

Adult Vernacular Production in Island
Southeast Asia and the Pacific

Laura Arnold¹, George Saad² & Emma Peddie¹

¹University of Edinburgh, ²Palacký University Olomouc

Workshop on the Languages of Papua 6,
17 July 2023

Adult Vernacular Production in Island Southeast Asia and the Pacific

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

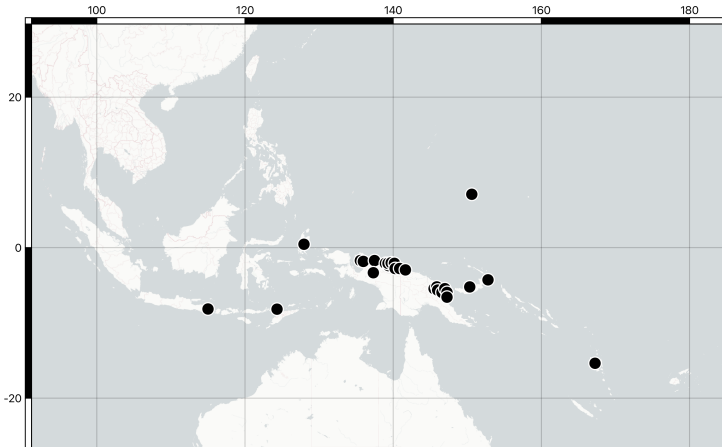
► Multilingual communities:

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



Examples of AVP

► Skou (Sko: Papua)

“Despite this wholesale influx of Indonesian and Malay, the prospect for Skou as a language continuing into the near future, at least, is not all grim... Although children attending school do not speak the language, it is apparent that they do understand it, as they are frequently addressed in it by their parents and other elders... The health of Skou, even when not spoken, can be gauged by the fact that **on leaving school these same teenagers are suddenly speakers of Skou.**”
Donohue (2005: 10)

Examples of AVP

► Sawai (Austronesian > SHWNG: North Maluku)

“As in many areas of Halmahera, the language situation is different from village to village... In [some] villages... Malay is the first language learned by children. The children understand Sawai, and **once they are finished with school, then some/most of them will begin to use the Sawai language on a somewhat daily basis.**”
Ron Whisler, pers. comm.

Examples of AVP

► **Bebeli (Austronesian > Oceanic: West New Britain)**

“In Banaule it was reported that children can speak Bebeli by the time they are about eight years old, but that they are not fluent until they are fifteen or sixteen. **Respondents in the other two villages said that children do not speak Bebeli until they are teenagers, and do not speak it fluently until they are at least twenty.**”
Spencer et al. (2013: 14)

Examples of AVP

▶ Waube (TNG > Madang > Rai Coast: Madang)

“Children who are not yet old enough to attend school primarily speak Tok Pisin... In every village visited, general consensus was that Waube and Tok Pisin would still be used by children when they became adults.”
Lambrecht et al. (2009: 24-25)

▶ Uyajitaya (TNG > Madang > Rai Coast: Madang)

“Young children (pre-school age) primarily speak Tok Pisin. All villages reported that children would speak Uyajitaya as adults.”
Lambrecht et al. (2008: 32)

Examples of AVP

► Ulwa (Keram: Sepik)

“There are very, very few people younger than 40 years old who are fluent speakers of the language. Ethnic Ulwas who are between the ages of 20 and 40 tend to be semi-speakers... some adults overestimate the linguistic abilities of the younger generation, **assuming that they will naturally become speakers of Ulwa once they become older**”
Barlow (2018: 25-26)

Adult Vernacular Production in Island Southeast Asia and the Pacific

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

AVP in Abui



AVP in Abui

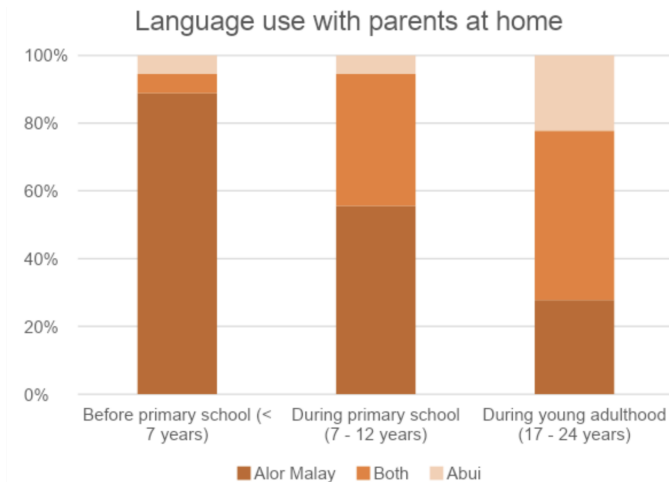
“In Takalelang [village, on the north coast], most children are brought up in Malay, though they become more proficient in Abui when they grow up because it is still the main language used between adults.”

