



5

The Importance of Mutual Understanding of Key Terminology in Development Projects: A PNG Example

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1 Introduction

Youth—what does that mean to you? Do your friends and colleagues have the same interpretation of the word? Perhaps, but do people from other linguistic and cultural groups have the same interpretation? As it turns out, probably not. This chapter explores the use of language in a PNG capacity development project and the advantages of research team members interpreting key project definitions in the same way as

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111

the project's participants. Having a shared understanding of key capacity development project terminology (words) and concepts (their meanings) helps development research teams to understand and use the terms in the same linguistic and cultural ways as their participants. Mutual understandings and consistent use of key project terms reduces the possibility that some project team members assume that others are interpreting the terms in the same way.

Development projects are often undertaken in low- to middle-income countries, also known as developing countries. A country is defined as developed or developing based on its citizens' life expectancy, access to education, and standard of living (the Human Development Index (HDI)). The HDI ranks countries on a scale of 0 to 1: most developed countries have an index above 0.80 (Roser 2014). Development projects are usually designed and funded by developed countries to help low- and middle-income countries overcome social, political, economic, and environmental problems (World Population Review 2021).

As communication is the core of development projects (Oketch and Banda 2008), effective communication is vital to getting messages across in a manner that is meaningful for the people whom the project is designed to benefit: 'Development is not possible without language' (Bamgbose 2014, 650). It is through communication that training programmes, training materials, monitoring, evaluation, and the reporting of the project's impacts are undertaken. It is common, however, for such communication to be undertaken in the language of the donor country, which is often different to the language spoken by the in-country project team and the project participants. As a result, the communication may be ineffective, as there can be complex cultural, or even subtle, differences in the concepts of common terminology, such as the term *youth* (which is the focus of this chapter). When these differences are understood by both the donor country and in-country project teams and participants, a shared understanding of key project terms can be developed. Having a mutual understanding of key project terminology enhances learning, and helps everyone involved in the project to understand complex concepts, and to solve complex issues and problems (Stein-Smith 2016).

There are currently 7,139 languages spoken around the world (Eberhard et al. 2021). Two thirds of these languages (80.5%) are spoken in the Pacific (18.5%), Africa (30%), and Asia (32%); just 23 languages are spoken by over half of the world's population. Research demonstrates that the use of local languages is valuable in assisting people to learn and engage in new concepts (see Caffery, Coronado, and Hodge 2016; Levy [this volume]; Oketch and Banda 2008). However, it is not always possible to use the language of participants in development training programmes, due to the number of languages spoken in the country. The language used in development programmes is a complex issue, and not easy to address, given the number of languages spoken in low- and middle-income countries and that the higher-income countries that fund development projects usually speak a different language. This is also true for countries where the language of the donor country is spoken in the recipient country, but as a second or third language. For example, in the project addressed in this chapter, the language of the donor country (Australia) is Standard Australian English (SAE)—whilst English is spoken in PNG it is usually as a third language. Speaking a language as a second or third language is different to speaking a language as a first language as a person's culture is intimately tied to their language (Cahill 2020). There are often cultural differences in the dialect of English spoken in each country, which adds more complications to the language used in development projects. Simple processes can be incorporated into the early stages of development projects, however, to establish effective communication so that the project team in both countries, as well as the participants, have mutual understandings of the development programme's messages.

