

# Exceptives Questionnaire - Tok Pisin

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# 1 The basics of Tok Pisin

## 1.1 Language name

Tok Pisin (ISO code: *tpi*) is a Germanic creole spoken across Papua New Guinea. It is classified as a dialect of Melanesian Pidgin.<sup>1</sup> Speaker estimations are around 3-5 million, with an estimated 500,000 to 1 million L1 speakers (Smith & Siegel 2013).

## 1.2 Morphological type

Tok Pisin is an isolating/analytic language.

## 1.3 Word order

The basic word order of Tok Pisin is SVO, illustrated with examples (1a-d).<sup>2</sup>

- (1) a. *Pikinini i pundaun.*  
 child PM falls  
 ‘The child fell.’ (intransitive)
- b. *Mi (\*i) kapsait-im dispela wara.*  
 1SG (\*PM) spill-TR this water  
 ‘I spilled the water.’ (transitive)
- c. *Mari i giv-im mi wanpela samting.*  
 Mary PM give-TR 1SG a/one something  
 ‘Mary gave me something.’ (double object ditransitive)
- d. *Mari i giv-im wanpela samting long mi.*  
 Mary PM give-TR a/one something PREP 1SG  
 ‘Mary gave something to me.’ (prepositional dative)
- o The predicate marker *i* (glossed as PM in the literature) functions like a third-person subject agreement marker (as seen (1a) and (1c-d) but not in (1b)). When used without additional lexical verbs, *i* can function as a copula (Verhaar 1995:70–71).
  - o The suffix *-im* can be added to intransitive verbs to become transitive verbs, for example, *boil* (‘to boil (intr.)’) into *boilim* (‘to boil (tr.)’), or to bare transitive verbs to change the meaning of the verb, for example, *kaikai* (‘to eat (tr.)’) to *kaikaim* (‘to bite (tr.)’) (Verhaar 1995: 22-24). Some transitive verbs can also be derived from nouns, modifiers and adverbs using *-im*.

## 1.4 Case-marking

Like many other creoles, Tok Pisin has no overt case marking (Bickerton 2008; Smith & Siegel 2013).

## 1.5 Focus constructions

As discussed in Sankoff (1993:129) and confirmed with data collected from our fieldwork, there are a variety of ways that Tok Pisin speakers can express focus. Two strategies are relevant in this document, namely (i) clefting and (ii) fronting.

For (i), *em* is a focus marker that indexes a focus construction in Tok Pisin similar to *it*-clefting in English. Consider (2a-c) where the argument directly following *em* is focused.

- (2) a. *Em (\*i) Mari \*(i) giv-im mi wanpela samting.*  
 FOC/3SG (\*PM) Mary PM give-TR 1SG a/one something  
 ‘It was Mary who gave me something.’

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<sup>2</sup>List of abbreviations: PM: predicate marker; SG: singular; PL: plural; HAB: habitual; TR: transitive; PST: past tense; FUT: future/irrealis; PROG: progressive; PREP: preposition; REL: relativiser

- b. Nogat, em (\*i) wantok ia put-im long maunten ia.  
 no FOC/3SG (\*PM) friend DET put-TR PREP mountain DET  
 ‘No, it was my friend who was wearing [it] on the mountainside.’ (Sankoff 1993:130)
- c. Em [dispela meri]<sub><i></sub> mi singaut-im [ ]<sub><i></sub>.  
 FOC/3SG [this woman] 1SG call-TR [ ]  
 ‘It was this woman I called.’ (Woolford 1979:84)

- o In (2a-c), the position of the predicate marker *i* differentiates the function of *em* as a 3SG pronoun vs. a focus marker. That is, in a string like ([*em*]<sub>Subj.</sub> + *i*), *i* is a predicate marker agreeing with a 3rd person subject (e.g. (2a)); in a string like ([*em*+NP]<sub>Subj.</sub> + *i*), *em* functions like a focus marker (2b).
- o As seen in (2c), an argument can be both fronted and clefted. However, because of the marked word order, this type of construction would be restricted to specific contexts where the argument is not being introduced ‘out of the blue’.

For (ii), arguments can be fronted with a resumptive pronoun occupying the original position, such as subject (3a) and object (3b) arguments.

