curriculum and newly graduated bilingual certified teachers of the current education reform. Teachers who agreed to take part in the follow-up interviews were interviewed after completed questionnaires had been collected from all the teacher participants.

Parents

Parents who participated in the questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews were those who had a child who participated in the study. Designated Grade 3 teachers in each school were asked to help distribute questionnaires to parents through their Grade 3 students. If they agreed, then they filled out the questionnaires. *'Tok Pisin parents'* refers to parents who had children attending Tok Pisin dominated classrooms whereas *'Tolai parents'* were those whose children were attending Tolai dominated classrooms. Parents who agreed to take part in the follow-up interviews were interviewed after completed questionnaires had been collected from all participants. All parents were educated in the English only era and attended a wide range of educational institutions ranging from primary, high/national high schools to teachers/technical colleges and /or universities. The majority of these parents were employed by the government, private sector, the church (the mission) or were self-employed.

Students

Student participants involved in the survey questionnaires were selected according to the willingness of Grade 3 teachers who were prepared to engage their classes in this study. These students had previously attended either a Tok Pisin or Tolai elementary school and were in their first year of transition (bridging) to English. *'Tok Pisin students'* refers to students who were taught in a predominantly Tok Pisin classroom, whereas *'Tolai students'* refers to students in a predominantly Tolai classroom. These labels were determined by the choice of the teachers whose classes were used in this study. The selection of students for in-depth interviews was also done in liaison with class teachers according to their availability and appropriacy of time. The ages of these students were between 9 and 11 years old.

2.2 Methodology

In order to achieve its purpose, the study was guided by the following research questions:

Main Research Question

What are the attitudes of teachers, parents and students towards the use of Tok Pisin and vernacular languages for instruction in the lower primary classroom?

Sub – Questions:

- 1) What are the *similarities* between the teachers, parents and students towards the use of Tok Pisin and vernacular languages for instruction in the lower primary classroom?
- 2) What are the *differences* between the teachers, parents and students towards the use of Tok Pisin and vernacular languages for instruction in the lower primary classroom?

In this study questionnaires were employed to satisfy the main aim of this study. The design of the questionnaires was adapted from three earlier studies on language attitudes which included Lai's (2005) study on language attitudes of the first postcolonial generation in Hong Kong secondary schools, Mparutsa, et al.'s (1990) investigation into language attitudes of secondary school students in Zimbabwe, and Buschenhofen's (1998) study on English language attitudes of year 12 students in four national high schools and first year university students in the two biggest universities in PNG.

A total of six questionnaires were designed for the six different categories of participants in the study namely: a) *Tok Pisin Teachers*), b) *Tolai teachers*, c) *Tok Pisin Parents*, d) *Tolai Parents*, e) *Tok Pisin students*, and *Tolai students*. All questionnaires were written in English as the survey was targeted at educated stakeholders. However, in situations where there was a need for translations or clarification, the researcher and/or the class teacher who are native speakers of both Tok Pisin and Tolai orally translated the sections that were unclear to parents and students. The questionnaires were designed similarly in that they all had four different sections namely: Part 1. Background information, Part 2. Language Use, Part 3. Language Attitudes and Part 4. Open-ended questions. In this paper, only the section on language attitudes (Part 3) will be discussed.

2.3 Data Collection Procedures and Management

The data collection for this study was carried out between March and May 2010. The main deciding factor for selecting this time-frame was that the study had to be conducted during the school teaching terms in order to obtain data from the anticipated participants.

A total of 600 questionnaires were disseminated to all participants across the six schools. These questionnaires were given out to participants after prior arrangements had been made. This included a pre-meeting with the head teacher and Grade 3 teacher/coordinator of each school to decide on when, where and how the questionnaires were to be disseminated and collected back from the participants. An allowance of two weeks was given for the completion of the questionnaires.

When all the completed questionnaires were collected, they were sorted and analysed using different colour coding and pseudonyms to protect the privacy of each participant. All

questionnaire findings were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program using both descriptive and inferential statistics in order to determine the overall trends in attitudes towards languages used in the lower primary classrooms.

Descriptive statistics describe the details or attributes of a given population such as size, frequency and mean (Gravetter and Wallnau, 2005; Groves, et al., 2009). Simple descriptive statistics (frequencies) were used in this study to provide counts of the factors underpinning the analysis of the questionnaire data and the demographic responses. *Inferential statistics* measure the relationship between two or more variables and include tests such as the Mann Whitney U (or Wilcoxon Rank Sum) which is used in this research. Rowntree (1981), like other researchers, places much emphasis on the aspect of inferential statistics which involves generalising from a sample to make estimates and inferences about a wider population (p.19). Inferential statistics enable hypotheses to be tested and generalisations to be made as shown in this study.

