

LANGUAGE POLICY: THE CASE OF SAMOA

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Introduction

Samoa lies in the middle of the South Pacific, in the heart of Polynesia, and is made up of two major islands, Upolu, home to the capital Apia, and Savai'i, and two small ones, Apolima and Manono. The country has a total land area of 2,934 square kilometres.

Samoa was the first Polynesian nation to re-establish independence in the 20th century, under the name 'Western Samoa', in 1962. In 1997, the official name of the country became 'Samoa'. The population, estimated in July 2005 at 177,287, is over 92% Polynesian, with nearly all others being of mixed European-Polynesian descent. The literacy rate is 99.7%. There are 141 primary, 24 secondary and 1 primary-secondary government schools and 33 mission and 7 private non-government schools.³

While there is no explicit legislation defining the official status of languages in Samoa, that status is implicit in Samoa's constitution, where Samoan and English are given official recognition with reference to three aspects: right to a fair trial (Section 9), languages of the legislative assembly (Section 54), and authoritative texts (Section 112). Further evidence of the implicit official languages policy is found in the bilingual policy in education, and the numerous domains, such as formal ceremonies, the judiciary and the media, where the two languages are used to convey the same message.

Since 1995, and more particularly in the last five years, the Samoa Ministry of Education Sports and Culture has been actively engaged in language policy development as part of a continuous process to drive a

³<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ws.html> and <http://www.spc.int/prism/country/ws/stats/soc/teachers.htm> accessed 23/2/2006

national language plan encompassing all sectors of society. The work of the last ten years builds primarily on Samoa's prior history of implicit and explicit language policies that arose out of contact with the outside world. It is this history from the time of contact that provides the impetus for change and hence the new policy directions.

Philosophical understandings

Education policies and social justice

Education policies in many countries today point to the important role of education in providing a just society, one that meets the criterion of equity. During Samoa's policy development process, the consensus was that equity contained the notion of equal opportunity, the idea that providing all individuals with equal access to schooling ensures a fair system.

Social justice in an education system is both distributive and relational, concerned with the individual's fair share as well as social cooperation, the interconnections between individuals in the society.

Education is thus a vital factor in the relationships between the individual, the community and the nation. Education policies and practices in education govern and regulate those relationships and the extent to which people are able to participate in education, and consequently in the society at large. One such area of policy is language.

Language is fundamental to human life and permeates all aspects of society. It defines us as a people, yet also differentiates us as individuals. In education, for example, deliberate policies about languages of instruction and examination act as criteria for determining who will complete different levels of education. At the classroom level, language becomes the means for accessing learning to a greater or lesser degree. The effectiveness with which the language of instruction is used to convey thought processes in the completion of school tasks is what success depends on. The extent to which we master the languages for

learning directly impacts on the extent to which we can participate in our societies. As such, languages in education structure our social, political and economic relationships and determine who has access to social, political, and economic power (Tollefson 1991). An important role of language policy, therefore, is the determination of which languages are to be used in relation to the social justice aims of education and national strategic goals, and the identification of mechanisms to provide students with the necessary proficiency to learn and display learning through the medium of those languages.

Though motivated by different reasons, language policy choices for teaching and learning inevitably control accessibility of knowledge and successful achievement. Whenever a person has to learn a new language to have access to education, language becomes a factor in structuring and ordering social relations (Candlin 1997). When educational access is contested on the basis of ability in one language, such as English, over another, such as an indigenous language, social injustice potentially becomes embedded within that system as the language skills readily available to some sectors of the population become the means for determining progression in the system. "Both governments and social institutions then must effectively and equitably meet the needs of the population so that groups that vary in linguistic repertoire have an equal opportunity to participate in their government and to receive services from their government" (Robinson 1988).

Language rights within global and regional frameworks

The Convention on the Rights of the Child

Language is affirmed as an important element of social justice in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Articles 29 and 30 explicitly protect children's rights to their language(s).

Article 29.1.(c)

States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

(c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, *language* and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living ... [emphasis added]

Article 30

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.