Kratochvíl (2007: 4)

AVP in Abui



AVP in Abui



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

Adult Vernacular Production in Island Southeast Asia and the Pacific

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

Language attitudes

- ▶ Positive attitudes towards LWC—language of social, economic, educational prestige

Language attitudes

- ▶ Positive attitudes towards vernacular—language of local cultural expression and identity

“Waube people hold a positive attitude toward both their language and toward Tok Pisin, the language of wider communication.”

Lambrecht et al. (2009: 26)

Table 9.1. Reported Language Preference for Books, Stories, and Scripture

Language Preferences	Uyajitaya*	Tok Pisin	English	Marik
In what language(s) would you like to read books?	9	7	2	1
In what language(s) would you like to hear stories?	9	4	0	0
In what language(s) would you like to listen to Scripture?	9	6	0	0

Language ideologies

► Language use and participation in community activities

“[The sudden switch from Indonesian to Skou by school leavers] reflects their status now not as wards of the state educational system, immune from prosecution for any violations of village conduct because of their requirement to fulfil governmental requirements, but as **members of the village community**. As such, in the absence of any significant employment for Papuan school graduates, [they] now adopt a more traditional lifestyle, including gardening, hunting, fishing, and speaking the language of their ancestors.”

Donohue (2005: 10)

Language ideologies

► Expectations w.r.t. language proficiency in childhood

“[AVP is found in the] sociolinguistic environment amongst the lau... Amongst the lau, young people below marriageable age (...roughly 14-15 years old) are not traditionally expected to fit into the highly prescriptive sets of rules and behavioural regulations that characterise society on the Van Daalen river. **They are permitted a significant degree of freedom, including that of the language they use**, which is denied more ‘grown’ adults.”

Janet Bateman pers. comm., cited in Donohue (2005: 10)

Language ideologies

- ▶ Expectations w.r.t. language proficiency in childhood

“[Amongst the Bebeli,] functioning as an adult necessitates the local vernacular, while children’s speech is not considered important.”

Spencer et al. (2013: 15)

Language and identity

► Strong sense of in-group identity

“Discussions around the survey, and other conversations with community members, suggested that while many children do not speak or understand Vatlongos [in Mele Maat], many go on to learn and use the language as teenagers. Young adults who had acquired Vatlongos in this way spoke about their motivations: **they often felt a need to have a language connected to their island identity, or a private language around strangers.** Sometimes being around speakers of other Vanuatu languages at secondary school led them to see the value of Vatlongos.”

Ridge (2019: 85)

Language and identity

► 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)

Language and identity

- ▶ Several groups with AVP maintain traditional practices:
e.g. Abui, Sentani, Skou, Iau...



Adult Vernacular Production in Island Southeast Asia and the Pacific

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

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?

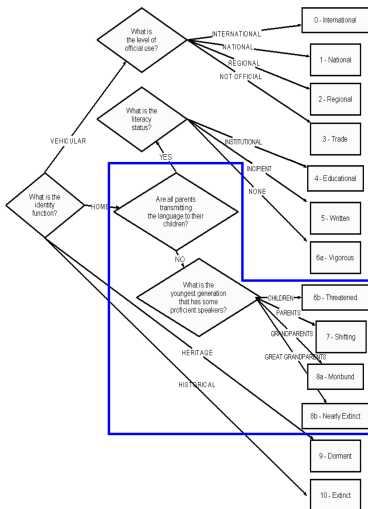
Models for investigating language change

- ▶ Apparent time hypothesis (e.g. Labov 1963, Sankoff 2006)
 - ▶ Harrington et al. (2000): Changes in Queen Elizabeth II's vowels from 1950s-1980s
 - ▶ Boberg (2004): Comparing apparent time and real time studies in Montreal English—late adoption of innovative forms by older speakers
 - ▶ Sloan et al. (2022): Increase in Gurindji-derived elements across the lifespan of spks of Gurindji Kriol

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

Models of language endangerment



Adult Vernacular Production in Island Southeast Asia and the Pacific

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

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? The world?
- ▶ What are the features of the linguistic ecology required for AVP 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?

