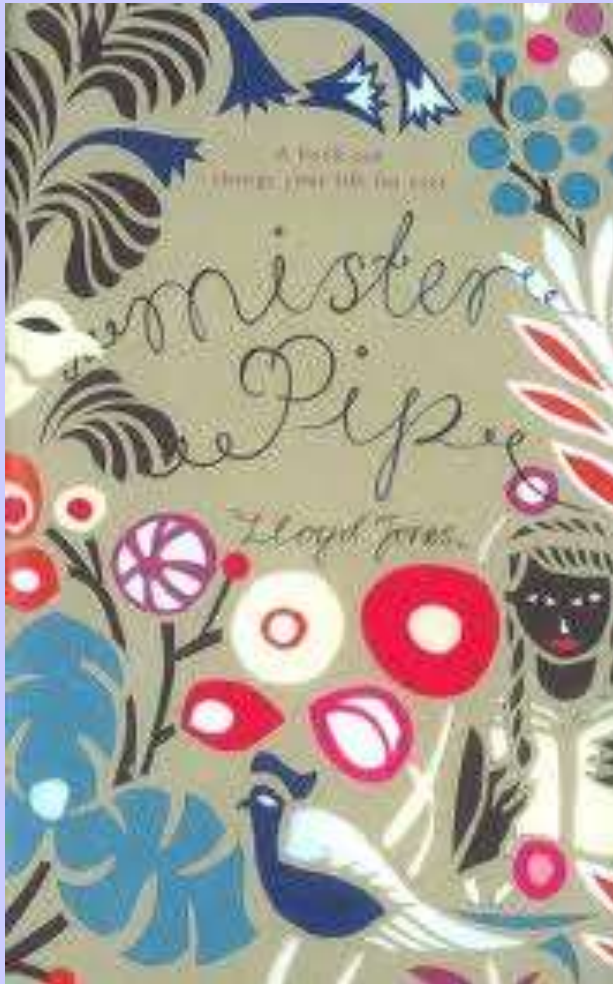


Mr. Pip: A sociolinguistic response

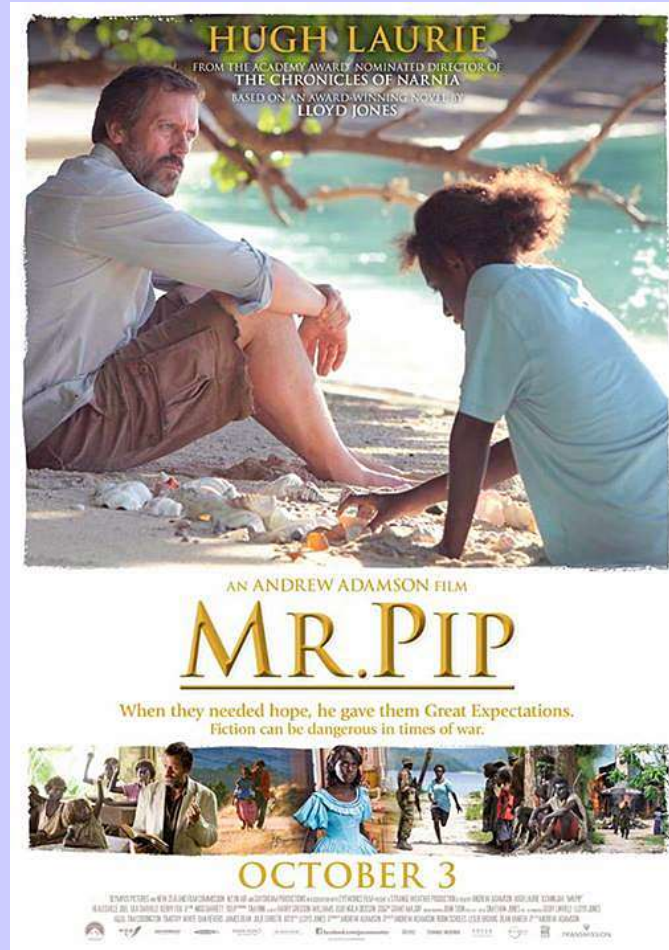


Hilary Smith
Systemetrics Research Associates
Honorary Teaching & Research Fellow, Institute of Education

The book



The film



http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tRn3gr8Pt_o

Escape into imagination - book

(Jones, 2006, *Mister Pip*, Penguin, pp. 17-18)

... Mr Watts began to read to us.

I had never been read to in English before. Nor had the others. We didn't have books in our homes, and before the blockade our only books had come from Moresby, and those were written in pidgin. When Mr Watts read to us we fell quiet. It was a new sound in the world. He read slowly so we heard the shape of each word.