The Likert summated rating scale was used in some sections of the questionnaires to measure the participants' attitudes and reactions. Statements of beliefs that had been formulated by the researcher were responded to by the participants indicating how strongly they agreed or disagreed on a 5 point scale. Points (1-5) were awarded to participants' choices and the total scores of each one was calculated and recorded. Data was analysed by looking at the distribution of the responses to each attitudinal question. The Likert summated scale was read as follows: 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = disagree, 4 = strongly disagree, and 5 = undecided. All the items in the questionnaire were analysed using the IBM SPSS Statistics Version 21. Descriptive statistics for the continuous variables were demonstrated as case number and percentage. The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test at a confidence level of 0.05 was used to determine the statistical differences between the attitudes towards the languages used in the bilingual education program of the following groups:

- Tok Pisin teachers vs Tolai teachers
- Tok Pisin parents vs Tolai parents
- Parents vs Teachers
- Tolai parents vs Tolai teachers
- Tok Pisin Students vs Tolai students

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Tok Pisin Teachers' Language Attitudes

A total of 48 teachers completed the Tok Pisin teachers' questionnaires. As shown in Table 1, the majority (n= 32, 66.7%) supported Tok Pisin as an important language for use in elementary schools for children's survival in PNG's society (Q1).

Table 1. Attitudinal Statements (Tok Pisin Teachers) (N=48)		Questions 1-13				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided
Q1. Teaching Tok Pisin in elementary schools is important for a child's survival in the PNG society		9 (18.8%)	23 (47.9)	11 (22.9)	5 (10.4)	-

Q2. Using Tok Pisin and English in the classroom will result in students losing their local vernaculars	6 (12.5%)	7 (14.6%)	25 (52.1%)	9 (18.8%)	1 (2.1%)
Q3. English is an international language therefore children should acquire English at an early age (in elementary 1 and 2) to be successful in life	30 (62.5%)	10 (20.8%)	7 (14.6%)	1 (2.1%)	-
Q4. Students are keen to learn English during the bridging stage (Gr 3)	14 (29.2%)	26 (54.2%)	5 (10.4%)	3 (6.3%)	-
Q5. Heavy use of Tok Pisin in the classroom contributes to students' lacking proficiency in English	25 (52.1%)	12 (25%)	8 (16.7%)	2 (4.2%)	1 (2.1%)
Q6. The use of Tok Pisin alongside English in the classroom helps students acquire English easily	22 (45.8%)	17 (35.4%)	7 (14.6%)	2 (4.2%)	-
Q7. I speak Tok Pisin very fluently but I am less fluent in reading and writing Tok Pisin	14 (29.2%)	17 (35.4%)	14 (29.2%)	3 (6.3%)	-
Q8. I find it difficult to plan for the integration of learning in two languages (Tok Pisin and English) across the curriculum	14 (29.2%)	19 (39.6%)	12 (25%)	1 (2.1%)	2 (4.2%)
Q9. I only have little knowledge of how to plan for two languages in use in one classroom, to assist in 'bridging' students from the home language to the language of the wider communication	12 (25%)	26 (54.2%)	7 (14.6%)	2 (4.2%)	1 (2.1%)
Q10. Teachers training colleges should introduce a unit on literacy in Tok Pisin for teachers in the bilingual education program (Grade 3-5)	18 (37.5%)	20 (41.7%)	5 (10.4%)	4 (8.3%)	1 (2.1%)
Q11. Bridging teachers need specialized training in teaching English as second language	33 (68.8%)	8 (16.7%)	5 (10.4%)	1 (2.1%)	1 (2.1%)
Q12. I spend a lot of time preparing and designing my own teaching materials in Tok Pisin because the education department does not provide us with teaching materials	30 (62.5%)	10 (20.8%)	5 (10.4%)	1 (2.1%)	2 (4.2%)
Q13. There is an abundant supply of teaching materials in Tok Pisin in primary school	6 (12.5%)	7 (14.6%)	11 (22.9%)	23 (47.9%)	1 (2.1%)

They (n=34, 70.9%) also did not think the bilingual use of Tok Pisin and English would affect children in terms of losing their vernacular languages (Q2). This suggests that these Tok Pisin teachers valued the use of both languages in the classroom as well as the local vernaculars. They also highly supported the idea of children being introduced to English at an early age at the elementary schools (Q3) in order to have a successful future. This was evidenced among 40 teachers who agreed.

Tok Pisin Teachers' Attitudes towards Language(s) for schooling

There was a general consensus among Tok Pisin teachers (n=40, 83.4%) that students were keen to learn English during the 'bridging period' (Q4) and that the use of Tok Pisin alongside English helped students acquire English (Q6). However, a lot of teachers (n=37, 77.1%) were concerned that a heavy use of Tok Pisin in the classroom (Q5) interfered with students proficiency in English.

Tok Pisin Teachers' Competency in Language Skills

Findings on 'competency in language skills' revealed three major concerns. Firstly, it was found that more than 60% of teachers were very fluent in speaking Tok Pisin but not in reading and writing the language (Q7). Secondly, the majority (n=33, 68.8%) had difficulties planning for the integration of learning in two languages (Tok Pisin and English) across the curriculum (Q8) and thirdly, the majority (n=38, 79.2%) admitted they only had little knowledge on how to plan for two languages in use in one classroom to assist in bridging students from the home language to English (Q9). Two suggested solutions which teachers were asked to give their views on were: (Q10) whether teachers' colleges should include a unit on literacy in Tok Pisin for teachers in the bilingual education training program, and whether 'bridging teachers' must be specialized in teaching English as a second language (Q11). In response, it was found that the majority of the teachers supported the two ideas

(n=38, 79.2% and n=41, 85.5% respectively), which indicates the need for more in-service training programs for practicing teachers and a revised training program for trainee-teachers at teachers' training colleges in the country.