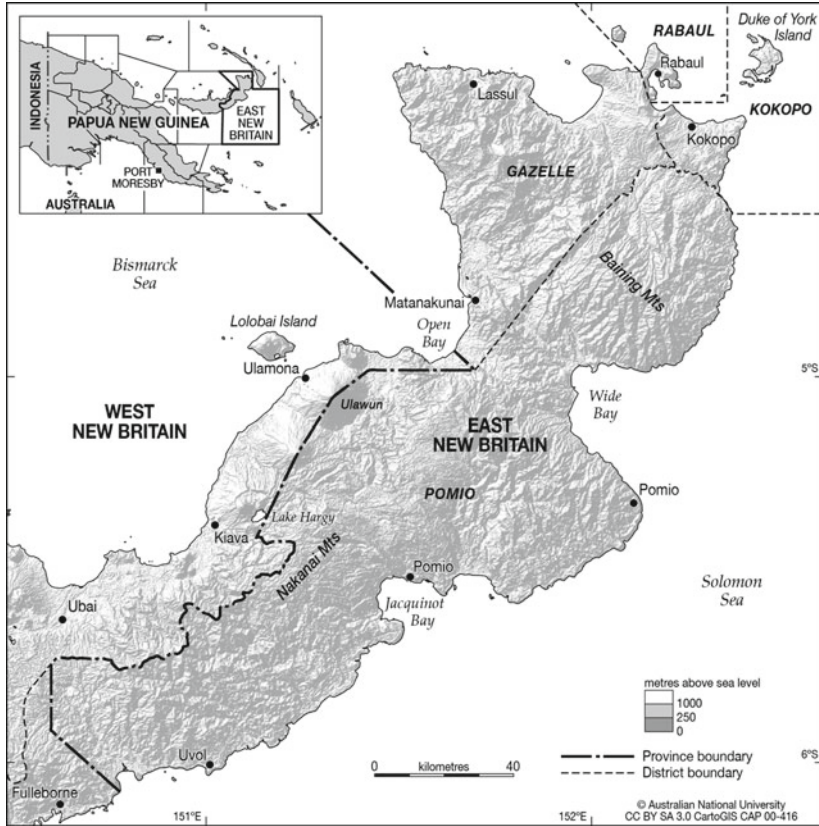
This chapter explores how using effective communication through culturally and linguistically appropriate language helps to effectively transmit key project terminology and concepts, in a manner that is appropriate to the participants of the development project. Using culturally and linguistically appropriate language builds participants' confidence, identity, and a sense of ownership of the project. This chapter first provides an overview of the development project, including an overview

of the recipient country and region. It then describes the socio-cultural and linguistic background of the project's participants, before discussing why this development research project chose to use Tok Pisin as the main language of communication with participants. The key steps undertaken to come to a mutual understanding of key project terms, concepts, and the associated benefits are also discussed.

2 Understanding Participating Communities

The mainland of Papua New Guinea (PNG) and its 600 islands are home to over nine million people, with a median age of 22.4 years (Worldometer 2021). There are more than 800 languages spoken across the country, with English, Tok Pisin, and Hiri Motu as the official languages (Eberhard et al. 2021). Approximately 200 of these 800 languages are Austronesian, and 600 are Papuan (Paul 2020). Tok Pisin is spoken by approximately two-thirds of Papua New Guineans, and is the mother-tongue of over half a million people (Redman-MacLaren et al. 2019). PNG is rich in natural resources but faces significant development challenges. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) ranks PNG at 155 out of 189 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI), and 161 out of 189 countries for gender inequality (UNDP 2020). The UNDP (2020) also report that only 10% of females and 15.2% of males over the age of 25 have had at least some secondary education. More than 85% of PNG's population live in rural or remote fertile communities and are subsistence or small-cash crop farmers, who provide over 83% of PNG's food supply (Department of Foreign Affairs Australia 2021).

East New Britain (ENB), one of PNG's north-eastern islands, is home to the youth development trial project discussed in this chapter. It has PNG's third-largest population: 328,369 (168,760 males (M)/159,609 females (F) (National Statistical Office 2011), and consists of four districts (see Map 1): Gazelle District—129,317 (66,428 M/62,889F); Pomio District—71,836 (36,865 M/34,971F);



Map 1 ENB PNG Districts (Map reproduced with the permission of CartoGIS Services, Scholarly Information Services, The Australian National University)

Kokopo District—87,829 (45,284 M/42,545 F); Rabaul District—39,387 (20,183 M/19,204F). Whilst culturally similar, the four districts differ in their language, environment, and agricultural production opportunities.

