



Tok Ples of Papua New Guinea CAN BE SAVED

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LSPNG





In this presentation, we will argue that the rich tapestry of the indigenous languages of Papua New Guinea ***can*** be saved from fading.

We will also propose an effective way of achieving that goal.



R. M. W. Dixon on linguistic situation (1997):

In every continent languages are dead, dying or endangered.

What will it take for a language to survive? The answer is grim (but it should be faced).

Major priority: to provide description of some part of the wealth of human language, documenting the diversity **before it is – as it will be – lost.**

* R. M. W. Dixon. 1997. *The rise and fall of languages*, pp. 143-145. Cambridge University Press.



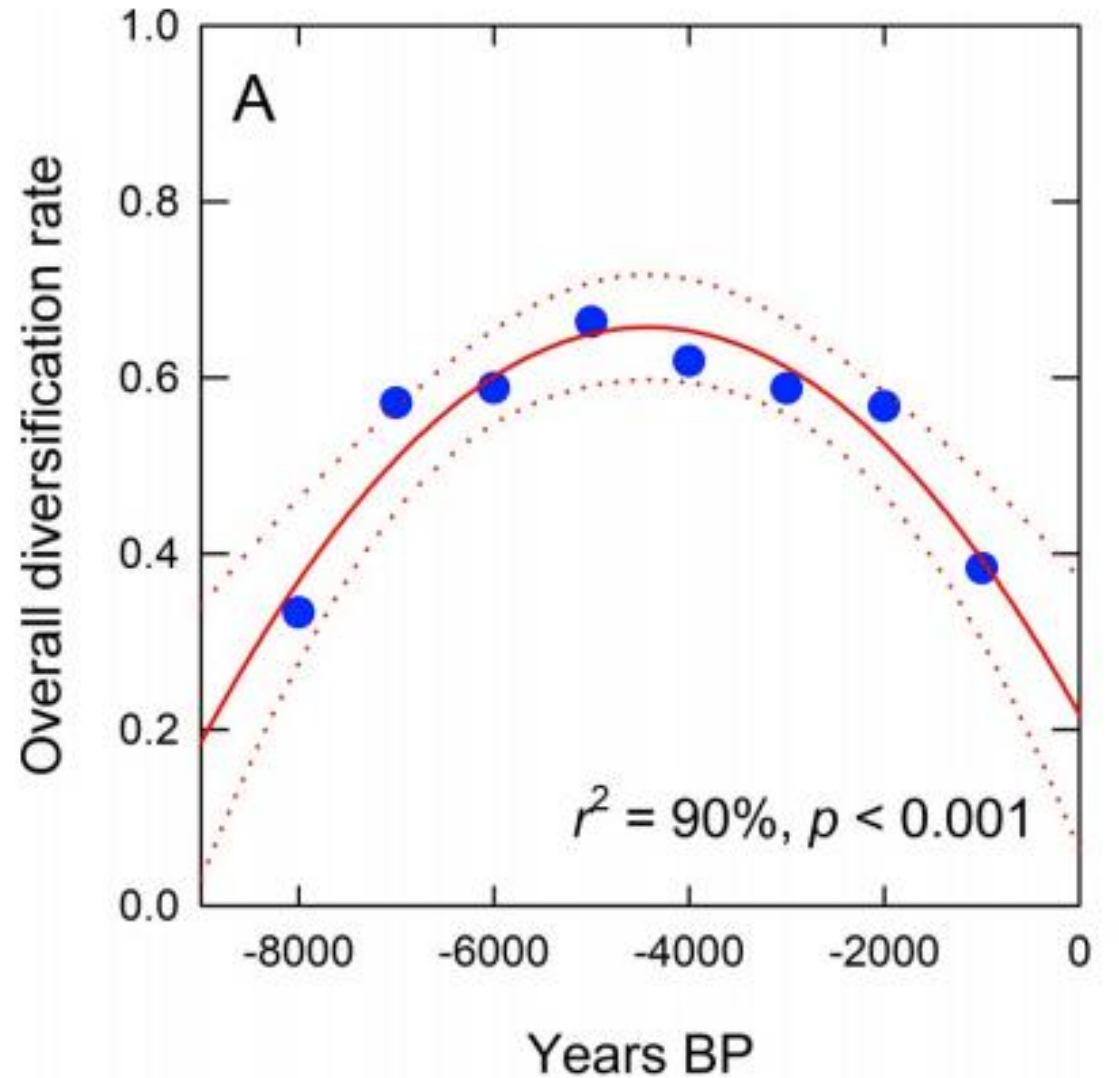
What will it take for a language to survive?