Tok Pisin Teachers' Attitudes towards Teaching Resources

There were also pressing issues in terms of teaching resources. Firstly, an overwhelming majority (n=40, 83.3%) agreed that they spent a lot of time preparing teaching and learning materials for their lessons due to the lack of teaching resources in schools (Q12). Secondly, 34 teachers (70.8%) disagreed that there is an abundant supply of teaching materials in schools (Q13) suggesting that the school administrations and NDOE need to work together to resolve the issue of lack of resources in schools throughout the country.

3.2 Tolai Teachers' Language Attitudes

A total of 37 teachers who claimed they used Tolai predominantly with their students in class completed the questionnaires. Findings in Table 2 revealed just over half (n=20, 54%) of the teachers in this sample agreed that the teaching of Tolai in elementary school was important for a child's survival in the PNG society (Q1). 17 teachers (46%) on the other hand, claimed that the teaching of Tolai was not important. It was also observed that while the majority (n=24, 64.8%) were in favour of Tolai being used alongside English to help maintain local vernaculars (Q2), 12 teachers (32.4%) disagreed. It was also noted that an overwhelming majority (n=35, 94.6%) were in favour of students acquiring English at an early age at the elementary level (Q3).

Attitudinal Statements	Questions 1-13				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided
Q1. Teaching Tolai in elementary schools is important for a child's survival in the PNG society	10 (27%)	10 (27%)	11 (29.7%)	6 (16.2%)	-
Q2. Using Tolai and English in the classroom will result in children maintaining local vernaculars	7 (18.9%)	17 (45.9%)	8 (21.6%)	4 (10.8%)	1 (2.7%)
Q3. English is an international language therefore children should acquire it at an early age (in elementary 1 and 2) to be successful in life	29 (78.4%)	6 (16.2%)	1 (2.7%)	1 (2.7%)	-
Q4. Students are keen to learn English during the bridging stage (Grade 3)	14 (37.8%)	13(35.1%)	4 (10.8%)	6 (16.2%)	-
Q5. Heavy use of Tolai in the classroom contributes to students lacking proficiency in English	29 (78.4%)	3 (8.1%)	1 (2.7%)	3 (8.1%)	1 (2.7%)
Q6. The use of Tolai alongside English in the bridging program helps students acquire English easily	10 (27%)	10 (27%)	10 (27%)	7 (18.9%)	-
Q7. I speak Tolai very fluently but I am less fluent in reading and writing in Tolai	14 (37.8%)	13(35.1%)	3 (8.1%)	6 (16.2%)	1 (2.7)
Q8. I find it difficult to plan for the integration of learning in two languages (Tolai and English) across the curriculum	17 (45.9%)	10 (27%)	5 (13.5%)	3 (8.1 %)	2 (5.4%)
Q9. I only have little knowledge of how to plan for two languages in use in one classroom, to assist in 'bridging' students from the home language to the language of the wider communication	17 (45.9%)	13 (35.1%)	3 (8.1%)	2 (5.4%)	2 (5.4)
Q10. Teachers training colleges should introduce a unit on literacy in Tolai for teachers in the bilingual education program (Grade 3-5)	11 (29.7%)	13(35.1%)	8 (21.6%)	3 (8.1%)	2 (5.4%)
Q11. Bridging teachers need specialized training in teaching English as second language	28 (75.7%)	9 (24.3%)	-	-	-
Q12. I spend a lot of time preparing and designing my own teaching materials in Tolai because the education department does not provide us with enough teaching materials	25 (67.6%)	9 (24.3%)	1 (2.7%)	2 (5.4%)	-
Q13. There is an abundant supply of teaching materials in Tolai in primary schools	8 (21.6%)	10 (27%)	9 (24.3%)	9 (24.3%)	1 (2.7%)

Tolai Teachers' Attitudes towards Language(s) for Schooling

The first of the three questions in this section sought teachers' views on whether or not their students were keen to learn English during the bridging period in Grade 3 (Q4). Findings revealed that 27 (72.9%) teachers supported the notion whereas ten (27%) did not. It was also noted that when teachers were asked whether the heavy use of Tolai resulted in students lacking proficiency in English (Q5), an overwhelming majority (n=32, 86.5%) agreed while four teachers (10.8%) disagreed. In response to the third question (Q6), as can be seen from Table 2, slightly more than half (54%) of the respondents indicated that they agreed that using Tolai alongside English in the classroom helped students acquire and comprehend English easily.

Tolai Teachers' Competency in Language Skills

As regards competency in language skills, a number of concerns similar to the Tok Pisin teacher findings are highlighted in this subsection. Firstly, findings revealed that a majority (n=27, 72.9%) of Tolai teachers could speak Tolai very fluently but were less fluent in reading and writing in Tolai (Q7). Secondly, an equal number (n=27, 72.9%) had difficulties planning for the integration of learning in two or more languages (Q8). Thirdly, the majority (n=30, 81%) again admitted they encountered problems bridging students from their home language to English as they had little knowledge of the concept of bridging (Q9). Five teachers (13.5%) on the other hand, indicated they did not face any difficulties at all while two (5.4%) were undecided.

