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

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Abstract: The linguistic situation in Papua New Guinea (PNG) is a very challenging one because PNG is rich with more than 840 living languages spoken by different ethnic groups. These language dynamics also influence the medium of instruction in the formal education system in PNG. This study explores the practice of translanguaging by educators and students in a public university in PNG who are mostly bilinguals, trilinguals or multilinguals. The data were obtained from six students, two tutors, two lecturers and three academic administrators through the use of semi-structured interviews. Additionally, data were collected from non-participatory observations which include a Bachelor of Arts year one and year two tutorials with a total of 68 students. Informed by the activity theory, interactive analyses were conducted through thematic analysis using the NVivo computer-based research tool. The findings revealed that educators and students translanguage in and out of class in higher education institutions in PNG. They translanguage between English and Tok Pisin with the aims of allowing speech participants to clearly express their discourse using selective features in their linguistic repertoire or appropriate registers, so that they can understand each other. However, there are some mixed responses surfaced because some research participants view translanguaging between English and Tok Pisin as beneficial and supporting them to progress while others view it as hinderance and regression in their academic writing practices.

Key words: translanguaging, medium of instruction, English, Tok Pisin

1. Introduction

The linguistic situation in PNG is a very challenging one. This is because PNG is rich with many languages and dialects spoken by different ethnic groups. PNG has three official languages (Tok Pisin[1], Hiri Motu[2] & English), and 840 living indigenous languages

[1] Tok Pisin is a lingua franca spoken by Papua New Guineans. It is also referred to as Melanesian Pidgin (Gerry, 2010). It can also be labelled as Melanesian Pidgin English, New Guinea Pidgin or Neo-Melanesian. Tok Pisin is the official name of the language since 1981(Schulte-Schmale & Naujoks, 2008).

[2] Hiri Motu is an official language mostly spoken by the Papuans (people of Papua) within the Southern region of PNG.

(Simons & Fennig, 2018), which is twelve percent (12%) of the world's languages, more than any other single country (Lewis, 2009 & Volker, 2015). The richness of languages in PNG indicates that many people are either bilinguals or multilinguals. Today, Tok Pisin is the principal lingua franca of PNG and the main language of communication in most speech acts while English "is used as the primary language of school, the government, and the written word" (Volker, 2015, p.205). English occupies a special position, being officially sanctioned as the language of formal education, government, commerce, and of international contact. It is spoken by mostly the PNG intelligentsia and educated elite along with the overseas community in the country (Nekitel, Winduo & Kamene, 1995). Since "PNG is well known in the world for its wealth of languages spoken" (Gerry, 2011, p.80), more than one language is used as medium of instruction between educators[3] and students in the country's public education system. In fact, in every classroom, there are bilinguals, trilinguals or multilinguals. Because of this complex discourse environment that PNG offers (Pickford, 2014), it makes academic writing practices in higher education more challenging when students use the English language. This calls for mediation from all key actors within individual institution's activity system[4] to contribute meaningfully in terms of educational resources and other tools to achieve desired outcome of their academic writing practices.

This case study examined six students which include three Bachelor of Arts (B.Arts) year one and three B.Arts year two, and two tutors and two lecturers with three academic administrators[5] at a public university in PNG. The findings are somewhat thought-provoking because some research participants viewed switching between languages, especially translanguaging between English and Tok Pisin as beneficial while others have a second thought about it. Translanguaging refers to using one language to reinforce the other in order to increase understanding and augment students' activity in both languages (Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012). The paper begins by presenting the related literature that underpinned the study, followed by the discussions of the findings and conclusion.

2. Literature Review

There are many issues that students encounter due to their bilingual education background,

[3] Educators refer to lecturers, tutors, academic administrators, or teaching (academic) staff in this study.
[4] Activity system or theory describes how effectively and successfully language learners in a joint activity interact to learn and use English in academic writing tasks (Mwanza, 2001 & Doecke & Kostogriz, 2005).
[5] Academic administrators refer to those administrators who also teach courses at tertiary education institutions.

although there is a general motivation and preference to learn English in PNG's formal education system. Many bilingual learners, having gone through the transitional bilingual education[6] program, are not taught by teachers who are either well-versed in the local language or the English language (Villarreal, 2007). Therefore, when students transit into the mainstream English-only classrooms, they may not adequately learn the English language, which may affect their English language learning. That is, they may be limited in their English grammar and vocabulary, and may not formulate their ideas correctly and constructively. Petty and Jensen (1980), Yamuna (2000) and Gerry (2010) added that those students normally have vocabulary difficulties; they are frequently flooded with words of both 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. All these issues and challenges in their use of English may hinder them from writing academically well.