The project ‘Gender equitable agricultural extension through institutions and youth engagement in Papua New Guinea’ is a four-and-a-half year Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) funded project, led by the University of Canberra. The part of the project relevant to this discussion aims to explore and develop pathways

for increasing PNG youth involvement in sustainable farming futures. Youth are vital to the future lives of all Papua New Guineans, as 80% of PNG's population depend on agriculture for food and employment; youth are the future of PNG's agricultural industry (Laraki 2012). PNG's social structures often exclude youth from decision-making processes, however, as it is customary for older members of society to hold the decision-making power (McPhee and McLachlan 2017). Having limited or no voice in decision-making in the family and community leads to the invisibility of youth perspectives in agricultural development policies and plans. As there is 'no motivational thrust to get [youth] engaged in entrepreneurship development or enter into either subsistence or commercial agriculture' (Halim 2013, 4) youth are leaving rural communities and family farms, in the hope of finding employment and a better future in urban communities (McPhee and McLachlan 2017; Halim 2013).

In response to this concern, this gender-based project is designed to empower PNG youth, particularly female youth, to engage further in their family farm, family decision-making, and in the wider agriculture sector. It is specifically designed to explore challenges and successes in building gender equitable approaches within ENB farming families and communities, and to further understand future aspirations of ENB youth and further engage them in agriculture, now and in the future. The project is developing and trialling a 'Youth as Change Agents' capacity-building programme that will enhance youth's agricultural skills, improve their self-esteem, and enhance their engagement in their family and community, to help set their future goals and aspirations. It will contribute to building respect for youth who want to contribute to improving community agricultural practices and technologies, and will help address social issues around ENB's youth.

This project is designed as a youth participatory action research project, where male and female smallholder farmers, male and female youth, church and community leaders, and the PNG and Australian project teams work together to develop the 'Youth as Change Agent' training programme. Such a collaboration helps base the capacity-building programme on youths' aspirations, assets, needs, place, culture, and language. The project is guided by an ENB Advisory Committee,

chaired by two youth (1F:1 M), and prioritises the empowerment of participants, particularly female and male youths, in an agricultural setting, through the process of constructing and using participants' own knowledge, lived experience, concerns, and languages (Anyon et al. 2018; Bettencourt 2020).

The project began just four months before the COVID-19 global pandemic restricted international travel. These travel restrictions meant that the project leader in the donor country (Author 1) could not travel to PNG. Therefore, the in-country project leader (Author 2) and the ENB Project Coordinator (Author 3) took on more project responsibilities than initially planned. Even though the main project capacity-building activities and research were to be undertaken by Tok Pisin speakers, rather than the project leader, it was vital that key project terminology and concepts were interpreted in the same way by the Australian project leader and the ENB participants, to ensure effective communication and accuracy in the capacity-building programme design and data analysis.

As in most Pacific countries, people in ENB are multilingual. ENB is home to fifteen Austronesian languages and seven Papuan languages; five spoken in the Baining mountains (Eberhard et al. 2021). ENB people speak at least three languages, including their Tok Ples (a language specific to their own region), Tok Pisin (a lingua franca), and English. Tok Ples differs from district to district and within districts. English is commonly spoken but it is not a first language and its fluency differs across and within the districts. However, Tok Pisin is the dominant language in all four districts (Eberhard et al. 2021).

For our capacity-building project, it was also important for everyone involved to have a shared understanding of the cultural and linguistic differences of the communities we work in, to minimise misunderstandings of the communities' cultural and linguistic norms. Whilst the in-country project team are familiar with the concepts it was clear that the concepts did vary across the project's participating communities. Knowing our participants' interpretation of the key concepts used in our capacity-building project was vital to the success of our project, so it was clear to our team that we needed to use local concepts of key terms where possible, and to use an accessible language at all other times.