In response to Question 10: 'Teachers training colleges should include a unit on literacy in Tolai for teachers in the bilingual education training program', 24 teachers (64.8%) agreed and 11 (29.7%) did not. Most remarkably, when teachers were asked whether or not bridging teachers needed specialized training in teaching English as a second language (Q11) all teachers (100%) claimed there was a real need in this area. This suggests that the school administration and the NDOE need to allocate funds for training and re-training teachers in order to gain positive outcomes of the bilingual education program in the country.

Tolai Teachers' Attitudes towards Teaching Resources

When teachers were asked if they spent a lot of time on preparing teaching materials for their lessons (Q12), the vast amount of respondents (91.9%) claimed they did as there was a lack of resources in schools. However, when teachers were asked specifically about the availability of resources in their individual schools (Q13), findings showed a split in the views; 48.6% stated there was an abundant supply of teaching materials, whereas 48.6% claimed they did not have enough teaching resources.

3.3 Comparison of Tok Pisin and Tolai Teachers' Language Attitudes

Results of an Inferential Statistical test:

In terms of level of significance on language attitudes, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test at a confidence level of 0.05 was used to determine the statistical differences between the attitudes of Tok Pisin teachers and Tolai teachers towards the languages used in the bilingual education program. Of the 13 attitudinal statements that were tested (see Tables 1 and 2),

findings revealed that there were statistically significant differences in only three of the statements as shown below:

Q5. Heavy use of Tok Pisin/Tolai in the classroom contributes to students lacking proficiency in English.

Findings showed a statistically significant difference ($p = .033$) in attitudes to this question. A significantly greater proportion of Tolai teachers thought heavy use of Tolai contributed to students lacking proficiency in English compared to Tok Pisin teachers' views towards Tok Pisin.

Q6: The use of Tok Pisin/Tolai alongside English in the classroom helps students acquire English easily. Findings also showed a significant difference ($p = .009$) in the attitudes of the teachers towards this statement. The Tok Pisin teachers are more in favour of the use of Tok Pisin alongside English than Tolai teachers are towards the use of Tolai alongside English.

Q13. There is an abundant supply of teaching materials in Tok Pisin/Tolai. Another statistically significant difference ($p = .030$) showed that the majority (70.8%) of Tok Pisin teachers did not support the statement compared to Tolai teachers. Tolai teachers' views were divided. 48.6% thought there was a good supply of Tolai materials whereas 46.8% disagreed.

4 Tok Pisin Parents' Language Attitudes

As shown in Table 3, a total of 40 parents from the six participating schools completed the questionnaires. The first three questions sought parents' general attitudes towards the languages their children were taught in at school. The majority ($n = 26$, 65%) of parents considered that the teaching of Tok Pisin in elementary school was important for their children's survival in the PNG society (Q1), whereas 14 (35%) disagreed. In response to Question 2, an equal number did not think that the use of Tok Pisin alongside English resulted in their children losing their local vernaculars. Only 14 parents (35%) thought that children were losing competence in their local vernaculars due to the use of Tok Pisin and English. On the other hand, 24 of the parents indicated that they thought that Tok Pisin hindered the learning process of their children in English (Q3).

Attitudinal Statements	Questions 1-13				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided
Q1. Teaching Tok Pisin in elementary schools is important for a child's survival in the PNG society	16 (40%)	10 (25%)	10 (25%)	4 (10%)	-
Q2. Using Tok Pisin and English in the classroom will result in students losing their local vernaculars	3 (7.5%)	11 (27.5%)	17 (42.5%)	9 (22.5%)	-
Q3. Tok Pisin hinders the learning process of a child when attempting to learn English in the bridging program	7 (17.5%)	17 (42.5%)	11 (27.5%)	5 (12.5%)	-
Q4. English is an international language therefore children should acquire English at an early age (in elementary 1 and 2) to be successful in life	32 (80%)	5 (12.5%)	1 (2.5%)	2 (5%)	-
Q5. The use of Tok Pisin in schools elevates the child's pride in his/her culture	6 (15%)	16 (40%)	13 (32.5%)	2 (5%)	3 (7.5%)
Q6. Tok Pisin helps my child to excel in his/her school work	7 (17.5%)	12 (30%)	8 (20%)	11 (27.5%)	2 (5%)
Q7. My child finds work in Tok Pisin easy to understand	8 (20%)	16 (40%)	10 (25%)	5 (12.5%)	1 (2.5%)
Q8. The use of Tok Pisin should cease at the end of lower primary(Grade 5) as stipulated in the curriculum guidelines and only English should be used in the	17 (42.5%)	11 (27.5%)	6 (15%)	5 (12.5%)	1 (2.5%)

upper primary level (Grades 6-8)					
Q9. Teachers must be literate in Tok Pisin in order to assist my child well in bridging to English	18 (45%)	15 (37.5)	3 (7.5%)	4 (10%)	-
Q10. Grade 3 bridging teachers must be fully bilingual in English and Tok Pisin	25 (62.5%)	15 (37.5%)	-	-	-
Q11. Lower primary teachers must attend regular in-service training on the planning and integration of two languages in one classroom (i.e. Tok Pisin and English)	29 (72.5%)	11 (27.5%)	-	-	-
Q12. The NDOE must provide bilingual teaching materials to all schools	28 (70%)	8 (20%)	3 (7.5%)	1 (2.5%)	-
Q13. Teachers must be multi-skilled in both Tok Pisin and English to produce a variety of teaching materials	27 (67.5%)	1(27.5%)	1 (2.5%)	1 (2.5%)	-