- (3) a. Christina<sub><i></sub> em<sub><i></sub> i-painim bikpela sik nau.  
 Christina 3SG PM-find-TR big sick now  
 ‘Christina, she got very sick.’ (Sankoff 1993:127)
- b. [(Dispela) Banana]<sub><i></sub>, mi no kaikai \*(em)<sub><i></sub>.  
 [(This) banana], 1SG NEG eat \*(3SG)  
 ‘This banana, I don’t eat it.’
- c. Banana, [(tasol) em]<sub><k></sub> mi no save kaikai [ ]<sub><k></sub>.  
 Banana, [(only) 3SG] 1SG NEG eat  
 ‘Bananas, only them, I do not eat.’
- d. Mi save laik-im olgeta man, tasol Jon, [(tasol) em]<sub><i></sub> mi no save laik-im [ ]<sub><i></sub>.  
 1SG HAB like-TR all men, but John, (only 3SG), 1SG NEG HAB like-TR [ ]  
 ‘I like all the men, but John only him I do not like.’

- o In (3c-d), both the object argument as well as the resumptive pronoun have been fronted. Here, adding *tasol* helps to further emphasise and highlight the fronted object for a specific reason or following from a specific context.

## 1.6 Passive constructions

According to our fieldwork, there is no passive construction in Tok Pisin. See Woolford (1979:97–105) for the same observation.

## 2 Basic exceptive constructions

### 2.1 Exceptive markers

Languages have different ways of expressing exception, where an element(s) is excluded or excepted from a general claim, larger domain or set of elements (Pérez-Jiménez & Moreno-Quibén 2012). True Exceptives constructions (EPs) typically consist of two parts: the set or domain from which the exception is to be made, the associate phrase or antecedent, and a corresponding exceptive phrase, which consists of the item(s) to be excluded from the associate’s domain.

Tok Pisin has no true exceptives. Two markers are used to facilitate exceptive-like expressions are *tasol* and *sapos*:

1. *tasol*, translated as ‘except’/‘but’/‘however’, or ‘only’/‘just’/‘nothing else’/‘alone’/‘merely’ (Glosbe; Tok Pisin English Dictionary), can be used (optionally) for exceptive-like expressions, as in (4). It can also be used as a coordinating conjunction, as in (5).

(4) *Exceptive-like construction with **tasol***

Mi kaikai olgeta kaikai **tasol** mi no kaikai banana.  
 1SG eat all food **except** 1SG NEG eat banana

‘I ate all the food except I don’t eat bananas.’

(5) *Construction using **tasol** as coordinating conjunction*

Em i no laik har-im dispela tok, **tasol** mi laik tumas long har-im.  
 3SG PM NEG want hear-TR this talk, **but** 1SG want greatly PREP hear-TR.

‘He does not want to hear this talk, but I do, very much.’ (Verhaar 1995:423)

2. *sapos*, translated as ‘if’/‘supposing that’/‘suppose’/‘unless’ (Glosbe; Tok Pisin English Dictionary) is also used in some data collected, as in (6a). In other environments, it functions as a subordinating conjunction to express conditional-like exceptions, as in (6b).

(6) a. *Exceptive-like construction with **sapos***

Yu bai no inap pads-im eksem **sapos** yu no ritim dispela buk.  
 you FUT NEG able pass-TR exam **unless** you NEG read-TR this book

‘You will not pass the exam unless/if you (don’t) read this book.’

b. *Construction using **sapos** as conditional conjunction*

**Sapos** i tru em i laik mek-im, orait em i ken mek-im nau tasol.  
**If** PM true 3SG PM want make-TR, so 3SG PM can make-TR now just.

‘If it is true he wants to do it, he can do it right now.’ (Verhaar 1995:435)

For the rest of this handout we will focus solely on *tasol*, as it expresses the closest realisation to the prototypical ‘true’ exceptive structure, i.e. [associate phrase] + [exceptive phrase], in Tok Pisin.