3 Accessible Language

In PNG it is common for the donor country of agricultural development projects to use their own language in development projects (usually English) due to the number of languages spoken in the country (Caffery and Hill 2019). However, as Catherine Levy (this volume) argues, it is important to use community members' first language in developing capacity projects. This argument is supported by the relevant literature which argues that using people's first language reduces 'lost in translation' issues; provides a sense of identity; allows speakers of minority languages to keep and develop their traditions; enables intergenerational communication; provides cognitive advantages; and contributes to general wellbeing (e.g., see Caffery, Coronado and Hodge 2016; Caffery and Hill 2019; Hill 2020). Whilst it may not always be possible to use the local language in development training programmes, it is important for projects to use an accessible and effective form of communication. Effective communication helps create active, inclusive, and empowering community participation (Pemba 2019).

When Caffery and Hill (2019) explored the language used in one PNG agricultural development project, they found that parts of the English language were challenging to some participants. Participants called this challenging language 'Expensive English', language that included unfamiliar words, or words that needed to be explained. Expensive English can also include everyday terms, such as youth, family, and farm, but have different interpretations in different languages. This paper focuses on the terms 'youth', 'female youth', and 'male youth'. The concepts behind these terms are familiar to most people regardless of their language, culture, or country, however, the actual interpretation of the terms differs across and within various cultures and countries. This is the case in PNG. As explained below, participants and the donor project team had similar but slightly different interpretations of these terms.

The accessible language principles designed by Caffery and Hill (2019) were based on Minimal English and Plain English principles. Minimal English includes vocabulary that is easy to understand and easy to translate (Goddard and Wierzbicka 2018). Drawing on Minimal English in development projects can support the understanding of

Western concepts to people in non-Western contexts (Hill 2021). Similarly, Plain English principles were used to develop Caffery and Hill's accessible language principles to simplify both the oral and written capacity-building materials. It is important to note that whilst Plain English includes the use of everyday words, these words may not be easily translatable into the contexts in which they are intended to be used (Caffery and Hill 2019), so these should be checked with participants.

The accessible language principles include the use of local-language terms and concepts, which is the preference of the 'Youth as Change Agent' project, and the adaption of typical features of the English language to align more closely to those of local understandings and/or use of the English language. For example, to avoid the use of synonyms and instead repeat the word, to provide clearer understandings; to use easily translatable verbs such as 'think' instead of 'attitude', and to avoid pronouns and use noun phrases instead. The principle also highlights the importance of avoiding the use of culturally specific English words that are not easily translatable to the local context, or that are complex in meaning. Table 1 provides an overview of the principles,

Table 1 Accessible Language Principles developed by Caffery and Hill (2019, p. 4)

Use	Avoid	Verify
Easily translatable verbs, such as 'know', 'think' 'want'	English culture specific words that are complex in meaning	with relevant language collaborators
Noun phrases	English culture specific words that are not easily translatable	
Repetition	Pronouns	
Shared human concepts	Synonyms	
Short sentences	Nominalisation	
Simple sentences/clauses	Complex clauses/sentences	
Simple, clear, paragraphs	English idioms and metaphors	
Dot (bullet) points rather than complex sentences		
Existing Tok Pisin translations to replace complex English words		
Tok Pisin counterparts, e.g., tingting 'think', 'thinking'		

clearly stating what to use and what to avoid, to create effective relevant capacity-building programmes. Caffery and Hill also stress the importance of involving the project's in-country team and, where possible, the participants, to verify the terminology and concepts match that of the participants' language (see Caffery and Hill 2019 for further detail on the Accessible language approach).

These principles support development projects to design a language that is clear and shared to build effective communication that helps the donor-country team, the in-country team and participants to minimise the language barrier.