The Convention has been ratified by every country in the world except two. Policies for languages in education can either enhance or undermine these rights. In this regard UNESCO sets out three essential guideline principles on their approach to language and education going into the twenty-first century. UNESCO:

- supports mother tongue instruction as a means of improving educational quality by building upon the knowledge and experience of learners and teachers
- supports bilingual or multilingual education at all levels of education as a means of promoting both social and gender equality and as key elements of linguistically diverse societies
- supports language as an essential component of inter-cultural education in order to encourage understanding between different population groups and ensure respect for fundamental rights.

Language and Education For All; Forum Basic Education Action Plan

The vision of the World Declaration on Education for All (Jomtien 1990; Dakar 2000), is that all children, young people and adults have the human right to benefit from an education that will meet their basic learning needs. “Basic learning needs comprise both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy, and problem-solving), and the basic learning content (such as the knowledge, skills values, and attitudes) required by human beings to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in

development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning” (UNESCO Education Concepts).

The Dakar 2000 Education for All Framework for Action adopted six goals as the basis for action.

EFA Goal 1: expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

EFA Goal 2: ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

EFA Goal 3: ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes.

EFA Goal 4: achieving a 50 per cent improvement in all levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for adults.

EFA Goal 5: eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls’ full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

EFA Goal 6: improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

The Pacific nations are active participants in their commitment to these goals. Within the context of the development of basic education, ministers of education of the Pacific Islands Forum affirmed a vision for basic education and acknowledged the value of using the indigenous language as the language of instruction in the early years of education (Forum Secretariat 2001a: 5). The ministers in 2004 noted the concerns

raised by the USP on the inclusion of indigenous language and culture in Pacific education, and agreed to consider adopting national language policies as part of the education planning process (Forum Secretariat 2001b).

Why have language policies?

Where rights, freedoms, and power are associated with language; when language is a barrier to participation in society and people do not have access to immediate or long-term social rights as a result of the language they speak, language policies outline remedies to redress such denials and can focus on individual or group rights or both (Barnaby 1996: 8⁴). When the viability and stability of a language is at stake, when the viability of a people is at stake, language policies can target language attitudes, language status, language structures, language re-generation and modernisation.

Language policy – definition

In this report, language policy is understood to be both implicit and explicit. Both types of policy affect the viability of a language. Implicit language policy, whilst unstated, is nevertheless influential in affecting language attitudes with consequential effects on language status and structures. Implicit language policy is found in common practice, accepting things as part of natural practice without question. Implicit language policy is random, subject to the whim of individuals and institutions, and disguised in the actions of government, employers, business, the media and community groups. An example of implicit policy is the language used in an institution's meetings, or in the internal communication of the institution.

Explicit language policy is consciously planned, stated and deliberately implemented action to affect (1) the status of a language—its position

⁴ The editors apologise for being unable to give the full bibliographical details of this source in the reference list.

relative to that of another language or other languages; (2) the corpus of a language—the development and regulation of the forms of the language itself; and (3) the rights of any or all linguistic groups to use their language in whatever domains are specified. Explicit language policies are usually long-term, sustained and consistently applied.

Consequences of language contact

It could be argued that our forefathers made a conscious choice for English because of its prevalence in the world of commerce, industry and many spheres of modern life, while retaining the status of Samoan as the language of socio-cultural communication in the society at large. The developmental needs of Samoa as a growing nation in the international community resulted in English assuming importance as the language of academic advancement and economic progress.

The choice of English as the medium of instruction before the end of primary schooling, and using English competency as a criterion for scholarship selection, as well as having it as the other language in the constitution, sanctions its use for academic, scientific, and business discourse. Over time, this elevation of English has contributed to a school system that was to progressively sift students for further opportunity on the basis of their English competency. At the same time, a growing population of Samoan children use English for socialisation. The consequences of this are felt in all spheres of life from our constitution, to our homes, with a population that is increasingly and highly bilingual.

Associated with issues of status for Samoan are issues of standardisation, orthography, and modernisation. Often the arguments invoked for the exclusion of Samoan from spheres of activities associated with modernisation are based on its perceived structural limitations, such as inadequate vocabulary and discourse structures. Decisions are varied, uncoordinated, and hotly contested with traditionalists preferring terminology to be coined from traditional words, others preferring the expediency of transliteration, and many others preferring the

incorporation of English terms unchanged into Samoan language discourse.