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Nonlinear diversification rates of linguistic
phylogenies over the Holocene

M. J. Hamilton, R. S. Walker

2019 PLOS ONE



UNESCO position on MTE since 1953

- **Promote** the development and use of **mother tongue-based instruction**.
- **Support** the critical role of **governments** in promoting effective MT-based education.
- **Promote** clear, **sustained political commitment to MTE** at all levels.
- Encourage MT development to the level of a cognitive academic language
- Make **MT acquisition the first priority** throughout primary school
- Promote policies that position parents/ family members as first teachers, engaging parents & community at all stages of program planning, implementation, and evaluation.

UNESCO POLICY TOOLBOX

Language of instruction | Education | IIEP Policy Toolbox (unesco.org)



Echoes & Ripples in PNG

Traditional education was integrated with the community and taught children to see the world through the eyes of the community. Through whose eyes do our children see the world now?

Matane: 1986, p. 3.



Education & Language Education Policy in PNG

- Pivotal role of government policy on education
- Need for pragmatism, to ensure adequate supply of quality HR to power sustainable national development
- **UN and World Bank shaped education policy through funding projects* → VE Reform was introduced in the mid-1990s**

*Richard Guy, Ch. 8

Policy Making and Implementation:
Studies from Papua New Guinea (ANU 2009)



Language Education in Papua New Guinea: Unique challenges

- More than **830** languages (200+ Austronesian & 600+ Papuan)
- Population: about 20% Austronesian; about 80% - Papuan
- Over **60** Papuan language families + a number of isolates
- Only Enga has over 100,000 speakers (Engan family, EHP)

(Aikhenvald: 2014)



Regarding the language of instruction, the Philosophy of Education stated that “maximal use of the vernacular in preschool or in early grades in community school should be encouraged because it will raise standards of education.”

Matane, Paulius. (1986). A Philosophy of Education for Papua New Guinea.
Port Moresby, PNG: National Department of Education.

Vernacular Education (mid-1990s-2013) aimed to:

- Promote/ preserve vernacular languages & cultures,
- Facilitate students’ comprehension,
- Raise literacy levels,
- Encourage community involvement ... and
- **Cut costs** at the same time! ***What*** could be better?



CONSEQUENCES

- **Shortage of national expertise | quality HR**
- **Widespread public concern over plummeting standards of education**

OBE Curriculum was in use for the last 18 years. However, seeing the negative impacts posed on students' education, it has been opposed by many teachers, parents and stakeholders.

Re-introduction of SBE is a break-through by the education department to mend the shortsighted unprecedented educational damages which were done by the OBE curriculum.

Mastering English by Steven Koya | The National August 20, 2019



Advances in neuroscience

- Postnatal brain development: a series of cascading 'critical periods' in FLA
- AO effect in SLA: changes in the *mechanism* of language acquisition