Exposure of PNG students to their home language and the level of education of their parents may also influence their learning and performance in the English language. It was noted by Baptiste (2012) that for many reasons, the level of competence in the English language varies greatly among PNG tertiary students, who normally use languages like vernacular, Tok Pisin, Hiri Motu or English at home. Thus, some students have more, and others have fewer opportunities to practice English. Moreover, it is stated that students come from different educational backgrounds therefore if they had done well in their previous schools and if their parents are well educated, then they tend to have better command of English (Baptiste, 2012). These are common experiences of students across tertiary education institutions in PNG.

Another factor affecting students' academic writing is frequent switch between English and Tok Pisin in and out of the classrooms by PNG academic staff and students. It seems that academic staff who are supposed to communicate with students in English-only are also using Tok Pisin that encourages students to do the same. Switching between languages 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). Contrariwise, switching between English and Tok Pisin may not assist PNG students in their English academic writing tasks

[6] Transitional bilingual education model involves education in learners' native language for one to three years to ensure that they do not fall behind in content areas of their studies. The aim is to assist learners to transit into mainstream English-only classrooms (Freeman, 2007).

because students become more complacent using Tok Pisin than English and consequently are often unable to express their ideas clearly in written English. Cummins (1994) concurred that students who speak a nonstandard variety of their first language (L1) are sometimes handicapped in education and are less capable of logical thinking. This assumption derives from the fact that the language of these students is viewed as inherently deficient as a tool for expressing their ideas logically. That is, students may have the ideas, but they may not have the appropriate English vocabulary, content knowledge and writing skills to correctly, meaningfully and explicitly express them in their academic writing tasks.

Switching between languages is taking prominence in higher education institutions. Students and educators can switch between languages through the process of translanguaging, codeswitching and code-meshing. Code-meshing is the process of blending minoritized dialects and world Englishes with Standard English. Code-meshing rather than codeswitching and translanguaging leads to lucid, often dynamic prose by people whose first language is something other than English, as well as by native English speakers who speak and write with accents and those whose home language or neighbourhood dialects are deemed nonstandard (Young & Martinez, 2011). Generally, code-meshing refers to the act of blending minority dialects or languages with Standard English, like using Hiri Motu with English to explain something in a PNG classroom.

While defining code-meshing, it is also important to define codeswitching. The term codeswitching is defined as "a phenomenon of switching from one language to another in the same discourse" (Nunan and Carter, 2001, p.275). It is further defined as "the alternation and mixing of different languages in the same episode of speech production" (Kharkhurin & Wei, 2015, p.153). Looking at PNG's higher education context, codeswitching is a useful tool in various speech acts among educators and students whereby they switch between languages like English and Tok Pisin or English and a local vernacular to further clarify certain information.

Translanguaging is also an important notion in the context of higher education especially for educators and students who use more than one language. As García (2009, p.140) states, "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." In other words, translanguaging is about how bilinguals communicate information in different languages to make information clearer and more understandable based on their choices of words and expressions. Hence, for PNG's higher education context, translanguaging occurs as an intentional strategy for teaching

in these English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms, integrating two languages (e.g. English & Tok Pisin) to achieve better communication and engagement in learning (Cahyani, de Courcy, & Barnett, 2018). The authors added that evidently, the pedagogical and sociocultural functions of students and educators' switching between languages are important factors in achieving the dual goals of content learning and language learning in ESL classrooms. While translanguaging is the use of different languages together which can be a powerful tool for learning, it can also go against the grain for language educators who are used to supporting students to master the intricacies of a single language (García, 2009). That is, when educators and students are translanguaging between English and Tok Pisin or other languages, it can cause confusions among themselves because the recommended medium of instruction is English and the curriculum materials that they use are written in English. Thus, educators and students supposed to be promoting the use of English language instead of translanguaging. This is one of the biggest challenges that higher education institutions in PNG are confronted with that needs to be critically addressed.