Tok Pisin Parents' Attitudes towards Language(s) for Schooling

An overwhelming majority (92.5%) of parents supported the statement that English should be introduced to their children at an early age (Q4), whereas a relatively low number (7.5%) did not. Responses to question (Q5) indicated that 55% of parents agreed that using Tok Pisin in school gave a child pride in his/her culture while 37.5% were against the view. It was interesting to note that Question Q6, which sought parents' views on whether the use of Tok Pisin helped their children excel in their school work, saw an equal number of parents who agreed (47.5%) and parents who disagreed (47.5%). In response to Question Q7, which sought parents' views on whether their children found work in Tok Pisin easy to understand, a majority (60%) agreed while 37.5% disagreed. A similar trend was seen when parents were asked whether Tok Pisin teaching and usage should end at the end of Grade 5 and English only should be used in upper primary school (Q8).

Tok Pisin Parents' Attitudes to Teachers' Competencies in Language Skills

When asked whether teachers must be literate in Tok Pisin in order to assist their children well during the bridging to English period (Q9), an overwhelming majority (82.5%) stated that they should be. Question 10 saw all parents agreeing that teachers should definitely be bilingual in order for successful outcomes to take place.

A similar result was seen when parents were asked to give their views on whether teachers should attend regular in-service training on planning in two languages; Tok Pisin and English (Q11).

Tok Pisin Parents' Attitudes towards Teaching Resources

When parents were asked whether the NDOE should provide bilingual teaching materials to all schools (Q12), an overwhelming majority (90%) supported the statement. When asked (Q13) whether teachers should be multi-skilled in both Tok Pisin and English to produce a variety of teaching materials to supplement their teachings, the great majority of the parents (95%) agreed.

5 Tolai Parents' Language Attitudes

A total of 46 parents (see Table 4) completed the Tolai parents' questionnaires. The first three questions sought parents' views on the languages their children were taught in at school. The majority (76.1%) of the parents were against the view stated in Q1 that the teaching of Tolai in elementary school was important for their children's survival in the PNGn society (47.8% disagreed and 28.3% strongly disagreed). Less than a quarter (23.9%) thought that teaching

Tolai was important for the children's survival. In response to Question 2, the majority (65.2%) of parents did not think that the use of Tolai and English resulted in their children losing their local vernaculars. 28.3 % on the other hand thought it did. When parents were asked about whether heavy use of Tolai hindered the learning process of children when attempting to learn English (Q3), the great majority (82.7%) agreed while only 17.3% disagreed.

Tolai Parents' Attitudes towards Language(s) for Schooling

Responses to Question 4 indicated that the majority of parents (93.5%) agreed that their children should acquire English at an early age. The remainder (6.5%) disagreed with the statement, claiming that the current bilingual system which required children to bridge to English at a later stage in Grade 3 was appropriate. There was a split in the views of the parents when they were asked to indicate whether or not using Tolai in school gave pride to their children's culture (Q5); while 48.8% agreed, 47.9% disagreed.

Table 4: Attitudinal Statements (Tolai Parents) (N=46)		Questions 1-13				
Attitudinal Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided	
Q1. Teaching Tolai in elementary schools is important for a child's survival in the PNG society	6 (13%)	5 (10.9%)	22 (47.8%)	13 (28.3%)	-	
Q2. Using Tolai and English in the classroom will result in students losing their local vernaculars	4 (8.7%)	9 (19.6%)	22 (47.8%)	8 (17.4%)	3 (6.5%)	
Q3. Tolai hinders the learning process of a child when attempting to learn English in the bridging program	18 (39.1%)	20 (43.6%)	6 (13%)	2 (4.3%)	2 (4.3%)	
Q4. English is an international language therefore children should acquire English at an early age (in elementary 1 and 2) to be successful in life	39 (84.8%)	4 (8.7%)	1 (2.2%)	2 (4.3%)	-	
Q5. Using Tolai in school gives a child pride in his/her culture	7 (15.2%)	15 (32.6%)	13 (28.3%)	9 (19.6%)	2 (4.3%)	
Q6. Tolai helps my child excel in his/her school work	1 (2.2%)	5 (10.9%)	16 (34.8%)	23 (50%)	1 (2.2%)	
Q7. My child finds work in Tolai easy to understand	5 (10.9%)	5 (10.9%)	10 (21.7%)	25 (54.3%)	1 (2.2%)	
Q8. The use of Tolai should cease at the end of lower primary (Grade 5) as stipulated in the curriculum guidelines and only English should be used in the upper primary level (6-8)	7 (15.2%)	8 (17.4%)	9 (19.6%)	17 (37%)	5 (10.9%)	
Q9. Teachers must be literate in Tolai in order to assist my child well in bridging to English	10 (21.7%)	15 (32.6%)	8 (17.4%)	11 (23.9%)	2 (4.3%)	
Q10. A Grade 3 bridging teacher should be fully bilingual in English and Tolai	17 (37%)	18 (39.1%)	3 (6.5%)	6 (13%)	2 (4.3%)	
Q11. Lower primary teachers must attend regular in-service training on the planning and integration of two languages in one classroom (i.e. Tolai and English)	15 (32.6%)	15 (32.6%)	5 (10.9%)	4 (8.7%)	7 (15.2%)	
Q12. The NDOE must provide bilingual teaching materials to all schools	18 (39.1%)	14 (30.4%)	6 (13%)	2 (4.3%)	6 (13%)	
Q13. Teachers must be multi-skilled in both Tolai and English to produce a variety of teaching resources	17 (37%)	18 (39.1%)	6 (13%)	2 (4.3%)	3 (6.5%)	