The issues in relation to language use in education are very much part of language issues in society though with a specific focus on the role of the two languages and supporting materials. Among these are: the transition between Samoan as a medium instruction and English, and the timing of the switch; the differences between policy and actual classroom practice regarding the language of instruction; the ongoing place of Samoan in schools; the use of Samoan at tertiary level; the attitudes to Samoan as a language for academic development; the practical difficulties of developing curricula, materials, assessment, and providing training for teachers; the issues of standardisation and modernisation; and, more recently, the issue of language shift to English by urban children.

More far-reaching challenges, however, relate to the social consequences of language decisions in education relating to access, treatment and outcome. Among these are issues to do with: the diminished value and place of Samoan for learning in the transitional bilingual arrangement we have had since 1924; the impact of this on the ability of the majority of students to have access to education; the place of Samoan in the selection criteria for places in secondary and post-secondary education; the place of Samoan in tertiary education; the inadequate levels of numeracy and literacy in both Samoan and English; and the disparities of outcomes between urban and rural populations.

Developmentally, such issues have provided the triggers that bring us to language determination, a reappraisal of our linguistic, socio-political, and economic environment, and the implementation of concerted efforts to reassert Samoan as an equally valid language for learning, scientific dialogue and research, and for the expression of complex technological concepts commonly associated with modernisation.

Language planning policy in education

Language planning in education is critical from the point of view of distributing access, but also in the way it contributes to the structure of individual and group relations. Language and language learning influence social and economic relationships to the extent that it is one's ability to use the languages of schooling and society to display knowledge and understanding, which determines the level of education one completes and therefore employment opportunities. Our historical experiences with English attest to this. Acknowledging the close association between language policy and social relations, the *Western Samoa Education Policies 1995-2005* declare that, "a national language policy which considers current language practices and needs within the social and cultural context is of critical importance to the realisation of an education system characterised by equity, quality, relevancy and efficiency" (Government of Samoa 1995:7). We see language-planning policy not as an exclusively linguistic activity but one that is also political in the sense that it is tied to the way in which power is acquired. If language planning-policy were simply a linguistic solution, it would be oblivious to the social realities and needs of the community.

Our vision for languages and literacy in education

The *Western Samoa Education Policies 1995-2005* (Government of Samoa 1995:19) describes our vision for languages and literacy in education.

In terms of a language goal, it is generally accepted that:

a prime objective of the Samoa education system should be bilingualism - the production of bilingual individuals, fully literate in both Samoan and English.

To achieve this goal,

all schools will follow bilingual teaching methodologies that recognise Samoan as the first language of the vast majority of children;

basic literacy in Samoan will be established before the introduction of English – although provision for children whose first language is English will continue in both the government and non-government systems; Samoan and English must be taught systematically, according to an approved bilingual methodology; literacy programmes will ensure systematic teaching and learning of Samoan throughout primary schooling, and of English from Year 4 to Year 8.

The intent of the policy is clearly pluralistic bilingualism. A pluralistic bilingual education system seeks to ensure additive bilingualism: the maintenance and development of mother tongue proficiency whilst acquiring English. The goal remains consistent with the constitutional direction of a bilingual Samoa. The instructional arrangement, however, in the above policies is the transitional bilingual one adopted in 1924. A review of the bilingual policy in 1999-2000 is adamant that pluralistic bilingualism will not to be achieved through a transitional arrangement in which instruction time in the child's mother tongue is gradually reduced.

Transitional bilingualism

The transitional bilingual policy advocates:

(1) establishing Samoan literacy first, (2) introducing English at Year 4, (3) teaching Samoan throughout primary schools i.e. up to Year 8. In practice, Samoan as the medium of instruction terminates at Year 6 with the switch to English as the medium of instruction. English is introduced orally from as early as Year 1 in some schools and is taught as a subject generally from Years 4 to 6. At Year 8, after students will have been learning English only for five years (three as a subject, two as medium of instruction), a national selection exam is administered in English selecting students for places in the three main senior colleges.

Behind the end of using Samoan as the medium of instruction at the end of Year 6, a number of assumptions are evident.