'My father's family name being Pirrip, and my Christian name Philip, my infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer or more explicit than Pip. So I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip.'

...

He kept reading and we kept listening. It was some time before he stopped but when he looked up we sat stunned by the silence. The flow of words had ended. Slowly we stirred back into our bodies and our lives.

Escape into imagination - book

(Jones, 2006, *Mister Pip*, Penguin, p. 72)

The distance from Pip's house in the marshes to the 'metropolis' of London was about five hours. We understood without Mr Watts saying so that five hours indicated a great distance. In eighteen-hundred-and-fifty-something it might have been. But five hours was nearer than a century and a half and a while lot closer than half a world away. We heard that Pip was scared of London's 'immensity'. *Immensity?*

We stared back at Mr Watts for an explanation. 'Sheer numbers, crowds, a sense of bewilderment and of overwhelming scale...'

Issues

- Very little Tok Pisin or first language (L1)
 - ▶ Unrealistic reflection of the situation
- Multilingualism the norm in Bougainville
 - ▶ Another language not so amazing?
- Students need to be engaged
 - ▶ Reading aloud not usually spellbinding
- Language difficult (low frequency vocab)
 - ▶ Students couldn't understand
- Context vastly different
 - ▶ Imagining 18th century English unrealistic

Escape into imagination – film



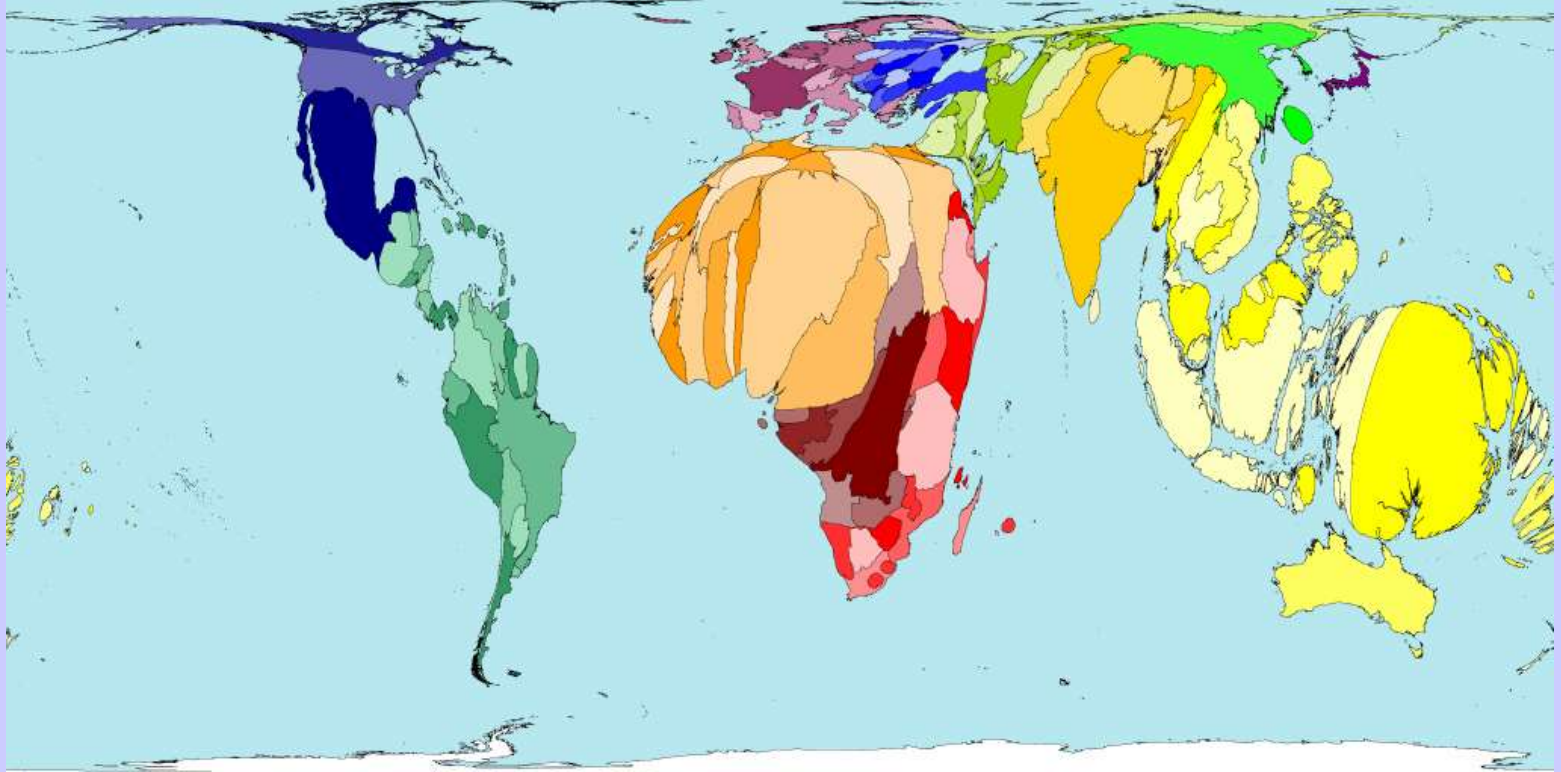
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAHz6J6Wrr0>