Language use in higher education can be challenging especially for bilinguals or multilinguals when they are trying to connect everyday language with academic registers. To correctly use academic registers, it is important to understand what register means in the tertiary education context. Gibbons and Lascar (1998) defined register as a product of the relationship between the linguistic systems and their use in certain contexts or situations. For academic register, it is the type of language that is used in the process of education, while everyday register is the language used for social interaction in home and community. Registers are described in terms of three main variables that influence the way we use language which are field, tenor, and mode (Mohan & Slater, 2006). Gibbons and Lascar (1998), and Mohan and Slater (2006) defined field as specialization and technicalization of language or, simply put, the activity being pursued, or the subject matter the activity revolves around. The authors defined tenor as the social roles and relationships between participants involved in communication. It can also involve issues of relations in power, emotions, and familiarity in the communication process. Gibbons and Lascar (1998), and Mohan and Slater (2006) further referred to mode as the medium (differences between speech and writing), role of language in the situation (text and context), and the distance between participants in communication.

Through understanding the three main variables that influence the manner in which academic registers are used, it is vital to develop the ability to clearly distinguish academic language from everyday language use. This means ESL tertiary students have to be instructed and guided on what and how to write using academic language by differentiating

it from everyday language. Valde´s (2004) sustained that in order to succeed in tertiary education studies, students must be given the opportunity to acquire academic, rather than everyday language. This means that "careful sequencing of tasks that require a gradual shift along the mode continuum is one way to move from familiar everyday language to the abstraction of academic registers" (Gibbons, 2013, p.32). In order to do that, all academic tasks that are provided have to be carefully structured in logical order, so that they efficiently move along the mode continuum, from spoken-like to written-like. This is also to reinforce disciplinary-based academic writing in which students are introduced to writing various texts using specialized academic language or registers (see Starfield, 2007).

While highlighting the important issues underpinning language use, it is also important to identify the theoretical framework that underpinned this study, which is the activity system. The use of the activity system enabled the researcher to clearly understand the ecology of academic writing practices at tertiary education level in PNG. Wingate (2006), and Hunter and Tse (2013) suggested that different levels of learning are involved in academic writing where one level consists of techniques while a deeper, more complex level involves understanding the nature of knowledge and how it is constructed. In order for students to write proficiently and successfully in any academic writing activity, they should receive the right input from the components or elements in the activity system. As identified by Engestrom (1987 & 2000), the elements include: subject (actors), object (objective/ goal), tools (instruments - physical and conceptual or intellectual forms), rules (policies/ decisions), community (members of the community of practice), division of labour (roles/ responsibilities), and outcome (result). The elements of the activity system are shown in the following diagram.

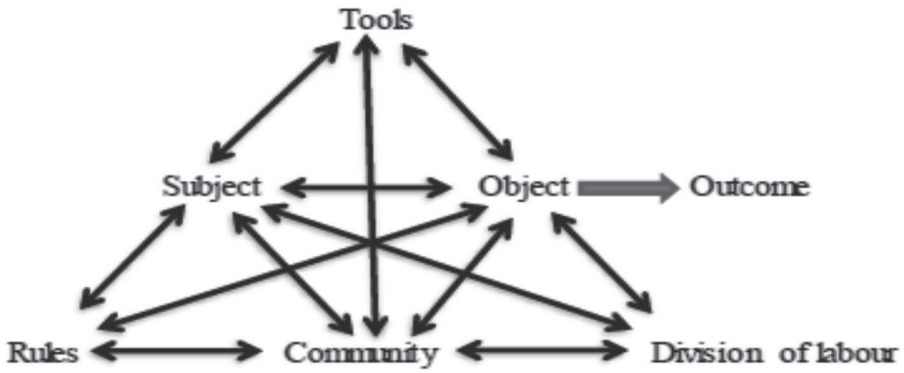

Figure 1: Key components of the activity system

As illustrated above, educators as subjects together with other elements of the activity system of any higher education institution have to provide opportunities for students to engage in various disciplinary-based academic writing activity (see Starfield, 2007) in order to further develop and enhance their competence and confidence in applying the English language.

3. Research Methodology

This was a qualitative research which involved case study. The participants of this study were some university students, their lecturers and tutors, and academic administrators. In order to study these students, it involved selection of sample populations from Bachelor of Arts (B.Arts) year one and two students from a public university in Papua New Guinea (PNG). The University was the case of the study and the students and educators were part of the system or the community of practice.