Firstly, the expectation is that bilingual students will understand and complete task requirements through the medium of English, thereby overlooking the possibility that their first language may have a valuable role to play at various stages in the processes. By assuming that success in classroom learning is to be achieved solely through English, little or no consideration is given to students' proficiency in a first language. On the one hand, the practice has the effect of excluding Samoan from opportunities to develop the vocabulary and the mechanisms for its use in a wide range of contexts. On the other hand, it has the effect of withholding from speakers of Samoan equal opportunities to use their language to fully explore and develop concepts for learning. Both consequences impact on the way people perceive Samoan.

By excluding Samoan from the major part of the curriculum in late primary through to secondary school the transitional policy contributes to some of the attitudes towards Samoan, such as that it is not a valid language for school, thereby affecting its status relative to English. The overall effect is a devaluing of Samoan in the eyes of many children, their parents and the community, to the extent that its structural limitations are accepted as natural, and its minimal role for learning as inevitable.

By diminishing the role of Samoan in content area learning, the vast majority of students who will only have been learning English for three years as a subject from Years 4 to Year 6, are prevented from having an equal opportunity to learn challenging content and higher skills. This is because insufficient time has been given to the development of cognitive academic language and learning skills in Samoan. At a time when learning is becoming more abstract and demanding, students are also faced with having to learn the language (English) in which the concepts are expressed. By using Samoan, on the other hand, students will have equity in the acquisition and display of knowledge.

Evaluation of student outcomes indicates disparities between students from urban and rural areas, with urban students achieving higher English literacy levels. Whilst we cannot rule out the influences of other factors

such as teacher quality, resource quality and parental support, we can say with some degree of certainty that rural students with limited exposure to English are disadvantaged in the current bilingual arrangement which switches mediums of instruction at Year 7 and selects students for future opportunities on the basis of their weaker language, English. For rural students and many other fluent speakers of Samoan, their Samoan language ability is not an advantage in the transitional policy and practice.

While the current policy goals are for pluralistic bilingualism (acquiring high levels of ability in both languages), the current transitional arrangement is an instructional model that results in assimilatory or subtractive bilingualism (the first language is replaced by the second in all aspects of schooling).

Once English is introduced, there is a huge reduction in time allocation for Samoan in most of the schools observed. Samoan is perceived as a very useful foundation for the transition into English. Its own development and enrichment is secondary to the motivation for learning English for academic and economic advancement. However, Samoan is still considered valuable for cultural identity reasons.

To sum up, the transitional arrangement, when it terminates the use of Samoan as a medium of instruction at Year 6, has a number of consequences: (1) it limits the opportunities for developing cognitive academic language proficiency and literacy in Samoan; (2) it impacts on attitudes about the capacity of Samoan to perform higher level academic functions, thereby affecting Samoan language status; (3) it limits opportunities for language expansion; and (4) it contradicts the social justice principles of equity and quality in the Department of Education's policies.

From the point of view of English language development, a uniform transitional policy applied nationally is no longer appropriate in some contexts. There is evidence in some school communities of a shift to English by the younger generations. The transitional bilingual

arrangement, when it delays the formal introduction of English as a subject until Year 4, does not take into account these factors: (1) it no longer suits the linguistic contexts of some school communities, thereby not providing for the language development of students with English as part of their repertoire; (2) when it is introduced at Year 4, it impacts on Samoan language instructional time as teachers give it more time; (3) it does not allow sufficient time for its own development for social and academic learning purposes before it is fully used as a medium of instruction.

The transitional arrangement as it is practised is therefore discontinuous for Samoan language development as well as inadequate for English language development. When it culminates in a selection examination in English at Year 8, the transitional arrangement further subverts the policy goals of equity, quality, relevancy, and efficiency.

The way language education is provided can therefore either positively affect equity and access to education or be a barrier to educational achievement. The social justice goals of Samoa's education policies will be better served by language education programmes in which there is an extended role for Samoan as a medium of instruction in a bilingual environment and opportunities for bilingual assessment. Such programmes will contribute to all students having equity in both the acquisition and display of knowledge.

New policy direction

The new policy direction is a result of a research study on the use of Samoan and English at primary level, followed by a series of focus group workshops in which the findings were discussed.