For this 'Youth as Change Agent' project, it was not possible to use participants' first language (Tok Ples) due to the number of languages spoken across the four participating ENB districts and the project team not speaking these languages. As using an accessible and effective style of communication in this project was a main priority to the project research team, we discussed this with the participants in one of our first meetings. During this meeting, the project team and participants decided on four key language points for the project:

1. As much as possible, the language of discussion and instruction in our development project would be Tok Pisin, as it is widely spoken in all four districts and many of the younger people spoke it as a mother-tongue;
2. As the project leader (Author 1) does not speak Tok Pisin, she would use the English language in a simple form, drawing on the accessible language principles, and an interpreter would be available to translate the messages to participants as needed, and to translate the participants' discussions to the project leader;
3. Tok Pisin terminology and concepts would be adopted for key project terms, for example the term 'youth' has a different concept in and between the ENB communities, and different to that English (as discussed below); and
4. As many of the literate participants were literate in both Tok Pisin and English, all training materials would be in both languages so participants could choose the written language that was most familiar to them, however these written materials would also use the accessible

language principles, and, to highlight the value of Tok Pisin in the project, Tok Pisin would always be placed first and the English would be in a smaller font.

The participants appreciated the recognition of their local language, Tok Pisin, as an important element of the project, which allowed both themselves and the project team to have clear understandings of key terminology and shared concepts (Lonyangapuo 2015), and which ensured inclusivity, relevance, and sustainability (Caffery and Hill 2019; Pemba 2019).

The next step for the project team was to learn the participants' terminology and interpretations of each of the key English project terms and concepts. We therefore undertook a language definitions activity with each participating district, and as a group, we determined the key terms and concepts that would be used in the project. This activity was a short 1.5-hour activity which was fundamental in building effective communication for the duration of the project.

4 Methodology and Results

The key terms explored in the language activity workshop include everyday project words and research-specific words. Table 2 identifies all the terms explored in the activity and simple instructions—this chapter addresses the analysis and decisions behind three of these key terms: *youth*, *female youth*, and *male youth*. Whilst the concept of 'youth' in

Table 2 Key project terms explored for use in the project

In small groups talk about the following words and write what they mean to you as a group on the papers provided			
youth	male youth	female youth	
challenge	success	enabler	
family	farm	team	family farm team

English is the same for both female and male youth, Blank (2008) states that in the PNG context, the term ‘youth’ can refer to males only, which is reflected linguistically in many Pacific languages, where the word for youth insinuates young, unmarried men (Luker and Monsell-Davis 2010). Hence, it is was important and right to explore whether there is a difference in the ENB concept between female and male youth.

The language activity was undertaken in the first meeting between the project team and project community leaders—youth and their parents. The same activity was subsequently undertaken with youth and their families across the four participating ENB districts, and in Australia, with the Australian project team.

The activity was facilitated orally by the in-country project team in Tok Pisin, with the written materials in both Tok Pisin and English. A list of key project terms in English were shown on a board or on butcher’s paper (depending on where the activity took place), so the participants could easily see the list of words. The participants were grouped into districts, and where possible, separated into adult women, adult men, youth female, and youth male groups. They were first asked to discuss each word in their groups, and to consider an equivalent term in both their Tok Ples and Tok Pisin languages, and to describe what each term meant to them. Participants were provided with a worksheet that was formatted and written in both Tok Pisin and English, so it was easy to read and use. Participants filled in the worksheet as a group, to enable all participants, regardless of their literacy skills, to contribute.

Twenty-one groups across the four ENB districts provided written responses on their worksheets. These responses were analysed and the results shared with the groups, so key project Tok Pisin terms and concepts could be determined and agreed upon for use in the project, to ensure everyone involved interpreted the terms in the same way.

As Tok Pisin is the main language used in the project, the following discussion focusses on Tok Pisin and English—Tok Ples data is not included here. The findings of the ENB language activity are first discussed, followed by those in English, before addressing the comparative data.

The results showed that the Tok Pisin key project terms, ‘youth’, ‘female youth’, and ‘male youth’ were similar in form across all four

districts, though the spelling often differed. Table 3 provides a list of equivalent Tok Pisin terms used by participants in two districts for the three related youth terms. Exact duplicates of words have been excluded here, but the various spellings of the same words have been retained to show the differences in the spellings, and to highlight the similarity of the terms—this was probably a literacy issue, since the terms are similar in pronunciation.