## 2.2 Lexical category investigations

For constructing exceptive expressions, *tasol* functions as a coordinating conjunction that connects two full clauses.

a. The position of the two clauses cannot be swapped, i.e. \*[*tasol* S1], S2

(7) a. *Two independent clauses*

Olgeta gels i go long nambis. Elisabet i no go.  
 all girls PM go PREP beach. Elisabeth PM NEG go

‘All the girls went to the beach. Elisabeth did not go.’

b. *Two independent clauses joined with **tasol***

Olgeta gels i go long nambis, **tasol** Elisabet i no go..  
 all girls PM go PREP beach, **but** Elisabeth PM NEG go

‘All the girls went to the beach, except Elisabeth (didn’t go).’

c. *Intended fronting of **tasol** clause*

\***tasol** Elisabet i no go, olgeta gels i go long nambis.  
**but** Elisabeth PM NEG go, all girls PM go PREP beach

‘\*But Elisabeth did not go, all the girls went to the beach.’

d. *Intended fronting of **tasol** clause with ellipses*

\***tasol** Elisabet, olgeta gels i go long nambis.  
**but** Elisabeth, all girls PM go PREP beach

(Intended: ‘Except for Elisabeth, all the girls went to the beach.’)

b. *tasol* only coordinates full clauses or like elements, [ S1 *tasol* S2 ] but not [ S1 *tasol* NP ] (i.e. ellipsis is impossible)

- (8) a. Mi save laik-im olgeta kaikai, **tasol** banana (tasol em) mi no save laik-im.  
 1SG HAB like-TR all food, **but** banana (only 3SG) 1SG NEG HAB like-TR  
 ‘I like all food except bananas. ((only them) I don’t like).’  
 b. \*Mi save laik-im olgeta kaikai, **tasol** banana.  
 1SG HAB like-TR all food, **but** banana  
 (Intended: ‘I like all food except bananas.’)

c. Non-exceptive uses

- o Post-nominally, *tasol* is also used as an adjective or adverb to express ‘only’ or ‘just’ (9a-e). Similar to (9a), the combination of a pronoun followed by *tasol* creates an emphatic pronoun, similar to *yet* (‘self’) and ‘*wanpela*’ (‘a’/‘one’) (Mühlhäusler 1985:344). The choice between these three is dictated by context alone to avoid ambiguity with the reflexive *em yet* (‘himself’) and the interjection *em tasol* (‘that’s all’) (9f).
- o *tasol* can also be used as an interjection used to express finality, ‘that’s all’, or ‘the end’ (9f). The use demonstrated in (9f) is commonly used to end stories and letters as well (Siegel 1981).

(9) *Uses of tasol*

- a. Mari **tasol** i lap.  
 Mary **only** PM laugh  
 ‘Only Mary laughed.’  
 b. Mari i lap **tasol**.  
 Mary PM laugh **only**  
 ‘Mary just laughed (and did nothing else).’  
 c. Mari i lap nau **tasol**.  
 Mary PM laugh now **just**  
 ‘Mary laughed just now. (temporal)’  
 d. \***Tasol** Mari i lap.  
**only** Mary PM laugh  
 (intended: ‘Only/But Mary laughed.’)  
 e. *tasol used both as a conjunction and as an adjective*  
 Mi save laik-im olgeta kaikai, **tasol** banana **tasol** em mi no save laik-im.  
 1SG HAB like-TR all food, **but** banana **only** it 1SG NEG HAB like-TR.  
 ‘I like all (the) food, but it’s only bananas I don’t like.’  
 f. **Em tasol**. No gat tok.  
**That’s all**. NEG have talk  
 ‘That’s all. (I have/There is) Nothing more to say.’

### 3 Word order in exceptives

#### 3.1 Position of exceptive structures

The exceptive-like marker appears clause-initial in Tok Pisin, regardless of the potential associate’s grammatical relation. Given this consistent positioning, it is likely that all exceptive-like clauses are free not connected.

- (10) a. *Subject associate*  
 Olgeta lain i no amamas, **tasol** Markus i amamas.  
 all people PM NEG happy, **but** Markus PM happy  
 ‘All the people are unhappy, **except** Markus (is happy).’  
 b. *Object associate*  
 Mi kaikai olgeta kaikai **tasol** mi no kaikai banana  
 1SG eat all food **but** 1SG NEG eat banana

‘I eat all the food, **except** I don’t eat bananas.’

c. *Indirect object associate*

Mi sal-im ol buk i go long ol sumatin, **tasol** mi no sal-im ol buk i go long Mari.  
 1SG send-TR PL book PM go PREP PL student, **but** 1SG NEG send-TR PL book PM go PREP Mary

‘I sent the books to the students **except** (not) to Mari.’

d. *Temporal adjunct associate*

Mi no save kaikai kaukau long moning, **tasol** nau moning mi kaikai.  
 1SG NEG HAB eat sweet.potato PREP morning, **but** now morning 1SG eat.