The research study was a multi-site case study involving ten schools, each studied at three class levels: Years 1, 4, 7, and in four subject areas: Samoan, English, Maths, and Science. The selected year levels target three transition points with regard to language use in schools. The aim was to provide a national portrait of language learning conditions in a

range of settings at a particular point in time. The study also looked for systematic connections among observed behaviours and conditions across settings. Multiple forms of data were collected, including classroom observations; classroom transcripts; questionnaires and interviews with principals, teachers and school committees; and parent questionnaires. Other supporting evidence included the findings from an evaluation of the impact of the BELS Literacy Programme (Basic Education and Literacy Support), and outcomes of the SPELL tests (Samoan Primary Educational Literacy Levels).

The findings of the study were summed up in one general and three specific conclusions (Lameta 2000).

The quality of language education constrains both learning and language development, and combined with language attitudes and practices in the homes, contribute to a diminishing status of Samoan language.

At the level of classroom instruction, the school language experiences of many children do not help and obstruct the achievement of the policy goal of full literacy in both Samoan and English, and the achievement of an education system characterised by equity and quality.

At the policy level, the current arrangements for transitional bilingual education with its terminal role for Samoan as a medium of instruction, and delayed introduction of English, is judged to be inefficient as a model for the achievement of full literacy in both Samoan and English, and do not serve the social justice aims of education

At the community level, the study further supports the conclusion that although there is strong support for the development of equally high levels of competence in Samoan and English, Samoan language exists in a weakened position relative to that of English.

The recommendations from the focus group workshops were compiled into draft language policy statements, which formed the basis for discussions at a public seminar. Consensus was sought from the participants at the public seminar on the draft policy statements. A key aim of the public seminar was to arrive at a consensus on the preferred

direction for bilingual education as described in the draft policy statements, and the structures for Samoan language management. After some amendment, the Department of Education's executive endorsed the policy statements in an executive meeting on 23rd July 2001.

Renewed language policies in education

Bilingualism, defined as the production of individuals fully literate and able to function effectively in both Samoan and English, was affirmed as critically important to Samoan nationhood, and therefore a principal aim of the education system.

To be fully literate in both Samoan and English involves being able to use and understand the kinds of texts valued by our society. Samoan society is traditionally an oral society, with many of our valued texts existing in the form of speech-making and oral stories. Literacy therefore must take account of our oral traditions and include reading, writing, listening and speaking to understand, process information and communicate it in ways appropriate for different socio-cultural and academic purposes. It is being able to use these skills to operate on a wide range of oral and print material at different levels of understanding, from understanding literal information to reflecting on the implications of it, to thinking beyond the text where inferences are transformed into generalisations. It further involves being able to synthesise and transform information into coherent texts. For Samoan it also involves being able to use and understand our three levels of language: everyday Samoan, polite Samoan and oratory language.

This level of literacy demands that both Samoan and English be provided with systematic opportunities to develop across the whole curriculum. These opportunities are limited when a language is treated as a subject of study. Used as a medium of instruction in other subject areas, a language can be used for different purposes, providing the contexts for the range of literacy skills to be developed. In this way also, the first language, Samoan, has the chance to 'grow' new words and other structures. This is critical for language expansion and advancement.

Instructional Arrangements

The implications of our bilingual-biliterate vision, is for a classroom instructional arrangement that can achieve the broad goals of education: equity, quality, relevancy and efficiency. The research study in 1999-2000 reviewed our current instructional arrangements and teaching practice, and compared it to best practice. Based on the research findings, current thinking in the field of bilingual education and Samoa's policy framework, a number of principles were articulated on the basis of which new arrangements were proposed. The five principles are:

Principle 1: Both Samoan and English are important to the social and economic well-being of Samoan society. The vision for Samoa's education system is pluralistic bilingualism. It seeks to ensure additive bilingualism – the continuing development and maintenance of Samoan language whilst acquiring English with both languages developing high levels of proficiency.

Bilingual education can have one of two aims: assimilation or pluralism. An education system which is assimilatory, seeks to 'wean' the child off the mother tongue as quickly as possible. One with pluralistic aims, on the other hand, seeks to provide a substantial portion of the child's education in the mother tongue. The instructional models for bilingual education need to be pluralistic.

