

Adult Vernacular Production in Island
Southeast Asia and the Pacific

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1. Introduction
2. Adult Vernacular Production in Abui: A case study
3. What conditions Adult Vernacular Production?
4. Theoretical implications of Adult Vernacular production
5. Conclusion

Definitions

▶ Multilingual communities:

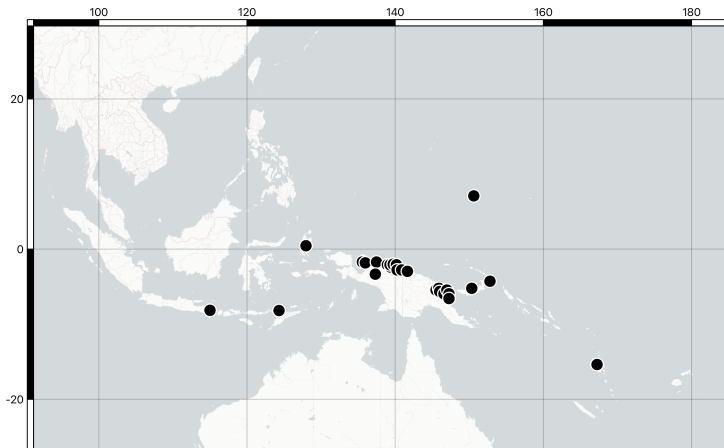
Local vernacular + Language of wider communication (LWC)

“...children grow up speaking a language of wider communication, and only start speaking the ‘vernacular’ when they join the community of adults. This could be termed ‘adult acquisition’ although, given that children are regularly hearing the language from adults around them, it might be better termed ‘adult/delayed vernacular production’. The switch from LWC to ‘vernacular’ may be gradual, or show a sharp divide corresponding to initiation into adulthood.”

Anderbeck (2015: 27)



Distribution in ISEA and the Pacific



AVP in Abui



AVP in Abui

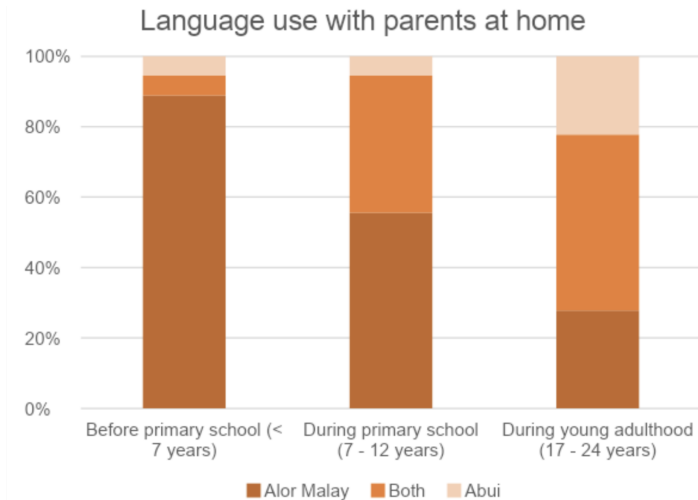
“In Takalelang [village, on the north coast], most children are brought up in Malay, though they become more proficient in Abui when they grow up because it is still the main language used between adults.”

Kratochvíl (2007: 4)

AVP in Abui



AVP in Abui



Saad (2020); Saad, Arnold & Peddie (in prep.)

What conditions Adult Vernacular Production?

- ▶ Language attitudes
 - ▶ Positive attitudes towards LWC—language of social, economic, educational prestige
 - ▶ Positive attitudes towards vernacular—language of local cultural expression and identity
- ▶ Language ideologies
 - ▶ Relationship between language use and participation in community activities
 - ▶ Expectations w.r.t. language proficiency in childhood vs adulthood

What conditions Adult Vernacular Production?

► Language and identity

- Several language communities with AVP are described as having very strong sense of in-group identity

“One feature of Bale culture is a **strong boundary control system**... There are clear criteria for group membership. One of these is speaking Bale-dha.”
Araali & Boone (2011)

“The Gurindji people became famous for their determination during [their workers’ strike between the years of 1966 – 1975], and their eventual triumph further solidified the **strength of the Gurindji identity**. This strength of identity has probably driven the maintenance of many elements of the Gurindji language...”
Sloan et al. (2022)

What conditions Adult Vernacular Production?

- ▶ Language and identity
 - ▶ Several groups described as maintaining traditional practices:
e.g. Abui, Sentani, Skou, Iau...



Models of language bilingual acquisition

	Childhood		Adulthood	
AVP	Active:	LWC	Active:	LWC, vernacular
	Passive:	Vernacular	Passive:	—
Simultaneous acquisition	Active:	LWC, vernacular	Active:	LWC, vernacular
	Passive:	—	Passive:	—
Sequential acquisition	Active:	LWC	Active:	LWC, vernacular
	Passive:	—	Passive:	—
Language shift	Active:	LWC	Active:	LWC
	Passive:	Vernacular	Passive:	Vernacular

- ▶ ‘Active-passive bilingual’: e.g. young Tayap-Tok Pisin speakers (Kulick & Terrill 2019)

Models of language bilingual acquisition

- ▶ Relationship to critical period hypothesis
 - ▶ Vernacular production: L1-like or L2-like (or something else)?
 - ▶ L1-like vernacular production would challenge strong variants of the hypothesis (e.g. Lenneberg 1967)
 - ▶ Saad et al. (2019): simplification of Abui possessive constructions
 - ▶ How to distinguish from ‘natural’ language change?
- ▶ What do we mean by ‘acquisition’?

Models of language endangerment

	Childhood		Adulthood	
AVP	Active:	LWC	Active:	LWC, vernacular
	Passive:	Vernacular	Passive:	—
Simultaneous acquisition	Active:	LWC, vernacular	Active:	LWC, vernacular
	Passive:	—	Passive:	—
Sequential acquisition	Active:	LWC	Active:	LWC, vernacular
	Passive:	—	Passive:	—
Language shift	Active:	LWC	Active:	LWC
	Passive:	Vernacular	Passive:	Vernacular

Summary

	Childhood		Adulthood	
AVP	Active:	LWC	Active:	LWC, vernacular
	Passive:	Vernacular	Passive:	—
Simultaneous acquisition	Active:	LWC, vernacular	Active:	LWC, vernacular
	Passive:	—	Passive:	—
Sequential acquisition	Active:	LWC	Active:	LWC, vernacular
	Passive:	—	Passive:	—
Language shift	Active:	LWC	Active:	LWC
	Passive:	Vernacular	Passive:	Vernacular

Looking forward

- ▶ How widespread is AVP in ISEA and the Pacific? Elsewhere in the world?
- ▶ What are the necessary and sufficient features of the linguistic ecology required for it to develop?
- ▶ What (if any) intergenerational differences do we see in the vernacular of speakers with AVP? How do these relate to language change in situations without AVP?
- ▶ To what extent are linguistic ecologies involving AVP stable?

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Thanks for listening!