Responses to Question 6 indicated that most parents (84.8%) did not think the use of Tolai helped their children excel in their school work. Furthermore, the majority (76%) of parents disagreed with the view that their children found work in Tolai easy to understand (Q7). Only 21% stated that their

children found work in Tolai easy to understand, while 2.2% were undecided. However, when parents were asked whether the teaching and usage of Tolai should cease at the end of Grade 5 and the focus should be on English only in upper primary school (Q8), over half (56.6%) disagreed, 32.6% agreed and 10.9% were undecided.

Tolai Parents' Attitudes towards Teachers' Competencies in Language Skills

Parents' views on whether teachers must be literate in Tolai in order to assist their children well during the bridging to English period (Q9) were divided, with 54.3% of parents agreeing that Tolai literacy was required whereas 41.3% disagreed. In contrast, a much larger proportion of parents (76.1%) agreed that Grade 3 bridging teachers should be fully bilingual in English and Tolai (Q10). In response to Question 11, which asked parents whether teachers in the lower primary should attend regular in-service training on the planning and integration of two languages, the majority (65.2%) agreed while 19.6% disagreed. 15.2% were undecided.

Tolai Parents' Attitudes towards Teaching Resources

Question 12 sought parents' views on whether schools should be provided with bilingual teaching and learning resources by the NDOE. The majority (69.5%) stated the NDOE should provide these materials, while 17.3% were not in favour of this view and 13% were undecided. Responses to Question 13 showed that a majority of the parents (76.1%) were in favour of the view that teachers should be multi-skilled in both Tolai and English to produce a variety of teaching materials to supplement their teachings.

5.1 Comparison of Tok Pisin and Tolai Parents' Language Attitudes

Results of an Inferential Statistical test: With regards to the level of significance on language attitudes, a Mann-Whitney U revealed that there were significant differences between the answers given by parents of students in Tok Pisin dominated classrooms and parents of students in Tolai dominated classrooms for ten of the thirteen attitudinal statements in Q1 to Q13. These are listed below:

Q1. Teaching Tok Pisin/Tolai in elementary schools is important for a child's survival in the PNG society. There was a highly statistically significant difference ($p < .001$) in attitudes to this question. The Tok Pisin parents were much more in favour (65%) and thus appreciated the use of Tok Pisin in elementary school seeing its importance for their children's survival in PNG compared to the Tolai parents who generally viewed Tolai usage as less important in elementary schools (24.9%).

Q3. Tok Pisin/Tolai hinders the learning process of a child when attempting to learn English in the bridging program. Although both groups agreed with the statement, Tolai parents have significantly more negative attitudes (82.7%) toward the use of Tolai compared to parents of children in Tok Pisin dominated classrooms, 40% of whom view the use of Tok Pisin as an aid to learning English ($p = .007$).

Q6. Tok Pisin/Tolai helps my child to excel in his/her school work. There was a significant difference ($p = .006$) between the two groups of parents' attitudes towards this statement. Significantly more Tok Pisin parents consider that the use of Tok Pisin in school helps their

children in their school work compared to Tolai parents, who hold strongly negative attitudes towards Tolai usage in the classroom.

Q7. My child finds work in Tok Pisin/Tolai easy to understand. There was a highly significant difference ($p < .001$) between the two groups of parents regarding this statement. While 60% of Tok Pisin parents agreed that their children find work in Tok Pisin easy to understand, only 21% of Tolai parents thought Tolai helped their children.

Q8. The use of Tok Pisin/Tolai should cease at the end of Lower primary. Tok Pisin parents were highly significantly more supportive ($p < .001$) of ending the use of Tok Pisin in Grade 5 and using only English in Grade 6 and upper levels. Tolai parents varied more in their responses to this question, indicating they were not sure if the use of Tolai should end in Grade 5 or whether it should be continued in the upper levels of learning.

Q9. Teachers must be literate in Tok Pisin/Tolai in order to assist my child well in bridging to English. Tok Pisin parents were significantly more supportive of the notion that teachers must be literate in Tok Pisin than Tolai parents, who indicated it was less vital for teachers to be literate in Tolai ($p = .003$).

Q10. Grade 3 bridging teachers must be fully bilingual in English and Tok Pisin/Tolai. Again there was a significant difference ($p = .003$) between the two groups of parents. While all Tok Pisin parents ($n = 40$, 100%) agreed that Grade 3 bridging teachers should be fully bilingual in English and Tok Pisin, significantly fewer Tolai parents considered it essential for teachers to be fully bilingual in English and Tolai.