Overall, there were three Tok Pisin terms for the English word ‘youth’: *lida* ‘leader’; *yangpela* ‘young fellow’ (*man* ‘male’ or *meri* ‘female’ can be added); and *yut* ‘youth’. As the term *lida* was stated only once, it was determined that there were two main equivalent Tok Pisin terms for the English term youth: *yangpela* and *yut*. The terms *yangpela* and *yut* are used interchangeably.

A woman in PNG is usually referred to as *meri*, and a male is referred to as *man*. Similar to the term ‘youth’, there were three Tok Pisin terms for the English words ‘female youth’. The results overall show that to

Table 3 Tok Pisin terms for the key project English term ‘Youth’, ‘female youth’, and ‘male youth’

District	Tok Pisin—youth	Tok Pisin—female youth	Tok Pisin—male youth
1	Lida yangpela / yangpala youngpla / youngpla man yut yangpla young young pela yut	yut blo of meri yangpela meri yangpla meri meri yut	yangpla man man yut manh yang pela man yangpla man young pela man youngpla man
2	yut young pela man / meri yangpela	youngpela meri yangpla meri yang pla meri meri yut yangpela meri Merie youngpla meri yangpela meri youngpla mery Merie	men yut
Not stated	yangpela youngpla young pela man	yangpela meri youngpla mery Merie	manh yangpla man youngpla man yangpela man

determine the sex of a youth, the relevant gender term is added; *yangpela meri* ‘young fellow female’ or *yangpela man* ‘young fellow male’ and *meri yut* ‘female youth’ or *man yut* ‘male youth’.

Our analysis showed that there were two terms to consider for the term ‘youth’: *yangpela* ‘young fellow’ and *yut* ‘youth’. Each of these terms were equally used in the ENB Tok Pisin language, however, the term *yangpela* ‘young fellow’ could also include children. As the focus of the project is age defined (18 +) from the point of view of the funding body, the project team, in consultation with the participants, agreed the project term for youth would be *yut* with the Tok Pisin gender term: *meri yut* ‘female youth’/*man yut* ‘male youth’.

Whilst determining a Tok Pisin term equivalent to the English word ‘youth’, ‘female youth’, and ‘male youth’, we also analysed the cultural definition of youth—female and male. We asked five questions to determine the following: ‘In your district/community ...’.

- How old are youth?
- Can a female who is married be called a youth?
- Can a male who is married be called a youth?
- Can a female who has children be called a youth?
- Can a male who has children be called a youth?

In response to the age question, participants’ answers ranged from 15 and 35 years of age (see Table 4). Two people in District 1 stated the age at which people are identified as a youth as between 15 and 18 years, but others in that district stated that youth are aged between 18 and 30, or 20 and 30. It is clear that in District 1, a youth is no longer a youth once they reached the age of 30. District 2 differed in the age range of youth, stating that people can be defined as youth up to the age of 35. Some participants did not state which district they were from, but their responses were in line with the responses from Districts 1 and 2. Whilst the responses to the age range of youth varied, participants stated that the upper age of a youth is 35 years. Interestingly, in a later meeting, when participants were electing two youths as Co-Chairs for the Youth Advisory Committee, one of the people they elected was 39 years of age.

Table 4 Age of youth by district

District	In your district/community, how old are youth?
1	15 18 18–30 years 20–30 years
2	15–30 18–25 years 18–35 years up to 33 years
Not stated	16–18 years 15–25 18–30 years 15–30 years

When asked why, they said he was recognised as a youth in his community, so it was okay. This highlights the varying cultural interpretations of just one term, ‘youth’, and that that term is culturally determined by measures other than age.

To further understand participants’ cultural definition of ‘female youth’ and ‘male youth’, they were asked to explore questions 2 to 5. Twenty of the twenty-one groups stated that a female and male youth can be married and/or have children (see Table 5). They said that the status of youth depended on the youth’s ‘mindset’ (attitude), their behaviour, and dependence.