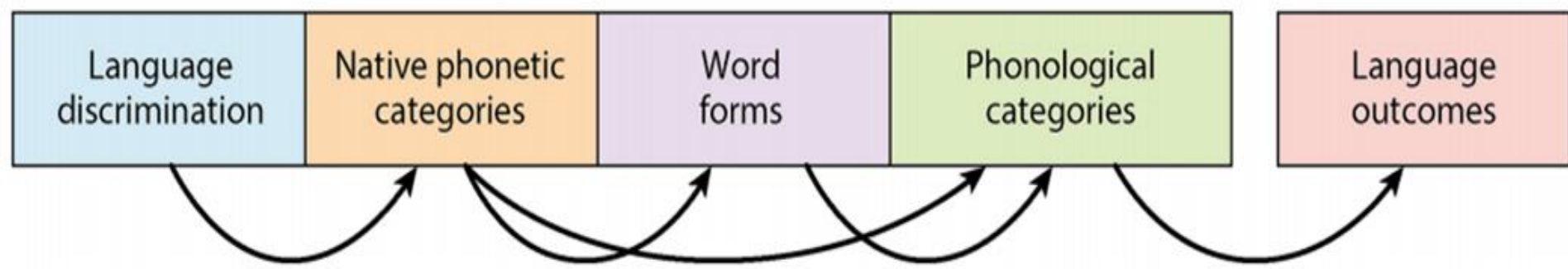
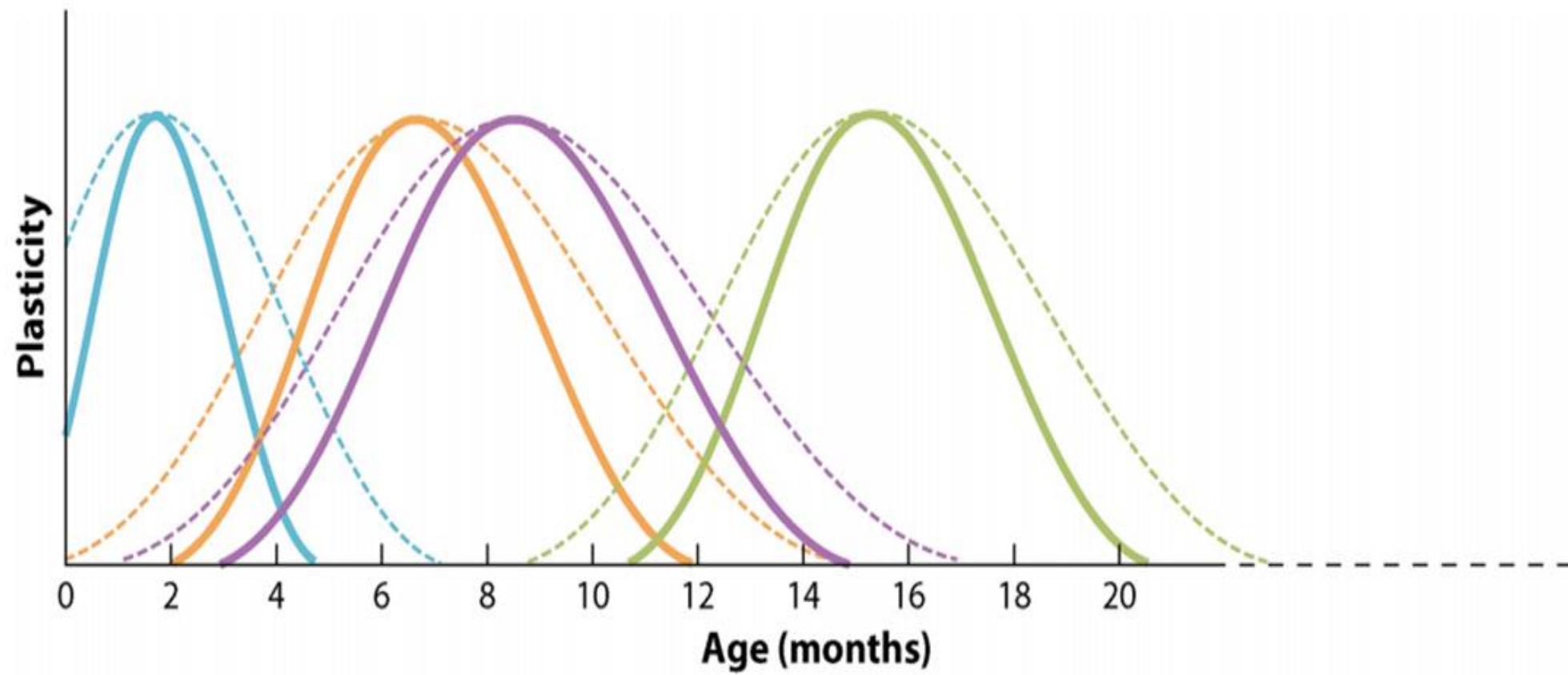