‘I never eat sweet potatoes in the morning, but this morning I ate (it).’

- o In transitive sentences with a subject associate, the following transitive clause with the exceptive can have the object omitted if it is stated explicitly and remains unchanged in the main clause. The second clause is still judged as ‘grammatically complete’ as evidenced by the presence of the transitive *-im* suffix on the verb in (11).

(11) Olgeta gels i no save laik-im banana, **tasol** Elisabet i save laik-im \_\_.  
 All girls PM NEG HAB like-TR banana, **but** Elisabeth PM HAB like-TR \_\_  
 ‘All the girls don’t like bananas, but Elisabeth does like (them).’

- o For object exceptions following object associates, the object of the second clause can be fronted as in (12) with the format NP+‘em’. Compare this with (4) which has the object in the prototypical clause-final position.

(12) Mi kaikai olgeta kaikai tasol banana (tasol) em<i> mi no kaikai [\_\_]<i>.  
 1SG eat all food but banana (only) 3SG 1SG NEG eat [\_\_]  
 ‘I ate all the food except (only) the banana, I did not eat (it).’

### 3.2 Connected exceptives

Connected exceptives are not allowed in Tok Pisin (13a-b).

- (13) a. *Intended connected exceptive with ellipses*  
 \*olgeta gels **tasol** Elisabet i go long nambis .  
 all girls **but** Elisabeth PM go PREP beach  
 (Intended: ‘All the girls except Elisabeth went to the beach.’)
- b. *Intended connected exceptive with full clause*  
 \*olgeta gels **tasol** Elisabet i no go i go long nambis.  
 all girls **but** Elisabeth PM NEG go PM go PREP beach  
 (Intended: ‘All the girls except Elisabeth went to the beach.’)

## 4 Constituency evidence for connected exceptives

Not applicable as Tok Pisin has no true exceptives. See §2.1.

### 4.1 Coordination

Not applicable as Tok Pisin has no true exceptives. See §2.1.

### 4.2 Displacement

Not applicable as Tok Pisin has no true exceptives. See §2.1.

### 4.3 Other

Not applicable as Tok Pisin has no true exceptives. See §2.1.

## 5 Characteristics of the associate

### 5.1 Quantificational associates

As all exceptive-like structures in Tok Pisin are free exceptives (i.e. the clause containing the exception follows the main clause), there is no restriction on the types of quantificational phrases that can be used as the associate.

- (14) a. Tripela gel go long nambis **tasol** Mary (tasol) em i no go.  
 three girl go PREP beach **but** Mary only she PM NEG go  
 ‘Three girls go to the beach, but just Mary does not go.’
- b. Planti lain i save laik long go long nambis, **tasol** mi (tasol) save les long go long  
 Most people PM HAB like PREP go PREP beach, **but** 1SG (only) HAB dislike PREP go PREP  
 nambis.  
 beach  
 ‘Most people like to go to the beach, but only I dislike going to the beach.’

### 5.2 Implicit associates

Since *tasol* acts as a conjunction, two independent clauses can be joined together which can appear similar in construction to an implicit associate. The inclusion of an object in (15) is strongly preferred but can be optional if the context is explicit.

- (15) Em i no kaikai ?(wanpela samting), tasol em i kaikai banana (tasol).  
 3SG PM NEG eat (a something), but 3SG PM eat banana (only)  
 ‘He did not eat (anything), but he did eat a banana.’  
 (Intended: ‘He doesn’t eat, except for bananas.’)

## 6 Characteristics of the exception

### 6.1 Categorical options

In Tok Pisin, the exceptive construction with *tasol* requires the full expression of the clause (a CP). See §2.2 (b) for justification.

### 6.2 Case marking on nominal exceptives

Not applicable as Tok Pisin has no true exceptives. See §2.1.

## 7 Clausal exceptives

### 7.1 Possible expression of full clause exceptions

All exceptive-like structures in Tok Pisin are full clauses. See §2.2 (b) for justification.

### 7.2 Multiple exceptions

Multiple exceptions are allowed since the exceptive-like structure in Tok Pisin always requires the realisation of the full clause (16).

- (16) Olgeta boi i danis wantaim olgeta gel **tasol** Mari i no danis wantaim Jon.  
 every boy PM dance together.with every girl but Mary PM NEG dance together.with John  
 ‘Every boy danced with every girl, **but** Mary did not dance with John.’