To compare the ENB Tok Pisin cultural use and interpretations of ‘youth’ with the English spoken by the Australian project team, the project leader interviewed the one other Australian project team member. Given that the Australian research team predominantly consisted of the project leader, the project’s Australian casual research assistant was interviewed. To gain an understanding of the English term from a youth in the donor country, a non-project youth was also interviewed. As understandings of the key definitions of youth between this project’s participants and the donor-country team was established for the purposes of effective communication across the project team, we didn’t explore the English concept of youth any further; however, it would be an interesting relevant study to do in the future. These interviews included the same questions as those asked of the ENB project participants: What does the

Table 5 Cultural marital and child status of PNG youth

District	Can a female who is married be called a youth?	Can a male who is married be called a youth?	Can a female who has children be called a youth?	Can a male who has children be called a youth?
1	Yes Yes, still at the youth age	Yes	Yes	Yes
2	Yes Yes because she still behaves like a youth in terms of how she socialises; her mindset	Yes Yes, because of how he behaves, his mindset	No Yes Yes, because some are young and still they have children	No Yes Yes, because of how old they are; if he is dependent or not
District not stated	yes, youngpla mama yes, youngpela mama yangpla mama Yes, yangpela mama	yes, youngpla papa yes, youngpela papa yangpla papa yes, yangpela papa	yes, youngpla mama yes, youngpela mama yangpla mama yes, yangpela mama	yes, youngpla papa yangpla papa yes, yangpela papa

term youth mean to you? The Australian participants' responses were similar to that in ENB, but did have subtle differences. Both Australian participants stated that the concept of youth 'is an evolving concept' and that it's not about age. One participant argued that traditionally, youth was defined as 'someone in high school but is now extended to people who don't have responsibility and obligations to other people' and that it is more related to their mindset. The other participant said the term generally means that 'someone is less experienced than others' and that 'age is just a number ... There isn't really an age range as someone who is 40 is a youth compared to a 60-year-old ... it is more about experience'.

The Australian participants also stated that there was no difference between female and male youth, as 'gender is just a label'; that 'male and female youth fall under the same category of youth'; and that 'there are

also other genders between female and male'. Both participants agreed that youth can be married and/or have children.

The comparative Australian and PNG data highlighted the subtle differences in the terms and concepts of youth. The Standard Australian English (SAE) and ENB terms for 'youth' closely resemble one another in form: *youth* and *yut* (respectively). Whilst it is not common in SAE to distinguish between genders for youth, it is in ENB *man* (male) / *meri* (female) *yut* 'youth'. Participants in both countries agreed that a youth can be married and/or have children and still be recognised as a youth. One difference that was clear between participants in both countries was the age of youth. In ENB, the age of youth varied between communities and districts, with some recognising youth as up to 35 years of age. This is a significant finding, as in the initial design of the project, it was understood that the age of youth, as generally used in organisations in Australia, is between 18 and 24 years; 18 being the voting age, and 24 as the upper age of youth (Muir et al. 2009). The project expected to work with PNG youth within that age bracket, but culturally, this was not an accepted option for participants and their families, so the project works with youth as it is defined and accepted by the participating communities.

This short language activity, undertaken early in the project, has helped the project team, in both countries, to understand the linguistic, cultural, and subtle differences of key project concepts between Tok Pisin and SAE. Exploring these small language and cultural differences has enabled a deeper understanding of the culture and norms of the communities we are working in, which in turn helps to deepen our understanding of our research data and its impacts. Using the terminology and concepts of the participants' local language has provided ongoing effective communication in all aspects of the project, and minimised miscommunication of the key terms. Whilst this chapter has explored just one key project term, we have found similar benefits in the other terms explored for the project. Having mutual understandings and consistent use of key project terms builds consistency in use and understanding between both the participants and the project research team.