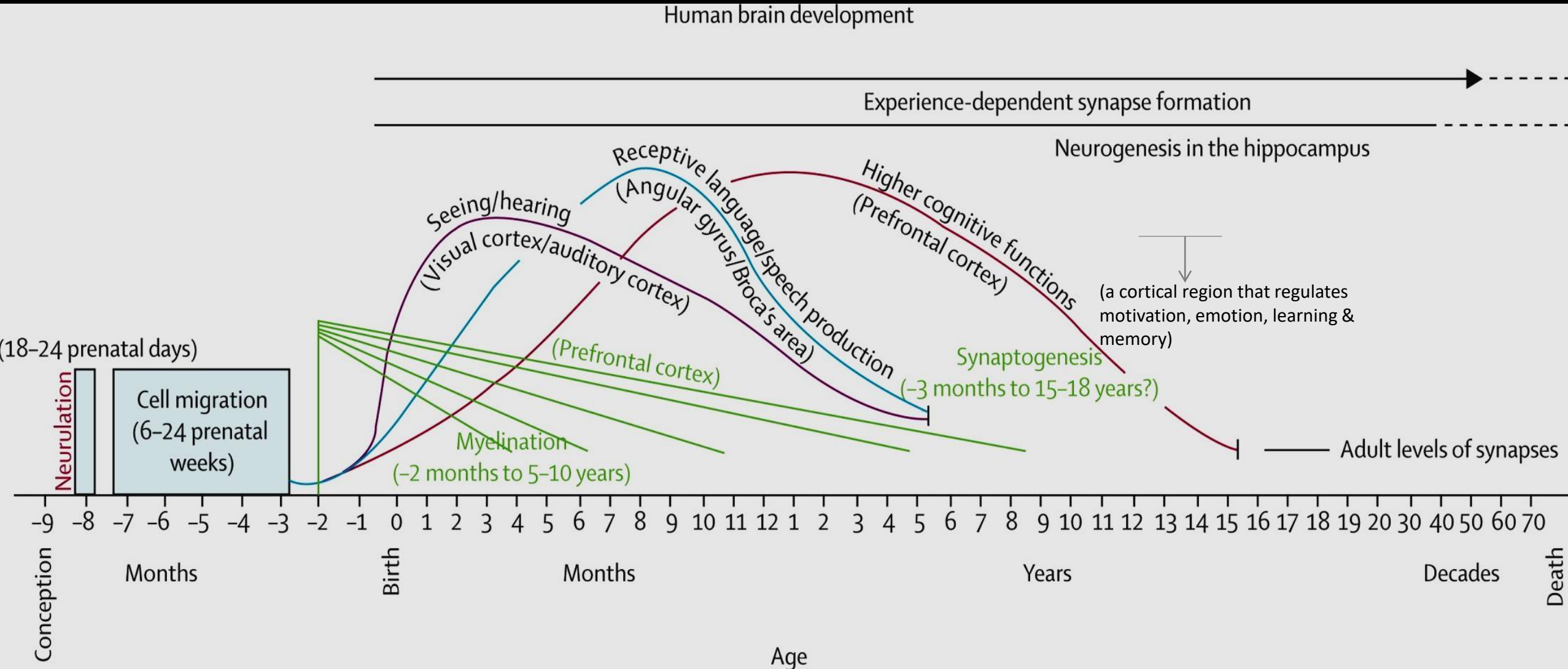