The researcher applied semi-structured interviews to collect the appropriate data. As one of the data collection methods, semi-structured interview is a useful instrument in qualitative research. Wahyuni (2012) elaborated that a semi-structured interview offers the merit of using a list of predetermined themes and questions as in a structured interview, while keeping enough flexibility to enable the interviewee to talk openly and freely about any issue or query that may arise during the interview. Semi-structured interviews were used in this study because the researcher wanted to allow the interviewees to have the flexibility to ask for further clarification on the research questions which could be modified if they were unsure and to allow for more interaction between the interviewees and the researcher. Furthermore, through the use of semi-structured interviews, the researcher asked for examples or more explanations on the answers given in order to gain deeper understanding of the issues.

The research participants in this case study were made up of students, tutors, lecturers and academic administrators, all from PNG. The investigator conducted individual interviews with three B.Arts year one students and three B.Arts year two students. Interviews were also conducted with the educators[7]. Apart from interviews, two respective tutorials were observed for B.Arts year one and B.Arts year two. The subsequent paragraphs present the findings from the interviews and observations conducted at the participating University together with documentations obtained for this research.

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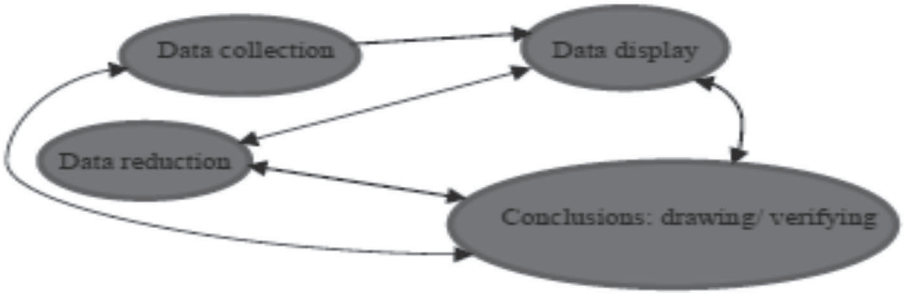
[7] Educators refer to lecturers, tutors, academic administrators, or teaching (academic) staff in this study.

The current study employed a number of data analysis frameworks. One of them is the interactive model of data analysis. Interactive model was developed by Miles and Huberman (1994), as a framework for analyzing qualitative data. The data analysis using this model has three core components which include data reduction, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions as shown in the following diagram.



(Source: Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.12)

Figure 2: The components of data analysis - interactive model

Using the above interactive model, the researcher collected the necessary information from the participants and display them. That is, the information were organized, compressed and assembled. Reduction of information and identification of data happened continuously throughout the process of analysis. In the early stages, data was edited, segmented and summarized. In the middle stages, it happened through coding and associated activities such as finding themes. In the later stages, the data were conceptualized and explained, since developing abstract concepts is also a way of reducing the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Huberman & Miles, 2002; Punch, 2005 & 2009). The three authors further indicated that drawing and verifying conclusions logically follows reduction and display of data, in fact it takes place more or less concurrently with them. Conclusions can be drawn at the early stage of the analysis, but they may be vague and ill-formed at this stage. This means they are held tentative pending further work and sharpened during it. The data is not finalized until all the information is in and has been analyzed. Hence, the researcher closely followed these procedures when analyzing the information and identifying the required data for this study.

In complementing the interactive model of data analysis, the thematic analysis framework was used. Clarke and Braun (2013) and Aronson (1995) stated that by using the thematic analysis, the researcher would, firstly, familiarize with the information collected;

secondly, identify and classify the data into themes and patterns through the process of coding; thirdly, review the themes and combine and catalogue related patterns into sub-themes; finally, write valid arguments or analytical narratives and contextualizing them in relation to existing literature. As for this study, the researcher analyzed the interview, observation and documentary information. The information obtained were carefully analyzed, then the data were identified and were categorized into different themes and patterns that correlated or have some common relationships.

