 FINAL REPORT TO MARSDEN FUND

Pasifika Languages of Manukau Project

2000 - 2002

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Short title Languages of the Manukau region

Contract number AUT 901

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               Donna Starks, University of Auckland

Funding 2000-02 $80,000 (incl GST) pa
1 Goal of the programme

Summary goal:

To investigate the use of and attitudes to the four main Pasifika languages in the Manukau region [Cook Islands Maori, Niuean, Samoan and Tongan], and to contribute to their maintenance.

2 Research objectives

The contracted objectives are to investigate:

1 the current state of the major languages of Manukau. Who speaks them, in what situations, and to which interlocutors?
2 the interaction of the languages in the Manukau community, specifically English with the different minority languages. What part do networks within and between the language communities play in patterns of use?
3 people’s attitudes towards their own languages and English. What are the social meanings of languages and language varieties here? What is the identity value of language for the different communities? How does this affect usage? What does it signify for theories of language and identity?
4 maintenance and shift among the minority languages of the area in their meeting with English. What are the main social factors implicated in their shift or maintenance? What role do attitudes play?

* Achievement of the objectives

Progress of the research

2000
The Languages of Manukau project was initiated with a pilot study in 1999-2000, which provided considerable initial information on the situation of languages in the Manukau area, based on 1996 census data and 17 interviews. The report on the pilot study was presented to a community meeting in April 2000 to launch the main project. This meeting initiated an extensive process of community involvement and consultation, which changed the approach of the main project to foreground Pasifika involvement and input. The re-orientation was most clearly evidenced in the expansion of the research group to include elders and academic advisors for each of the four participating communities (see section 5 below). These leaders guided the development of the multilingual questionnaire designed to elicit the project’s data.

2001
The second year focused on data gathering - conducting the major survey of language usage and attitudes which is at the heart of the project. The year’s work encompassed the completion of the questionnaire and translation into the four Pasifika languages. The questionnaire is 27 pages long, and covers demographic information, family history, language fluency, language use, language attitudes, and issues of language maintenance. Four bilingual interviewers were trained, and 120
interviews recorded with Pasifika residents of Manukau (in the language of their choice), 30 from each community. The sample was structured into young, middle and older age groups, equal numbers of women and men, with representation from both island- and NZ-born. The tapes from these interviews were annotated by bilingual research assistants and the questionnaires checked, coded and prepared for quantitative data entry and qualitative analysis.

2002
Data coding was completed in the summer of 2001/02, and the quantitative data entered into SPSS during the first half of 2002. Qualitative comments from each interview were summarized by the bilingual research assistants and entered on individual spreadsheets in the second half of 2002. The quantitative data has undergone considerable analysis in SPSS to produce the findings summarized below. The qualitative data has been selectively scanned for pertinent material. More analysis will be undertaken in 2003 (see section 4 below). Once the first round of analysis was available, our priority was to present back to the community the findings from the information they had provided. This was done primarily through hosting community meetings with each of the four groups (see below) late in 2002.

Results
Overall, there is a clear trend indicated by many of the factors analyzed which point to a shift away from the community language and towards English by these Pasifika groups. This is evident particularly on age-graded dimensions, such as language use to younger family members and differences between language use in interviewees’ childhood homes compared with their current homes.

Our findings show some strong similarities across the four Pasifika communities. There are no statistically significant differences between the four community groups for nine social variables which are known to affect language attitudes & language use. These were ethnic group membership, ethnic identity, care-givers’ cultural and linguistic background, place of birth, where grew up, schooling, interviewees’ evaluation of the ‘traditionalness’ of the family the participant grew up in, and their similar evaluation of their current household.

Traditional communities with strong social networks
All four communities show evidence of strong network ties operating between community members, as evidenced in criteria such as attendance at community events, visits to and from the islands, and church attendance. Strong community ties provide the potential for greater community language use in all four Pasifika communities. The sole difference in social networks across the four Pasifika communities lies in a decline in church attendance for both the Cook Islands and Niuean communities (21/30 in each community). As language maintenance measures are often incorporated into church activities, this shift in attendance could have a long-term cumulative effect on community language use if other language maintenance efforts are not put in place.