Q11. Lower primary teachers must attend regular in-service training on planning in Tok Pisin/Tolai and English. Tok Pisin parents saw a much greater need (100%) for regular in-service training on planning in two languages than Tolai parents ($p < .001$).

Q12. The NDOE must provide bilingual teaching materials to all schools. Tok Pisin parents ($n = 36$, 90%) were significantly more supportive of the notion that 'The NDOE must provide bilingual teaching materials to all schools' compared to Tolai parents ($p < .001$).

Q13. Teachers must be multi-skilled in both Tok Pisin/Tolai and English to produce a variety of teaching materials. While both groups agreed with this statement, Tok Pisin parents ($n = 38$, 95%) considered the need for teachers to be multi-skilled in the two languages to be significantly more important than Tolai parents did ($p = .002$).

5. 2 Comparison of Parents' and Teachers' Language Attitudes

Results of an Inferential Statistics Test:

The Mann-Whitney U test was also conducted to test the null hypothesis of no significant differences in the overall attitudes of parents compared to teachers. Two attitudinal statements which had the same wording across the groups were tested for significant difference. The findings are shown below:

Tok Pisin Parents vs Tok Pisin Teachers

Q1. Teaching Tok Pisin in elementary schools is important for a child's survival in the PNG society. There was no significant difference in this question ($p = .268$). This suggests that both Tok Pisin groups agreed that the use of Tok Pisin in elementary schools is important for children's survival in PNG.

Tolai Parents vs Tolai teachers

Q1. Teaching Tolai in elementary schools is important for a child's survival in the PNG society. Unlike the responses of the Tok Pisin respondents, there was a statistically significant difference ($p = .014$) in the attitudes of the two Tolai groups. Over half (54%) of Tolai teachers considered the use of Tolai in elementary school to be important for a child's survival in the PNG society, which is significantly more than the 24% of parents who supported the statement.

5.3 A Comparison of All Parents vs All Teachers

Q3 in the teachers' questionnaire and Q4 in the parents' questionnaire, 'English is an international language therefore children should acquire it at an early age (in elementary land 2) to be successful in life'. The Mann-Whitney U test revealed a highly significant difference ($p < .001$) in the attitudes of the parents compared to the teachers indicating that parents had much more positive attitudes towards English being taught to their children at an early age compared to teachers.

6. Tok Pisin Students' Language Attitudes

As shown in Table 5, out of the 124 students, the majority (76.6%) stated that the use of Tok Pisin alongside English in the classroom helped them understand English concepts better whereas only 23.4% disagreed (Q1). While the majority (81.5%) said they used Tok Pisin most of the time, 18.5% claimed they used other languages (Q2). Furthermore, a majority (89.5%) stated they found it easier talking to their teachers in Tok Pisin than in English. Only a handful of students (10.5%) said they could speak English with ease to their teachers (Q3). 96% of students agreed that learning English was important to learn (Q5). When asked whether Tok Pisin was more important to learn than English, only 16.1% agreed, while 83.9% disagreed (Q4). In addition, the majority (65.3%) of the respondents agreed that writing a sentence in English was harder than in Tok Pisin whereas 34.7% did not agree (Q6).

Table 5: Attitudinal Statements (Tok Pisin Students) (N=124)	Yes	No
Q1. Using Tok Pisin in the classroom helps me understand English better	95 (76.6%)	29 (23.4%)
Q2. I speak Tok Pisin most of the time in school	101 (81.5%)	23 (18.5%)
Q3. I find it easier talking to my teacher in Tok Pisin than in English	111 (89.5%)	13 (10.5%)
Q4. Tok Pisin is more important to learn than English	20 (16.1%)	104 (83.9%)
Q5. It is important to learn English	119 (96%)	5 (4%)
Q6. Writing a sentence in English is harder than writing in Tok Pisin	81 (65.3%)	43 (34.7%)
Q7. If I don't speak English well, I will not get a good job in future	103 (83.1%)	21 (16.9%)
Q8. Most children in my class like learning English	115 (92.7%)	9 (7.3%)
Q9. I only speak English during class time and nowhere else	70 (65.5%)	54 (34.5%)

In response to Question 7, 83.1% agreed that they would not get a good job in the future if they did not speak good English, whereas 16.9% did not agree. Interestingly, when students were asked whether students in their class liked learning English, an overwhelming majority (92.7%) agreed that they did; only 7.3% said they did not (8). Two thirds of students also agreed that they only spoke English during class time and not outside the classroom (65.5%) while 34.5% indicated that they spoke English elsewhere (Q9).

7. Tolai Students' Language Attitudes

When the 118 students were asked to indicate whether using Tolai in the classroom helped them understand English better, less than half (43.2%) agreed (Q1). When they were asked about the language they spoke most in school, 69 (58.5%) stated it was Tolai while 49 (41.5%) said they spoke other languages (Q2). On a similar note, the majority (61%) said they found it easier speaking Tolai to their teachers (Q3) compared to English (39%), and 69.5% agreed that it was more difficult to write in English than Tolai (Q6). Nevertheless, 92.4% of students disagreed with the statement that Tolai is more important than English (Q4), and nearly all the Tolai students (97.5%) agreed that it was important to learn English (Q5).