To obtain a more accurate and clearer data analyses and displaying of the findings, NVivo research tool was also used. This computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) has been seen as aiding the researcher in his search for an accurate and transparent picture of the data whilst also providing an audit of the data analysis process as a whole (Welsh, 2002). For this study, the transcribed data were imported from their sources and were coded and kept in the nodes which provided the storage areas in NVIVO for references to coded texts (Bazeley, 2007, cited in Houghton, et al., 2017). "Node is an NVIVO term for what would be more commonly referred to in research as codes signifying themes and subthemes" (Houghton, et al., 2017, p.876). The nodes for this study were organized into four main themes with some sub-themes that were modified, extended or deleted during the progress of coding (Walton, 2016). By using these data analyses tools, the data were thoroughly analyzed, and the findings are discussed hereafter.

4. Findings and discussions

4.1 Findings

Before deliberating on the findings from this study, it is worth examining the notion of 'language use' as part of the academic practice. According to this study, language use refers to how English and other languages like Tok Pisin are used in both spoken and written discourses. Students were interviewed on the usage of languages in their academic writing practices. The student interviewees responded that they use English in class and they use English and/or Tok Pisin outside of class in their verbal utterances and written tasks. As revealed in the findings, the language use in higher education in PNG is influenced by the language education policy as identified in the policy documents obtained for this study. As per the Circular Instruction 38/99 from a former Secretary for Education, issued pursuant to Section 28(a) of the Education Act (Ch. No.163) as amended in 1999, the new language policy for all public schools was the bilingual education program after students go through elementary education in either a community's local vernacular or lingua franca and gradual bridge into English in elementary two. According to the policy, the bilingual

education program involves the use of either a local vernacular or lingua franca and English from grade three onwards. English is then used as the main language of curriculum and instruction throughout the students' education while they maintain their local vernaculars or lingua franca. This circular is in conjunction with the Ministerial Policy Statements No.1/91 and No.38/99, and Secretary's circular No.1/91. These data suggest that the language education policy, as part of the rules in the activity system, allows for flexibility of language use in the mainstream schools and tertiary education institutions in PNG.

Due to the influence of the language education policy, it allows for translanguaging to occur in higher education institutions in PNG. The participating students stated that they switch between English and Tok Pisin both in and out of class. Also, they explained that switching between languages especially in their verbal utterances is mostly done to further explain or clarify certain information, words or concepts. This data supports the view that the uses of English and Tok Pisin as diverse languages form educators and students' repertoire as an integrated system (Canagarajah, 2011). Simply put, students and educators are able to switch between English and Tok Pisin which are languages that they are quite familiar with, so they do not encounter problems in using these languages.

It is also worth examining the impact of spoken language on written texts. According to the research, there were mixed responses from the participating students. A participant states as follows, "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 that, "Tok Pisin doesn't help me. Because when I use a lot of Tok Pisin in class, I feel that, it makes things a bit complicated. It's not helping me to improve my English" (Year 1 Student 1, 25/10/16: 9am). One other participant mentions that, "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 Student 3, 25/10/16: 1pm). Two students disclosed that they are confident in using English. Therefore, they do not switch between languages in class, but they use Tok Pisin 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 in an academic setting. Thus, they have the option of translanguaging between English and Tok Pisin. These findings suggest that how and what students write are sometimes influenced by the languages that they speak both in and out of class.

The above findings are in agreement with the two tutorial observations conducted with the B. Arts years one and two classes. It was observed that throughout the tutorials, the tutors used English except for one who translanguaged few times to explain certain

things. For the students, they communicated in English, but a few translanguaged between English and Tok Pisin when not in the presence of the tutor. These data are consistent with Canagarajah (2011) who confirmed that translanguaging occurs surreptitiously behind the back of the tutor in class. Furthermore, it was noted that the students coped well with the English medium curriculum (worksheets/handouts) used. As implied in the data, there are advantages and disadvantages of translanguaging between languages. On one hand, translanguaging helps speech participants to clarify or simplify their utterances, so that speech participants fully comprehend what they utter. On the other hand, translanguaging can be a barrier to participants in their academic writing practices. For example, translanguaging between English and Tok Pisin in higher education in PNG can affect students' comprehension and application of the English language in their written discourses. As Gerry (2010) explained, English language is the lexifier of Tok Pisin because most of the Tok Pisin words come from English and its grammatical rules are somewhat different to English. Therefore, students can be easily tempted to incorrectly use words to develop ungrammatical sentences in their English academic writing tasks.