### 7.3 Sluicing interpretations

Not applicable as Tok Pisin has no true exceptives. See §2.1.

## 7.4 Clausal/speaker-oriented adverbs

Not applicable as Tok Pisin has no true exceptives. See §2.1.

## 7.5 Preposition stranding

Not applicable as Tok Pisin has no true exceptives. See §2.1.

## 7.6 Internal reading with ‘same, different’

Since Tok Pisin disallows ellipses as well as connected exceptive constructions, the meaning of any exceptive-like construction in relation to ‘same’ or ‘different’ would be made explicit by the subsequent clause.

## 7.7 Binding diagnostics

The sentences in (17a-b) prove consistent with the previous analysis of *tasol* as a conjunction between two independent clauses with separate binding domains. In (17b), the ungrammaticality of the sentence demonstrates that the second clause is a second binding domain since the anaphor ‘herself’ does not have a viable binder within its binding domain.

- (17) a. Mari i save laik-im olgeta lain tasol em i no save laik-im [em yet].  
 Mary PM HAB like-TR all people except 3SG PM NEG HAB like-TR [3SG self]  
 ‘Mary likes everyone, but she does not like herself.’
- b. \*Olgeta lain i save laik-im Mary tasol em yet i no save laik-im.  
 all people PM HAB like-TR Mary but 3SG self PM NEG HAB like-TR  
 (intended: ‘Everyone likes Mary, but herself does not like (her).’)

## 7.8 Island sensitivity

Since Tok Pisin expresses exceptions with full clauses that are free, “extracting” the exceptive-like construction is irrelevant and thus, island sensitivity tests are not applicable. However, see below for attempts to further support the judgement that *tasol* functions as a coordinating conjunction.

### 7.8.1 Adjunct island

- (18) Jon i no amamas bikos nogat lain i lap long tok pilai bilong em, tasol mama bilong  
 John PM NEG happy because no people PM laugh PREP talk play POSS 3SG, but mother POSS  
 em tasol i bin lap.  
 3SG only PM PST laugh  
 ‘John is unhappy because nobody laughed at his jokes, but only his mother laughed.’  
 (Intended: ‘John was unhappy [because everyone [except his mother] laughed at his jokes].’)

### 7.8.2 Complex NP islands

- (19) Mi har-im [tok.win olsem olgeta lain i stil-im mani long Mary], [tasol Jon tasol i no  
 1SG hear-TR [rumour like every people PM steal-TR money PREP Mary] [but John only PM NEG  
 stil-im mani long Mary].  
 steal-TR money PREP Mary]  
 ‘I heard this rumour that everyone stole money from Mary, but only John didn’t steal money from Mary.’  
 (Intended: ‘I heard [a rumour that everyone stole money from Mary except John].’)

### 7.8.3 Relative clause islands

Several relativisation strategies have been reported for Tok Pisin, which may differ across regional dialects as well as between speaker generations (Sankoff & Brown 1976; Mühlhäusler 1977:572–573; Verhaar 1995:211–234).



- (20) Mi luk-im wanpela man, em i no kar-im ol narapela samting, [tasol em i kar-im wanpela  
 1SG see-TR a man, 3SG PM NEG carry-TR PL none thing, [but he PM carry-TR a  
 kakaruk tasol].  
 chicken only]  
 ‘I saw a man, who didn’t carry anything except he carried just a chicken.’  
 (*Intended: ‘I saw [a man [who carried nothing except a chicken]].’*)

## 8 Problematic data

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## 9 Additional observations and comments

The above observations support the conclusion that exceptions in Tok Pisin are expressed by optionally conjoining two contrasting independent clauses together with *tasol*. In these environments, *tasol* functions as a coordinating conjunction.

## 10 Consultant

- Our language consultant is a 35-year-old female and a native speaker of Tok Pisin.
- Tok Pisin is her main language and she uses it at home, as well as at work and outside of the home. English is the only other language used on a daily basis, although the consultant also knows some French, Japanese, and Iatmul.
- She was born and grew up in Wewak, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea. She has not lived anywhere outside of Papua New Guinea, but spent 5 years in the Manus province and 2 years in the Eastern Highlands province.
- Her highest level of education is a BA University Degree.

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