Why does it matter?

- Bougainville is one of the most linguistically diverse places in the world



PNG (Bougainville) linguistic diversity



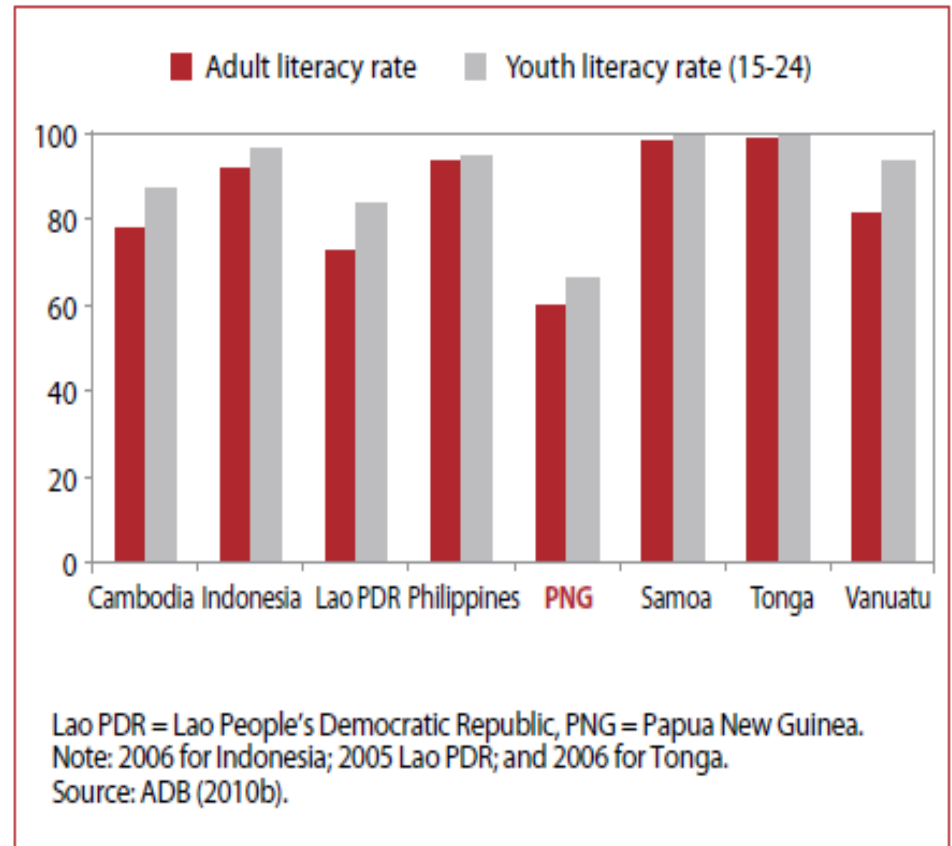
www.worldmapper.org

Territory size shows the proportion of the world's indigenous living languages that are spoken there.

Why does it matter?

- PNG literacy rates are very low









Figure 4.9. Literacy Rate (2008, %)



From: Asia Development Bank, 2012, p. 6.