The experience of students in translanguaging between English and Tok Pisin is similar to what is experienced by the participating educators. According to the interviews, the participating students explained that most of their educators switch between English and Tok Pisin both in and out of class. However, one student clarifies that, "Some lecturers and tutors do switch between languages and others do not" (Year 2 Student 2, 26/10/2016: 11am). This is confirmed by another student, "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 indicated by the students, their educators switch between English and Tok Pisin only in class to further clarify, elaborate or explain certain words, information, ideas, or concepts. These data are consistent with Cahyani, de Courcy and Barnett (2018) who stated that educators and students' codeswitching frequently functioned as translanguaging in that it occurred as an intentional strategy for teaching in bilingual classrooms, integrating the two languages to achieve better communication and engagement in teaching and learning. By engaging in the process of translanguaging between Tok Pisin and English, it can perform two functions. Firstly, it can act as a useful tool in the University's activity system to allow effective teaching and learning to occur. Secondly, it can create confusion in students' minds when they want to translate information from Tok Pisin into English which can affect the outcome of their written academic texts.

Apart from what the students shared, some questions were asked to get the views of the participating lecturers and tutors on language use at higher education institutions. One

lecturer stated that students switch a lot between English and Tok Pisin. He elaborates as follows, “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). This data infers that students are not confident in their application of the English language. Therefore, they employ Tok Pisin as an alternative language of communication. Further, the interviewees stated that 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, the lecturers and tutors assured that they do switch between English and Tok Pisin when necessary. This is confirmed with the findings from one of the tutorial observations. It was observed that a tutor translanguaged few times between English and Tok Pisin to re-emphasize and further explain some specific or key information covered in the lesson. As noted here, translanguaging can be viewed as a viable communitive tool for effective knowledge transmission. In fact, translanguaging between English and Tok Pisin is the demonstration of educators working with students to explore concepts, add to their knowledge, make connections between ideas and to help them learn (García, 2009). This clearly sums up the aim of translanguaging between known languages. However, as indicated earlier, the findings suggest that translanguaging can be a hinderance to the correct use of English in students’ written academic texts.

In addition to the responses from the participating students, tutors and lecturers, three participating academic administrators offered their views on language use at the University. One of the participating academic administrators 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 emphasized that students use Tok Pisin and local vernaculars more often than English where they supposed to be practising English outside of class times. However, one of the academic administrators exemplified that some of her year four students write so well - good language structures, choice of words, and structure of essay. She elaborated that other students are in the middle; they vary from good to very good, and others are just absolutely poor (unfortunately, year four students were not participants of this study). Equally important, the onus is also with the educators to effectively guide and instruct their students on what and how to write using academic language by differentiating it from everyday language. As Valde´s (2004) stated, in order 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 through engaging in various academic writing activity. This will expose students to different learning opportunities and will enable them to translate their knowledge of academic language and apply their skills of academic writing.

Furthermore, there were concerns raised on students' performance in their academic writing activity. Another administrator states as follows, "It's really hard to improve their writing, but they still graduate from the University" (Academic Administrator 3, 02/11/2016: 10am). This also leads to two crucial points. First, these students will encounter many challenges and issues related to their writing practices at their workplace. Second, if these students are not writing at the expected level at their workplaces and in their daily encounters, people will then start questioning the integrity and reputation of the University, its programs and teaching staff. This can then bring about other issues like University losing its potential clients. Further still, one of the academic administrators expressed that, "A lot of staff raised concerns about the performance of their students. They raised concerns regarding things like plagiarism, copying word for word from sources and never bothered to acknowledge the sources" (Academic Administrator 1, 01/11/2016: 10am). These are serious academic issues which are closely connected to the University's policies. It can be concluded that some personnel are not strictly observing the existing policies which are part of the University's activity system that need immediate attention of the University Management.