5 Discussion

Across the Pacific, there is no widely recognised definition of ‘youth’ (Lee and Craney 2019), though ‘youth’ is recognised as a phase of life that sees an individual transition from childhood to adulthood, dependence to independence (Curtain and Vakaoti 2011). The UN Funds Population Activities (2019) state that the ages of youth as identified in the Pacific Island States is between 12 and 35 years, depending on the state. In PNG, the cultural definition of youth is largely linked to the obtainment of social responsibilities (Luker and Monsell-Davis 2010; McPhee and McLachlan 2017) and, in some rural communities, ‘economic responsibilities as these have effects on the social relationships, including those connected to land and its use’ (Bacalzo 2019, 58). Youth transitioning from dependence to independence differs from country to country and community to community, and even within the same language group, as seen in the data provided in this chapter. The current rapidly changing cultural and economic context of PNG is having a large impact on the definition and experience of youth (Luker and Monsell-Davis 2010; Bacalzo 2019). As an individual’s independence is defined in relation to cultural values and knowledge, it is natural that people’s interpretations of the concept of youth vary globally, even though there may be similarities.

Using cultural markers to classify youth has caused policy and programme implications (Lee and Craney 2019; Noble et al. 2011), therefore, age boundaries are commonly used by government and non-government organisations to allow for comparative data use, and to place limits on programme participation (Mou-Vagi 2013). The 1983 and 1996 PNG youth policies defined youth as 12–35 years to reflect the strong role of cultural markers (National Youth Commission of Papua New Guinea 2007). However, the most current PNG youth policy, The National Youth Policy of Papua New Guinea 2007–2011, defines ‘youth’ as between the ages of 12–25 years (McPhee and McLachlan 2017), but also recognises that the definition of youth varies across PNGs regions and can be determined by marital status, roles, and involvement in community life (Noble et al. 2011).

The idea of international and national definitions and age boundaries of youth are valuable for policy and programme development. However, they do miss important cultural understandings that could fully inform the policies and development programmes. Age boundaries also exclude people who are culturally defined as youth but outside the policy or programme age boundary. For example, people outside the 12–25-year age group (PNG policy) could be excluded from opportunities and other supports that youth within the age boundary are eligible for.

Whilst our project agreed to use the term *yut* ‘youth’, we need to ensure we interpreted this word in the same way as it is interpreted culturally by our participating communities. The concept of *yut* ‘youth’ in ENB is not about someone within a certain age range but more about how that person is culturally recognised, and the role they play within their family and community. It is also related to their status and their agricultural and social opportunities. Many of the youth in our project cannot own land, and they are generally not involved in family, community, or agricultural decision-making. Traditionally, in ENB, youth inherit land and status from their parents, so it is challenging for them to own land to help gain the status of an adult and to be involved in decisions relating to their family farms. The role of our research project is not to change the cultural norms of participating ENB communities or families, but to understand the cultural norms of youth to see if we can work with them, as change agents, to be more engaged in their own, and their families’ and communities’ agricultural futures. Youth are the future leaders and farmers, so hearing their voice is important, both in understanding their current situations and in working with them as change agents so they become more engaged in their agricultural futures. For our project to work successfully with youth and their families in exploring and developing pathways for their increased involvement in family farms and sustainable farming futures, we needed an in-depth understanding of the ENB communities’ interpretations of youth.

Understanding the cultural variations of the concepts of key project terminology is vital for our project. Such understandings help to provide a deeper understanding of our participating communities’ interpretations of ‘youth’ and other key terminology, to help reduce misinterpretation of participants’ meanings, having a clearer understanding of why older

people are participating as youth in our project, and to help us develop and deliver a culturally and linguistically appropriate programme for communities.

6 Conclusion

Language is an important tool for achieving sustainable human development, building pride, and strengthening identity in local-language speakers, as well as building sustainability of the project after the project funding ends. Using an accessible language approach in dual-language projects helps to ensure that everyone in the project—participants and researchers—have the same understanding of terminology and concepts. When everyone in the project has the same interpretation of key terms, stronger project relationships are built. When participants' language and culture are reflected in the project, it builds pride and a sense of identity within the project, as it highlights the importance of their language and culture and that their language and culture is valued. Building on participants' language also sets an important foundation for the project, by highlighting equality between participants and the project team.

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