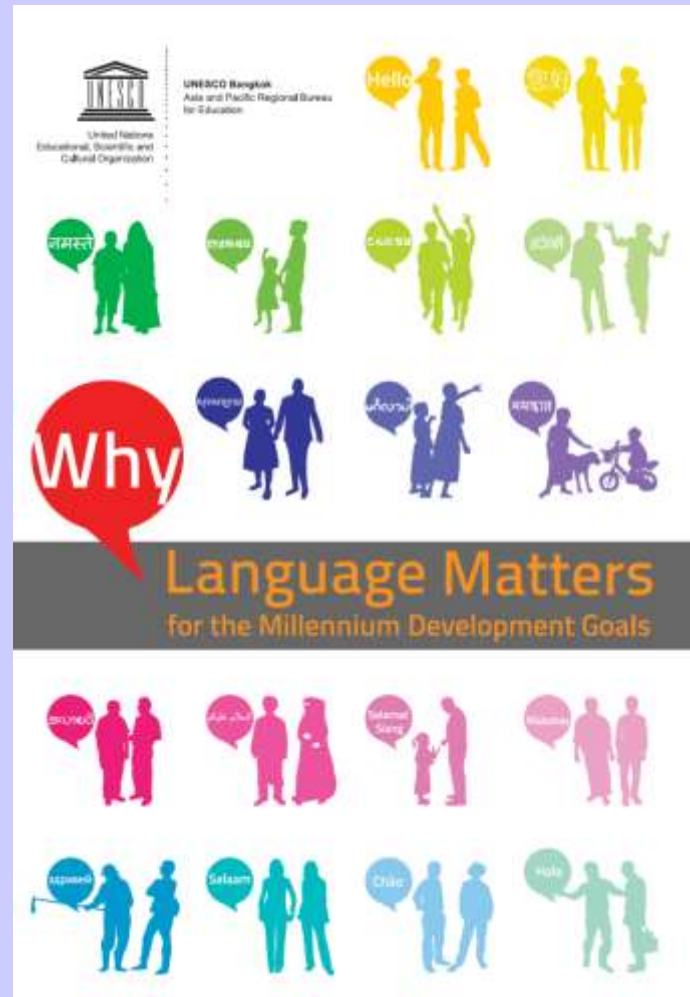
Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

From: Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2013, p. 21.

	Goal	PNG progress
 1	Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	Off-track
 2	Achieve universal primary education	Off-track
 3	Promote gender equality and empower women	Off-track
 4	Reduce child mortality	Off-track
 5	Improve maternal health	Off-track
 6	Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	Off-track
 7	Ensure environmental sustainability	Off-track
 8	Global partnership for development	?

Why does it matter?

- Language is essential to the achievement of the MDGs



MDGs and language

UNESCO, 2012



1

People's identities are formed by their language, culture and environment – loss leads to human and social costs.



2

Many children struggle at school when they are not taught in their L1 (first language).



3

Women's literacy and information in their L1 improves economic position and children's upbringing.



4

Families care for children better when they receive information in familiar language and cultural context.



5

Women care for themselves better when they receive information in familiar language and cultural context.



6

Culturally sensitive communication reduces stigma, encourages positive choices.



7

Many regions with high biodiversity also have high cultural and linguistic diversity, with local knowledge.



8

Building global partnerships requires clear communication.

Why does it matter?

- International research is clear:

Introducing literacy in L1 first will result in better outcomes for all subjects – **including English.**

Ref: Taylor and Coetzee, 2013.

Why does it matter?

- PNG language in education is an ‘early exit transitional’ model
- Less likely to achieve high levels of bilingualism/multilingualism
- Teachers support early introduction of English
- Place of Tok Pisin and local languages is controversial



Why does it matter?

“... if you teach minority children through the medium of a dominant language, at the cost of their mother tongue, you are participating in linguistic genocide.”

Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000, p. 25.



Mr. Pip's legacy

www.bougainvillelibrary.org.nz



References

- Asian Development Bank. (2012). *Papua New Guinea: Critical development constraints*. Manila: Asian Development Bank. Accessed from <http://www.adb.org/publications/papua-new-guinea-critical-development-constraints>
- Franken, M. and August, M. (2011). Language use and the instructional strategies of Grade 3 teachers to support 'bridging' in Papua New Guinea. *Language and Education*, 25(3), 221-239.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2000). Linguistic human rights and teachers of English. In J. K. Hall & W. G. Eggington (Eds.), *The sociopolitics of English language teaching*, pp. 22-44. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. (2013, August). 2013 Regional MDG Tracking Report. Accessed from http://www.forumsec.org/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/2013_Pac_Regional_MDGs_Tracking_Report_FINAL.pdf
- Taylor, S. & Coetzee, M. (2013). *Estimating the impact of language instruction in South African primary schools: A fixed effects approach*. Stellenbosch Working Paper Series No. WP21/2013. Accessed from <http://www.ekon.sun.ac.za/wpapers/2013>
- UNESCO. (2007). *Advocacy Kit for Promoting Multilingual Education: "Including the Excluded"*. UNESCO Bangkok. Accessed from <http://www2.unescobkk.org/elib/publications/110>
- UNESCO. (2012). *Why language matters for the Millennium Development Goals*. UNESCO Bangkok. Accessed from <http://www.unescobkk.org/resources/e-library/publications/article/why-language-matters-for-the-millennium-development-goals>