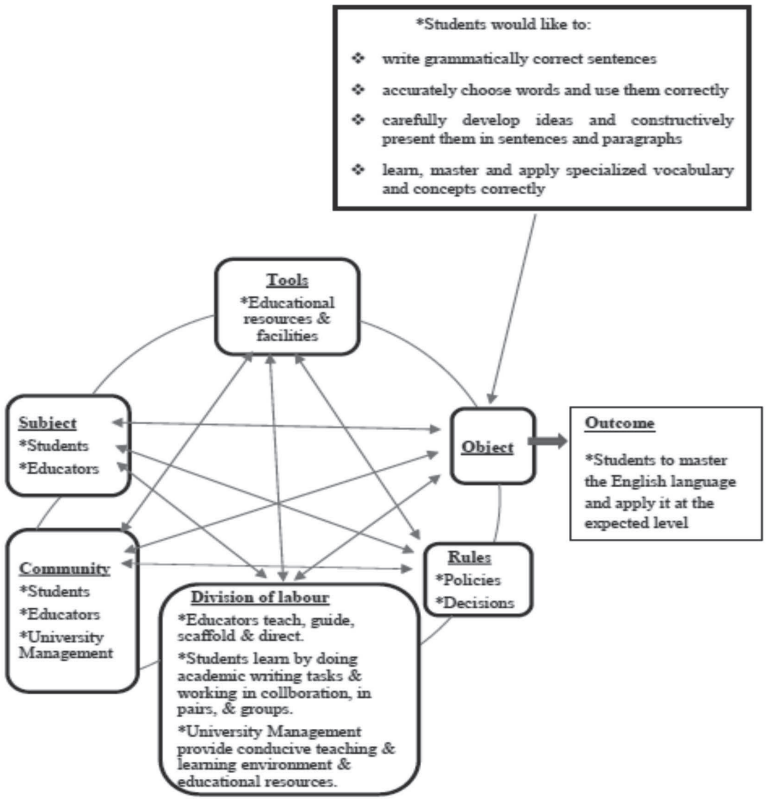
4.2 Discussions

All educational institutions around the world have their own recommended language of instruction. In PNG, English is mainly the language of instruction in education institutions, the government and written word (Volker, 2015, p.205). However, as disclosed in this study, students and some educators prefer using Tok Pisin and few other local languages interchangeably with English because of the non-restriction on the language use in PNG's public education system.

The inclusion of translanguaging in this study is important because it underlines how PNG educators and students speak English and Tok Pisin interchangeably both in and out of class that also influence their academic writing practices. Translanguaging is redefined as using one language to reinforce the other in order to increase understanding and augment students' activity in both languages (Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012). This study is interested in translanguaging between English and Tok Pisin, especially in spoken discourses and its impact on written texts in English with the intention of learning and mastering English in particular. According to the participating students and educators from the participating University, they use English in class. Some further stated that they switch between English and Tok Pisin in class, and English and either Tok Pisin or local vernacular outside class times. As revealed in the study, they switch between languages mostly to further explain

or clarify certain information, words or concepts. This is consistent with Baker (2011) who identified one of the potential educational advantages to translanguaging as it can promote a deeper and fuller understanding of the subject matter. This posits that translanguaging can play a crucial role in clarifying certain confusions that may arise in the teaching and learning processes.

Even so, some student interviewees articulated that they prefer using English than Tok Pisin, which means they do not translanguage between the two languages. This is an indication of students with the goal or objective of mastering the English language and become better at it in their spoken and written discourses. However, to master the English language, it requires students to conceptualize the ways of using grammatically correct sentences, accurately choosing appropriate words, carefully developing ideas and constructing them, and learning, mastering and applying specialized vocabulary and concepts correctly. These can be further illustrated using the activity system diagram.



(An extended version of the activity system model adapted from Engestrom, 1987 & 2000)

Figure 3: Facilitating students' mastery and application of the English language using the activity system

All the elements of the activity system of the University are required to contribute meaningfully for students to fully achieve the outcome of mastering and applying English as the target language,. That is, both students and educators have to work in collaboration with support from the University Management. The necessary mediated tools to assist the language learning should also be adequately provided with clearly defined policies and decisions that guide their practices. However, as noticed in this study, there is no restriction in the use of other languages like Tok Pisin. Therefore, this often creates confusion among practitioners in the higher education system which also affects their practices, especially in supporting students in their learning, mastering and applying of the English language.

The confusion can also lead to students encountering issues in their written English, especially in the areas of grammar, sentence structure, paragraph development, word choices and so forth. Gerry (2010) highlighted that since English language is the lexifier of Tok Pisin, most of the Tok Pisin words come from English. However, they are often pronounced in a different way, and some may have different meanings. For example, '*spak*' (comes from the word spark) means 'drunk' and '*baksait*' (from the word backside) refers to someone's back, not to their butt. Further, Gerry explained that many Tok Pisin words have a meaning much wider than that of the English words with which they originated. For instance, '*kilim*' (from kill him) can mean 'hit', 'beat', or 'kill'; '*pisin*' (from pigeon) means bird in general; and '*gras*' (from the word grass) refers to not only 'grass' but also 'hair', 'fur', and 'feathers.' With these complex linguistic features of Tok Pisin, they can confuse students and affect their English academic writing activity if they are not very careful. Therefore, to succeed in tertiary education studies, students must be given the opportunity to acquire academic, rather than everyday language Valde´s (2004). This is a better way to help students further develop their understanding of the English language and to apply it in their academic writing practices.