Fluency
The majority of the sample is bilingual in their Community Language (CL) and English, with few who are monolingual in either only their CL or in English. Of the four
groups, Niueans have the least number of bilinguals (17/30) and greatest number of monolinguals (7/30), while Tongans are the most multilingual. 5/30 Tongans are able to speak languages other than English and Tongan. The most common third language in the sample is Samoan.

The majority of individuals in the sample report that they can understand, speak, read and write everything in their CL. However proficiency in the CL is in all communities age graded. While all of the older generation and most of the middle-aged are fluent in the CL, a large number of younger community members do not claim full fluency in the CL. Such age grading is a typical marker of inter-generational language shift away from the CL and towards the dominant language, in this case English.

Language of the interview
There is a statistically significant difference across the four Pasifika communities in what language was chosen for use in the interview. The CL was the preferred language in the Tongan (23/30) Cook Islands (22/30) and Samoan (19/30) communities, but not for the Niueans (14/30). On the basis of our analysis of the 1996 census data, the greater number of interviews in Cook Islands Maori, and the fewer in Samoan, was unexpected. The choice of language among bilingual speakers in these communities appears to serve as an integral marker of identity; one that has yet to be examined in the sociolinguistic literature to date.

Childhood language use
For all four communities, the language of interviewees’ childhood is remarkably similar. The majority reported learning their CL as their first language. Members in all four communities showed no significant differences in the language of the household they grew up in, with a strong preference for the CL in the home, a trend that has not continued into the present-day situation in Manukau. Consistent CL use in the childhood home was strongest amongst the Tongans (24/30), followed by the Cook Islanders (19/30), and the Samoans (17/30). Childhood CL use was weakest amongst the Niueans (15/30).

However, in all cases the level of use of the CL in the interviewee’s current household is well below that in their childhood household. This is particularly striking in the Samoan community, where only 3/30 report consistent use of Samoan in their present household.

Who speaks the language and to whom
Much of our questionnaire focussed on ‘who speaks what language to whom’ in Pasifika families in Manukau. Similar patterns are observed in the language used ‘to’ most types of family members. Significant differences between the communities only occurred in reported language use to teenagers and to children pre-school age and under. Few Niueans and Cook Islanders choose to always speak the CL to these addressees, and only one individual in the Cook Islands and Niuean samples reported that they always heard preschool children speaking their CL. The situation was much the same for reported teenage use. A decline in CL ‘by’ and ‘to’ teenagers and preschoolers is reported amongst the Tongan and Samoan communities but it is far less dramatic. This may be a sign of strong language shift amongst the youngest generation, a trend supported by age-grading in the Pasifika communities. In the Cook Islands community age-grading is most evident in declining CL skills of its youngest members, while in the Niuean community age-
grading is more apparent in the increasing English language skills of its youngest members. The trends in the Samoan and Tongan communities are more mixed.

**Community versus non-community domains**
The key language-maintenance domains of the home and church are losing ground in all four communities. Fewer individuals reported ‘always’ using the CL at home than in any other domain. Church, traditionally seen as central in the preservation of community languages, has undergone a significant shift in attendance in the Cook Islands and Niuean communities. In the Cook Islands community, there is also a shift in community language use within this domain. Few Cook Islanders reported Cook Islands Maori as the only language of church services (6/21). However, there is encouragement for language maintenance in the Cook Islands community, in that while the language used in the church service may be English, the language used afterwards outside church (16/21) is likely to be Cook Islands Maori. Given the traditional importance of the church in language maintenance efforts in the Pasifika communities, other community-based institutions, most notably schools and homes, are needed to support CL maintenance in these communities.