Table 6: Attitudinal Statements (Tolai Students) (N=118)	Yes	No
Q1. Using Tolai in the classroom helps me understand English better	51 (43.2%)	67 (56.8%)
Q2. I speak Tolai most of the time in school	69 (58.5%)	49 (41.5%)
Q3. I find it easier talking to my teacher in Tolai than in English	72 (61%)	46 (39%)
Q4. Tolai is more important to learn than English	9 (7.6%)	109 (92.4%)
Q5. It is important to learn English	115 (97.5%)	3 (2.5%)
Q6. Writing a sentence in English is harder than writing in Tolai	82 (69.5%)	36 (30.5%)
Q7. If I don't speak English well, I will not get a good job in future	111 (94.1%)	7 (5.9%)
Q8. Most children in my class like learning English	109 (92.4%)	8 (6.8%)
Q9. I only speak English during class time and nowhere else	80 (67.8%)	38 (32.2%)

In addition, 94.1% agreed that if they did not speak English well they would not get a good job in future (Q7). While 92.4% said most children in their class liked learning English (Q8), 67.8% of the respondents said they only spoke English during lessons and nowhere else (Q9).

7.1 Results of an Inferential Statistical test:

Comparison of Tok Pisin and Tolai Students' Language Attitudes A Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to test for significant differences in the attitudes of the students who attended a Tok Pisin dominated classroom and those who attended a Tolai dominated classroom. Of the nine attitudinal statements (as shown in Tables 5 and 6) that were tested, four had statistically significant differences which are discussed below:

Q1. Using Tok Pisin/Tolai in the classroom helps me understand English better. Findings revealed a highly significant difference ($p < .001$) in the attitudes of the two groups of students towards the statement. Far more Tok Pisin students (76.6%) agreed that using Tok Pisin in the classroom helped them understand English better than Tolai students, only 43.2% of whom agreed that using Tolai helped with English comprehension.

Q2. I speak Tok Pisin/Tolai most of the time in school. It was found that significantly more ($p = .025$) Tok Pisin students agreed with this statement than Tolai students.

Q3. I find it easier talking to my teacher in Tok Pisin/Tolai than in English. Findings revealed that there was a highly significant difference ($p < .001$) between the Tok Pisin and Tolai student groups. While the majority of Tok Pisin students (89.5%) agreed that speaking Tok Pisin with their teachers was easier than using English, only 61% of Tolai students found speaking Tolai easier than English.

Q4. Tok Pisin/Tolai is more important to learn than English. Far fewer Tolai students ($n = 9$, 7.6%) agreed that 'Tolai is more important to learn than English' compared to Tok Pisin students, 20 (16%) of whom stated Tok Pisin was more important to learn (highly significant $p < .001$).

8. Some Key Findings

The findings demonstrate the importance of taking into account the attitudes of all stakeholders since these have a powerful effect on how bilingual programs are viewed and implemented in practice. The value of including the views of children made a significant contribution to the study. It was interesting to see how they said they valued the use of their mother tongues in the classroom and how this helped them learn, echoing the views of supporters of the bilingual policy among some teachers and parents. The attitudes of children themselves to bilingual education are seldom heard in debates about its success and failures. Participant responses indicate that one of the major reasons for the lack of acceptance of the appropriateness of the use of Tok Pisin and vernacular languages in education is the dropouts, poor academic findings, and low levels of English language proficiency as evidence of these failures. Many teachers and parents attribute this situation to the whole idea of bilingual education and indicate support for a return to an English-only system. Others, including teachers who have been bilingually trained and children learning under the bilingual system, see such problems as the result of the deficiencies in the system.

The findings have also highlighted the increasing role of Tok Pisin in PNG's social life in the realm of work and education in PNG. Participants' responses showed that they acknowledged this, though there were differing views about if this was a threat to vernacular languages or not. It was clear from the questionnaire responses that participants saw Tok Pisin as a more useful language for education than a vernacular language like Tolai. As regards Tok Pisin being a bridge to English, some respondents considered its similarity to English as an advantage, others as a disadvantage. Such findings add to the literature on the use of pidgins and creoles in education and need further investigation.

Finally, the study found that both teachers and students reported that more than two languages were used in what are officially classified bilingual programs. Responses indicate that this might be due to the mismatch between the linguistic abilities of the teachers, or sometimes the students, and the nominated medium of instruction in that class or school. It might also be a natural result of the increasing use of Tok Pisin as a lingua franca and as a

mother tongue. Such findings indicate that the role of Tok Pisin in vernacular bilingual programs in PNG needs further investigation.

9. Conclusion

The findings of the questionnaire analysis show the multilingual nature of the society in which the respondents live and the influence this has on what languages are used at home and school. In answer to the main research question “What are the attitudes of teachers, parents and students towards the use of Tok Pisin and vernacular languages for instruction in the lower primary classrooms?” findings indicate a wide range of attitudes among the different groups who participated in this study. Questionnaire responses also indicate the continuous high status of English and the growing importance of Tok Pisin as a lingua franca in both formal and informal situations. This was further evidenced in the findings of the inferential statistical analysis using the Mann-Whitney U test, which revealed a number of significant differences, some of which were highly significant. This has implications for bilingual programs based on Tolai and other vernaculars.

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