Since higher education institutions in PNG are more into using English as their main language of instruction and academia, the process of translanguaging can hinder these practices. This is in line with García (2009) who highlighted that while translanguaging is defined as the use of different languages together which can be a powerful tool for learning, it can also go against the grain for language educators who are used to supporting students to master the intricacies of a single language. When educators and students are translanguaging between English and Tok Pisin or other languages, then this can cause confusions among them because the recommended medium of instruction is English and the curriculum materials that they use are written in English. Therefore, this is a huge challenge that tertiary education institutions in PNG are threatened with that needs to be critically

addressed.

On the other hand, translanguaging has many benefits as revealed in this study. As García (2009, p.140) explained, "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." In other words, translanguaging is about how bilinguals communicate information in two different languages to make information clearer and more understandable. This is achieved in PNG's higher education context as noticed in the findings whereby educators and students translanguage between English and Tok Pisin. Cahyani, de Courcy and Barnett (2018) further indicated that evidently, the pedagogical and sociocultural functions of educators and students switching between languages are important factors in achieving the dual goals of content learning and language learning in ESL classrooms. What these authors stated support the findings from this study, however, most of the interviewees do not learn Tok Pisin, but they only use it to clarify certain information in their English discourses. This is in line with García (2009) who indicated that translanguaging is about *communication*, not about *language* itself. However, what Garcia claimed can be further argued because translanguaging involves communication using two languages. Thus, it is not possible to exclude one from another because language and communication co-exist when translanguaging.

From the findings, some of the educators from the participating University stressed that their students mainly use English in class and use Tok Pisin outside class. However, this is contradicting to what the researcher has discovered in the observations of the tutorials run by the participating educators. It was noted that students still switched between English and Tok Pisin during tutorials when talking among themselves, but not in the presence of the concerned educators. As exposed by one of the educators at the participating University, some students are mostly quiet in order to solve their own problems. That is, students are mostly quiet to avoid translanguaging and getting into any other problems associated with spoken discourse. However, it is important for educators to encourage students to openly express themselves in discussions and presentations, so that they can improve their spoken English instead of them being quiet and passive. In doing so, students will also improve their written English. This is in support of Baker (2011) who stated that translanguaging involves reading, explaining and discussing information in a language and then to write about it in another language which requires the subject matter to be processed and digested. That is, the information presented in spoken form through the process of translanguaging using English and Tok Pisin must be fully understood before it is presented in written English.

5. Conclusion

From the discussions, it can be concluded that there is no clear and strict language policy that governs the medium of instruction in higher learning institutions in PNG. Educators and students have the choice of using English, then switch to Tok Pisin and vice versa through the process of translanguaging. As indicated in the literatures, the aim of translanguaging is to allow speech participants to clearly express their discourse, so that they can understand each other well. The research participants claimed that they translanguage between English and Tok Pisin both in and out of class because there is no strict policy which governs the use of language at the tertiary education context. While translanguaging has added benefits (García, 2009 & Cahyani, de Courcy & Barnett, 2018), there are also disadvantages associated with it (Garcia, 2009). Some participating educators claimed that when students are regularly engaging in translanguaging between English and Tok Pisin, they then tend to produce written English assignments which are somewhat similar to the way they use Tok Pisin. Further, some student interviewees stated that translanguaging between English and Tok Pisin is not assisting them to effectively develop their spoken and written English, yet they are still using.

As revealed in this study, translanguaging is seen either as a benefit or threat to the academic practices of students and educators at higher education institutions in PNG. As such, it is now an issue that warrants further investigation whereby the National Government, the National Department of Education and the Office of Higher Education need to re-evaluate any existing language policy and redesign it to guide the language use in higher education institutions in PNG. The institutions should be informed of their expectations in their language use while also considering the importance of English language as the medium of instruction and its benefits at workplace, and to the global society.

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