**Language attitudes**
International studies show that positive attitudes towards language maintenance can have an effect on the successful promotion of community languages. The study shows all four Pasifika communities believe that ‘it would matter’ if their CL was lost. A positive attitude is a necessary base on which to build language maintenance initiatives, and all four communities have this general positive attitude. The majority of the sample also report active interest in sending their pre-school children to be educated in the community language. This interest is slightly stronger for the Niuean and Samoan communities (28/30 each) than in the Cook Islands and Tongan ones (25/30 each).

Interest in CL schooling declines in all communities the further up the education system one moves, perhaps as a result of patterns in their own CL in schools. The most interest in primary education was expressed in the Samoan (25/30) and Niuean communities (22/30). For secondary education initiatives, the trend is identical. The Samoan community express the greatest interest (24/30).

For the issue of language maintenance, the most salient trends concern home language use. Language initiatives in the Pasifika homes of Manukau appear less than optimal. All four communities show little consistent effort to maintain their language in the home. Few have a rule to ‘speak only the CL at home’. A CL-only rule is slightly stronger amongst the Samoan community (8/30), but still a very minority view. This common trend of not re-enforcing CL use in the home is one which could have a major effect on language use within one or two generations.

**Identity**
Three differences were noted in responses to attitudinal questions affecting issues of identity and language maintenance. These are whether the interviewee planned to stay in New Zealand, whether they consider New Zealand as ‘home’, and their attitudes towards switching to English in front of a non-CL speaker. Although the majority of Tongans (26/30), Samoans (23/30) and Niueans (23/30) had long-term plans to stay in New Zealand, the majority of Cook Islanders did not share these views (14/30). This short-term view of New Zealand may increase the desirability for
language maintenance, and may have a positive effect on language use. A second key difference between the communities relates to assimilation into New Zealand society. This was measured, in part, by the question on whether they considered 'New Zealand as home'. Individuals and groups who wish to assimilate into a new culture often avoid the display of overt features of their ethnic culture, including language. In this sample, although the majority of Tongans (26/30) and Niueans (25/30) view New Zealand as 'home', only a minority of Cook Islanders (12/30) and Samoans (14/30) hold these views. The Cook Island and Samoan attitudes may reflect a desire to associate with their homeland, even if they have no plans to return. This association may again play a positive role in language attitudes.

**Language maintenance and shift**

Most communities believe that their language is strong in their homeland. Tongans are the most enthusiastic about the language maintenance in their homeland (29/30). Samoans were also highly confident, but less so (21/30), while Niueans (16/20) and Cook Islanders (12/30) expressed more doubts on the survival of their language in their respective home countries. All four communities expressed more concerns about the survival of the community in New Zealand with the greatest concerns expressed by the Cook Islands and Niuean communities (23/30).

Many striking individual comments were offered concerning shift away from the community language:

- 'I speak Niuean to my children and they respond in English.' (older Niuean man)
- 'Children need English to get a good job. You can't get a good job if you only know
  Cook Islands Maori.' (older Cook Islands woman)
- 'Learning to speak Samoan, and the culture, is important. But in New Zealand, English
  is also important, job-wise.' (young Samoan woman)
- 'If you can't speak Tongan, then you are not Tongan. Language tells us what you are.'
  (older Tongan man).

We note in particular the comments of a middle-aged, NZ-born Samoan man, who said that he feels marginalized from his own culture through not speaking the language, and embarrassment at not being able to converse with the elders. However our interview helped him resolve to act on this, by way of seeking out a Samoan language class.

Cook Islanders have the least supportive attitudes to their CL overall. Few regard Cook Islands Maori as a core social value (5/30). Most believe the language is in danger of being lost in both New Zealand (23/30) and the home islands (18/30), and they have the least interest in maintaining their language in the school system. These attitudes, together with other attitudes common to the four Pasifika communities (e.g., the lack of a rule to speak the CL at home) raises an alarm for immediate language awareness in the Cook Islands community. It is often the case that communities do not try to engage in language maintenance until the very last moment, when the task has become much more difficult.
Community meetings

In keeping with our involvement with the Pasifika communities of Manukau, developed over the three years of the project, our first commitment was to present back to the community the findings drawn from the information their members had provided in interview. To this end, four community meetings were held in November-December 2002.