FIGURE 1 | Sequential, overlapping critical periods in infant speech perception development. Solid lines represent typical onsets and offsets; broken lines indicate extensions of periods. Adapted from Werker and Hensch (2015). Republished with permission from Annual Reviews.



To ensure sustainable national development, China's government-supported initiatives focus on the 'maximum impact' period in children's brain development.





Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Early Childhood Research Quarterly



Long-term effects of China's One Village One Preschool program on elementary academic achievement



Si Chen^{a,*}, Chen Zhao^b, Yan Cao^b, Chen Chen^a, Catherine E. Snow^a, Mai Lu^b

One Village One Preschool (OVOP) project is a government-supported public intervention launched by the China Development Research Foundation, which provided disadvantaged rural and minority children with free of charge ECE.

OVOP - about **2300 centers**; over **170,000 3–6-year olds**, free of charge for all

Comparative longitudinal analysis of academic achievement data (OVOP v no ECE, private ECE, or public ECE during the first 5 years of elementary school.

EVIDENCE:

Providing low-cost ECE to rural children in China has educational and social value.



AO Research in UPNG (2015-2020)

- The findings of 7 research projects (2014 – 2021) established a ***causal negative relationship*** between AO|ELL and the students' academic performance, measured by their GPAs (*grades* in NHSs)
- **Increase in AO → Decrease in academic achievement**



SUMMARY OF OUR UPNG 2018 RESEARCH FINDINGS

We used various models of analysis and found a strong and **statistically significant negative relationship** between students' AO/AGELIT/ELL and their GPAs.

- **A one year increase in AO/AGELIT** reduces the GPA by **.167** and **.032** grade points, respectively ($p > .05$)
- **The use of ELL TP/TPENG/VENG** reduces the GPA by **.536**, **.356**, & **.175**, respectively, as compared with ELL English ($p > .05$)

N.B. Findings are consistent across all models and specifications.



Yet, despite science & public concern,
the pressure to revert to exclusive MTE in the first
years of formal education is mounting:

- **UNESCO** – Regional Consultations | Global Action Plan
- **WB**: Language of Instruction = focus of education policy discussions





PUBLICATION | JULY 14, 2021

Loud and Clear: Effective Language of Instruction Policies for Learning

The World Bank's focus on foundational skills requires that issues of language and Language of Instruction be brought to the forefront of education policy discussions. Poor Language of Instruction policies harm learning, access, equity, cost-effectiveness, and inclusion. Yet nearly 37% of students in low- and middle-income countries are taught in a language they do not understand. Massive learning improvements are feasible by teaching in a small number of additional languages. The World Bank's first Policy Approach Paper on Language of Instruction offers an indication of the work that will be undertaken to support countries in introducing reforms that will result in more resilient, equitable, and effective systems by promoting teaching in the languages that students and teachers speak and understand best.



UNESCO: International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022-2032

- **15-16 March 2021:** Regional Consultative meeting for Eastern Europe and Central Asia Global Action Plan for IDIL
- **27-28 May 2021:** Consultative Meeting in the Pacific on the IDIL2022-2032 Global Action Plan



2022-2032 | INTERNATIONAL DECADE OF
Indigenous Languages



IS MTE THE
WAY TO GO?



2022-2032 | INTERNATIONAL DECADE OF

Indigenous Languages



UNESCO: International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022-2032

LSPNG Proposal (27.03.2021): Establishment of the
Indigenous Languages and Literature Institute (ILLI)

ILLI functions: to organize, supervise, & coordinate
language documentation and Tok Ples literacy
projects in PNG and the wider South Pacific Region.



Linguistic Research Institute (LRI)

An LRI will be best positioned to

- **train & support** "community linguists" and "community writers" (like Asel of the Maclay Coast, Madang), as well as
- **harness the synergy** of government, the public-private business sector, international organizations/NGOs & the indigenous communities



DILEMMA remains: Where will the linguists come from?

Native speakers, given linguistic knowledge, are best at documenting their languages

Why are they in short supply in PNG?



Premises of our argument:

1. English = language of EDUCATION in PNG.
2. Learning another language becomes more difficult with age.
3. A wealth of learning material (songs | rhymes | games) is freely available on YouTube.
4. Many tech-savvy Grade 12 leavers are waiting for jobs in their villages.
5. Increase in AO causes a decline in students' academic achievement.

Therefore, to produce more experts in *all sciences* (including linguistics),

BILINGUAL ECE IS THE WAY TO GO!



