

Discussion and comments

Status of local languages: There was a clarification that New Guinea Pidgin (Tok Pisin) is an official language of Papua New Guinea. But in many/most cases in the PIC, pidgin is seen as lower in status than languages such as English or French. Even local communities do not see it as having status. A delegate from Papua Indonesia questioned whether it was seen as 'dangerous' for Indonesia if teaching in schools was conducted in local languages.

Indonesia's policy on English learning: It was said that in Indonesia there is much confusion on English policy, with many different ministries issuing different instructions.

When to start teaching English: Mr. Whitehead said that often the decision to bring in English into schools too early was taken for political reasons. In fact, it is often detrimental to do this. It is a responsibility of organisations like British Council and international organisations to actively lobby governments against the poorly planned use of English.

Monitoring and evaluation. Researchers have highlighted the need for more monitoring and evaluation of learning through English programs, in terms of their achievements.

On influencing government policy in the PICs: In Samoa UNICEF had the same researcher working on curriculum research and orthography and also working with the government on policy; this kind of linking helps a lot.

English as a local language: isn't this contradictory? Mr Whitehead said there was no dichotomy. In many cases, English has been appropriated to reflect local cultural norms and as such is organic and sometimes used as a tool to create anti-hegemonic dialogues. Examples of local appropriation of English in Asia include Singlish (in Singapore) and Konglish (Korea)—but in fact these monolithic terms don't reflect the ways in which English is very fluid. It is one of its strengths that it is being appropriated for local purposes.