The full research group for each community was involved in planning the community’s meeting, and in contextualizing and presenting the study and its findings. The presentations included brief descriptions of interviewing and coding processes by the bilingual interviewers and research assistants, contextualizing by academic advisors and elders, and presentation of findings by each group’s lead researcher (titles and presenters are listed under ‘other presentations’ in section 7 below). Lengthy discussions ensued on the floor of the meeting and continued over the refreshments provided. Most of the presentation and discussion in all meetings was conducted in the community language, with translation into English as necessary. Three out of four of the meetings were well attended, and feedback was strongly supportive of and positive towards the study, although questions were also raised concerning the use to which the findings would be put. A common thread at all meetings was the push for the findings to be used to advocate language maintenance to decision makers, especially in the education system.

In addition to the community meetings, the research team have given numerous academic conference presentations, particularly in 2001 and 2002. These are listed under section 7 below.

3 Additional work undertaken

The level of community involvement and feedback incorporated into the programme after the first six months was considerably greater than envisaged when it was proposed and contracted. While on the one hand this has undoubtedly reduced the tidiness of the programme’s conduct, and postponed production of some of the envisaged academic outputs, the prioritization of community needs and involvement has proved essential, both on the principled grounds of the right of the researched to be involved in the research process, and on the practical grounds that without such involvement the programme itself would have been much less rich, possibly mistaken in its interpretations and conclusions, and even de-legitimized or jeopardized.

The Marsden grant has been the primary funding for the project, providing for research on three of the Pasifika groups. It helped attract the additional funding needed to study all four groups, primarily through a substantial two-year grant from the University of Auckland’s Woolf Fisher Research Centre.

Additional work flowing from our language maintenance goal includes the occasions on which the research team have been called to present our work and findings in support of language maintenance advocacy, particularly to governmental bodies and officials within the education system.
The project has led directly to other language projects in the Pasifika communities of the Manukau area, particularly Niuean. A protocol developed for the current programme has been adapted by another Pasifika communities project.

A project on maintenance of te reo Maori in the Manukau area was conducted in parallel to our Pasifika research programme by Ms Arapera Ngaha (University of Auckland’s James Henare Maori Research Centre) and completed in 2001. Ms Ngaha reported the project in her MA thesis (supervised by Donna Starks) and received First Class Honours for the degree.

4 Future directions

Future work on the Pasifika Languages of Manukau has several strands:

First, completion of work on the immediate database during 2003 includes further analysis, particularly of the qualitative data, and refining of quantitative analysis and results for writeup and academic publication. The priority given to community presentation over academic publication means that the preparation of written version papers covering our final findings has not yet occurred, as we had envisaged at the start of the programme. Our draft conference papers listed in under 7 will form the basis of our initial written publications.

Secondly, our commitment to language maintenance advocacy continues with a presentation in Wellington in the next few months of the study and its findings to government officials and (we hope) ministers. Bilingual information pamphlets on the project’s findings for each community will be published, and a project website created to carry all available material. These activities will be supported by our own institutions. Maximum public coverage of the work and its implications will be sought at this point.

Thirdly, a new programme building on aspects of the current database which remain unanalyzed plus new work is planned for 2004-06, and is the subject of an application to the Marsden Fund in the 2003 round (‘Pasifika Languages and Identities in Manukau’, 03-UOA-88).

Lastly, there are two further avenues of future work which the research team will pursue: more applied language-maintenance study for which we will seek education funding; and research on the state of the languages in the home islands themselves, derived from the concerns expressed by our interviewees.

Involvement in the current project has also proved a stimulus to Pasifika scholars and students involved in our team, with, for example, one academic advisor about to begin doctoral studies on the sociolinguistics of his community language and one of our bilingual interviewers has enrolled in a Masters in Education on bilingual education.