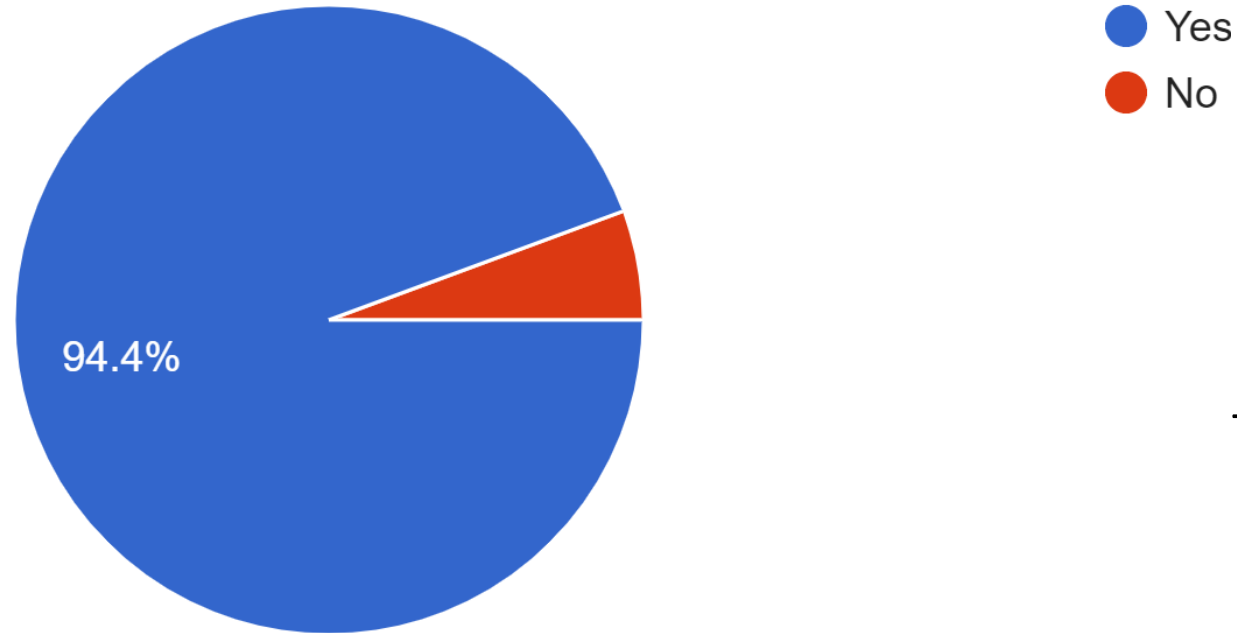


SUPPORTING EVIDENCE



1. Should 3-6 year-old kids start learning English in pre-school?

977 responses

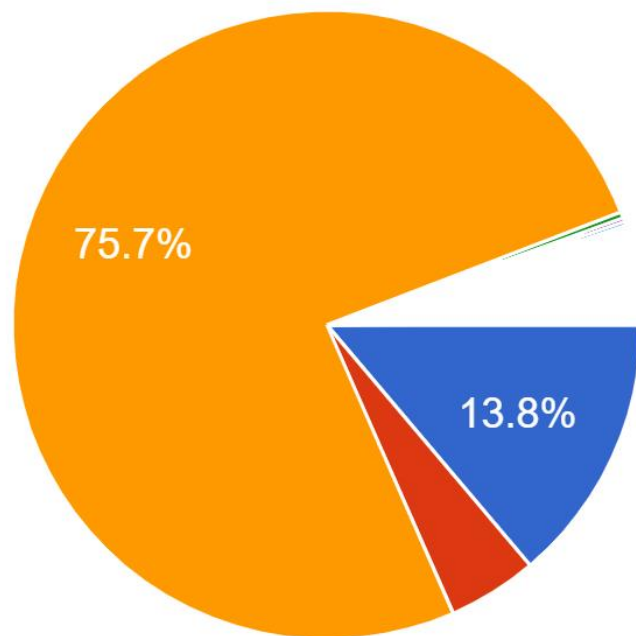


Preliminary results of
the 2021 Public Opinion
Survey



2. What is the most important skill for kids to learn in Grade 1?

977 responses



- Cultural knowledge
- To read & write in Tok Ples
- To read and write in English
- To read and write in both English and...
- Manners
- Bullet point 1 & 3
- To read and write in English & Pidgin
- English and pidgin is much better then...