References I

- Anderbeck, Karl. 2015. Portraits of language vitality in the languages of Indonesia. In I Wayan Arka, Ni Luh Nyoman Seri Malini & Ida Ayu Ade Puspani (eds.), *Papers from 12-ICAL, Volume 4 (Language documentation and cultural practices in the Austronesian world)* (Pacific Linguistics A-PL 019), 19–47. Canberra: Australian National University.
- Araali, Bagamba & Douglas Boone. 2011. *Challenges to applying the EGIDS in Northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo*. Paper presented at the American Association of Applied Linguistics, Chicago, IL.
- Barlow, Russell. 2018. *A grammar of Ulwa*. University of Hawai'i at Mānoa dissertation.
- Boberg, Charles. 2004. Real and apparent time in language change: Late adoption of changes in Montreal English. *American Speech* 79(3). 250–269.
- Donohue, Mark. 2005. Word order in New Guinea: Dispelling a myth. *Oceanic Linguistics* 44(2). 527–536.
- Harrington, Jonathan, Sallyanne Palethorpe & Catherine Watson. 2000. Monophthongal vowel changes in Received Pronunciation: An acoustic analysis of the Queen's Christmas broadcasts. *Journal of the International Phonetic Association* 30(1/2). 63–78.
- Kratochvíl, František. 2007. *A grammar of Abui, a Papuan language of Alor*. Utrecht: LOT.
- Kulick, Don & Angela Terrill. 2019. *A Grammar and Dictionary of Tayap: The Life and Death of a Papuan Language*. (Pacific Linguistics 661). Berlin: DeGruyter Mouton.
- Labov, William. 1963. The social motivation of a sound change. *Word* 19(3). 273–309.

References II

- Lambrecht, Philip, Alison Kassell, Margaret Potter & Sarah Tucker. 2008. *The sociolinguistic situation of the Uyajitaya [duk] language*. SIL International: SIL Electronic Survey Reports 2008-019. Available at <https://www.sil.org/resources/archives/9137> (accessed 2020-04-24).
- Lambrecht, Philip, Alison Kassell, Margaret Potter & Sarah Tucker. 2009. *A Sociolinguistic Profile of the Waube [kop] Language Group*. SIL International: SIL Electronic Survey Reports 2009-017. Available at <https://www.sil.org/resources/publications/entry/9140> (accessed 2020-04-24).
- Lenneberg, Eric. 1967. *Biological foundations of language*. New York: Wiley.
- Lewis, M. Paul & Gary F. Simons. 2010. Assessing endangerment: Expanding Fishman's GIDS. *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique* 55. 103–120.
- Ridge, Eleanor. 2019. *Variation in Vatlongos Verbal Morphosyntax: speaker communities in Southeast Ambrym and Mele Maat*. SOAS, University of London dissertation.
- Saad, George. 2020. *Variation and change in Abui: The impact of Alor Malay on an indigenous language of Indonesia*. Amsterdam: LOT.
- Saad, George, Marian Klamer & Francesca Moro. 2019. Identifying agents of change: Simplification of possessive marking in Abui-Malay bilinguals. *Glossa* 4(1). 1–29.
- Sankoff, Gillian. 2006. Age: Apparent time and real time. In Keith Brown (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, 110–116. Elsevier.
- Sloan, Bodean, Felicity Meakins & Cassandra Algy. 2022. Intergenerational changes in Gurindji Kriol: Comparing apparent-time and real-time data. *Asia-Pacific Language Variation* 8(1). 1–31.

References III

Spencer, Juliann, Sara Van Cott & Bonnie MacKenzie. 2013. *A sociolinguistic survey of the Amio-Gelimi language area*. SIL International: SIL Electronic Survey Reports 2013-017. Available at <https://www.sil.org/resources/archives/54624> (accessed 2021-01-29).

Introduction

○○
○○○○○

AVP in Abui

○○○○

Conditioning factors

○○
○○○
○○○

Implications of AVP

○○○○○

Conclusion

○○



Thanks for listening!