5 Personnel
The full team of people involved over the three years of the project numbers more than twenty – an academic advisor, elder, interviewer and research assistant from each of the four Pasifika communities, plus the four researchers, and several other research administrators and assistants. All have their contribution recognized financially by salary, wages, koha and/or expenses. The advisors and elders played an integral role in the development of the questionnaire, training of interviewers, location of interviewees, and feedback to their communities particularly through community meetings held in late 2002. The academic advisors are largely staff of the Centre for Pacific Studies at the University of Auckland, and most of the interviewers and bilingual research assistants are students in the same Centre. The full research team is:

**Researchers:**
- Allan Bell, Auckland University of Technology
- Donna Starks, University of Auckland
- Karen Davis, Manukau Institute of Technology
- Melenaite Taumoefolau, University of Auckland

**Academic advisors:**
- Vavao Fetui, Rangi Moeka`a, Nuhisifa Williams, Melenaite Taumoefolau

**Elders:**
- Tose Tuhipa, Pita Williams, Viliami `Alofi, Tere Tarapu

**Interviewers:**
- Nga Puna, Vasilini Faletau, Ma`ina Field, Ofania Ikiua

**Research assistants:**
- Tenoa Puna, Merry Ane Heka, Helen Tanielu, Malia Talakai

**Administrators:**
- Susie Marsh, Ofania Ikiua, George Major, Alan Wendt
6 Financial review

The financial statement is appended.

Budget variances

Research/technical assistants:
The requirement for these workers concentrated into the last two years of the project, with less empirical work done in the first year than originally scheduled.

Indirect costs:
Similarly, some of these concentrated towards the end of the project.

Total:
The $7910 under-spend in year 1 appears in year 2 as extra income. This duplication creates an apparent $7910 extra budgeted income, which is not the case. Total budget and spending for the project is the allocated $240,000.

7 Presentations and publications

The following presentations were given and publications appeared during the three-year term of the Marsden funding. There has also been good media coverage at certain stages of the project.

Publications


Conference presentations


**Other presentations**


Manukau is New Zealand's most multilingual area. The Pasifika Languages of Manukau Project has been investigating the use of, and attitudes to, the four main Pasifika languages there - Tongan, Samoan, Niuean and Cook Islands Maori - with the intention of contributing to their maintenance.

The three-year project has researched the languages through interviews using a 27-page questionnaire. 120 interviews were recorded with young, middle and older age groups, equal numbers of women and men, and representation from island- and NZ-born. The questionnaire asks for demographic information, family history, language fluency, language use, language attitudes, and issues of language maintenance.

In all four communities fluency in the community language is age graded. While all of the older generation and most of the middle-aged are fluent, a large number of younger community members do not claim full fluency in their community language. Such age grading is a typical marker of inter-generational language shift away from the community language and towards English. At this time, few people are monolingual in either English or the community language, most have some degree of fluency in both languages.

All four communities show strong network ties operating between community members, and this gives the potential for greater community language use. There is however a decline in church attendance for both the Cook Islands and Niuean communities. Most interviewees grew up speaking their community language in the home. However, in all cases the level of use of the community language in the interviewee's current household is well below that in their childhood household. Few Niueans and Cook Islanders choose to always speak the community language to preschoolers, and only one individual in the Cook Islands and Niuean samples reported that they heard preschool children speaking the language.

The study shows that all four Pasifika communities believe that ‘it would matter’ if their community language was lost. A positive attitude is a necessary base on which to build language maintenance initiatives, and all four communities share this general positive attitude. Support for preschool provision of the community language is strong, but interest in community language education declines the further up the education system one moves. While most Tongans and Niueans view New Zealand as ‘home’, only a minority of Cook Islanders and Samoans hold these views. All four communities expressed more concerns about the survival of the community in New Zealand with the greatest concerns expressed by the Cook Islands and Niuean communities.
The findings of the project were presented back to the Pasifika communities at four meetings held in Manukau at the end of 2002.