▲ 1/7 ▼



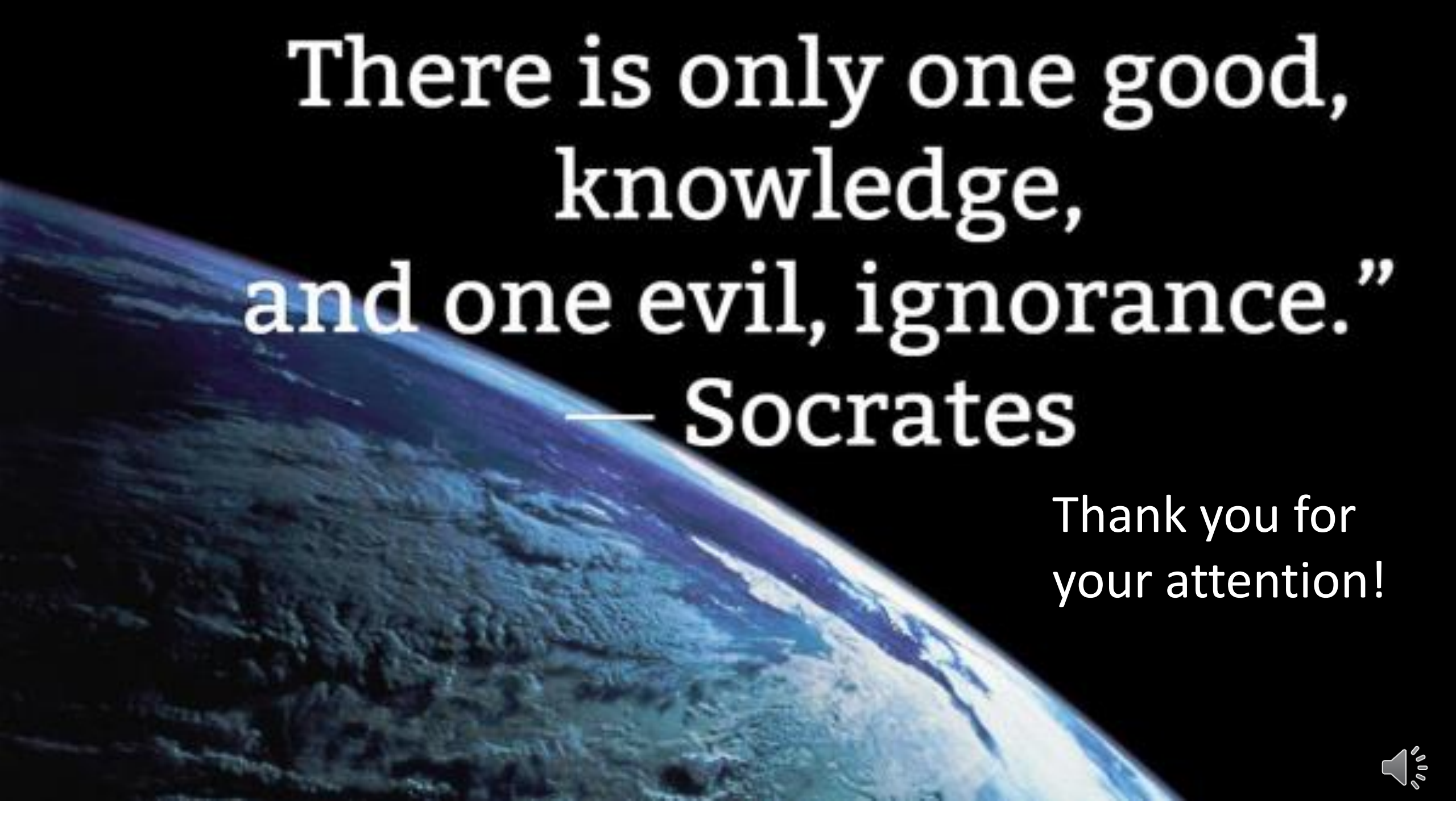


al Farabi (872–950 AD) on logic vs grammar

“This art [of logic] is analogous to the art of grammar, in that the relation of the art of logic to the intellect and the intelligibles is like the relation of the art of grammar to language and expressions. That is, to every rule for expressions which the science of grammar provides us, there is a corresponding [rule] for intelligibles which the science of logic provides us” (ed. Amīn, p. 68).

<https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/farabi-ii>





There is only one good,
knowledge,
and one evil, ignorance.”
— Socrates

Thank you for
your attention!



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