Principle 2: Samoa's education policies aim to improve equity and quality while at the same time increasing relevancy and efficiency. Students will perform at grade level in academic areas in both Samoan and English.

The concept of equity requires that the system will treat all individuals fairly and justly in the provision of educational opportunity. Policies which advantage some social groups and disadvantage others will be avoided, while those which address existing inequalities in access, treatment and outcome will be promoted (Government of Samoa 1995:9).

The principle of equity must apply to all students whether they are Samoan or English dominant, or balanced bilinguals; from urban or rural areas; and whether they are boys or girls.

Principle 3: The vast majority of students are still first language speakers of Samoan with emerging pockets of bilingual new entrants, and an increase in the use of English in the students' environment. Children therefore come to learn second languages in different ways.

Children become bilingual in Samoan and English in two main ways: by simultaneous or successive acquisition of English. For many children with Samoan as a first language, the usual pathway is successive acquisition of English. This means that the instructional model for bilingual education must have these features:

- it must allow cognition and general learning to be developed in the first language—Samoan;
- it must allow gradual transition from Samoan medium instruction to English medium instruction, giving both languages sufficient development time before the transition to balanced instruction in both languages.

For other children, who have acquired Samoan and English simultaneously, the challenge in an instructional model is to provide developmental opportunities for both their languages. Two-way bilingual models suit these children better than transitional models.

Principle 4: Samoan is a valid language for school learning, and has the capacity for the expression of higher level thinking skills. Language is more effectively learned when it is used to learn other subjects (as a medium of instruction) than when it is just a subject of study.

The transitional bilingual model common in most Pacific nations operates on the principle that the use of the first language as a medium of instruction prepares the ground for later use of the second language for instruction. Compared to other models of bilingual education, the

students' language and academic outcomes under the transitional model have been found inadequate (see Brown 1997 et al.). The transitional arrangement, by seeing only one of the students' two languages as the ongoing language of instruction, provides inadequate development time for either language. Moreover, it impacts on the extent to which students whose first language is not English, can have equity in the acquisition and display of knowledge.

The importance of Samoan as a valid language for learning cannot be underestimated. It is important from the point of view of allowing those students who speak it as a first language to use it for as long as possible for developing conceptual and cognitive skills. It is also important from the point of view of enhancing Samoan's status.

The instructional model for bilingual education must allow Samoan the opportunities to be used as a medium of instruction for as long as possible in the system. In addition, if students are going to eventually be instructed in English in each subject, they need to know the language of those subjects in terms of their vocabulary and discourse features. The opportunities to learn these are better found in the subject areas than in the English classes.

The instructional model for bilingual education must, therefore, also provide English medium instruction time in different subjects from as early as is practicable once a sufficient base has been developed in English. Clearly the instructional model needs to give sufficient development time to both languages, and equal value to both languages as mediums of instruction, once a sufficient language base has been developed in the second language.

Principle 5: Approaches and strategies to work towards the goals of dual language proficiency and academic achievement need to demonstrate flexibility to meet local school populations and conditions.

While centrally defined policies provide overarching guidelines, the programme designs at school level need to take account of the linguistic environment of each school.

Our commitment

To achieve the goals of bilingualism, the new education system arrangements commit themselves to the promotion of Samoan language status and the acquisition of English in the following policy statements:

Promotion of status

All policy and practice by Department of Education administrators and teachers must uphold the status of Samoan as the first language of the majority of its citizens, and its usefulness for social, academic and economic advancement as well as the need to acquire English.

Medium of instruction

- Bilingual literacy will be developed through the use of a time-sharing arrangement to ensure that both Samoan and English are used as mediums of instruction.
- Samoan will be the main medium of instruction from Years 1-5, and thereafter becomes the medium of instruction for 50% of the curriculum to Year 8.
- English as a medium of instruction will be introduced in Year 2 for 10% of curriculum time in each subject and progressively to 50% in Year 6, 7 and 8.

The percentage of time applies to instruction time in every subject in the school programme.

The policy further describes the requirements for implementation through the development of appropriate curricula, materials, teacher quality, assessment, monitoring and evaluation, and aspects of

compliance in school's practice which include school management systems, programmes, pedagogy and conduct.

National structures for Samoan language management

The issues pertaining to the status of Samoan and its structures require a nationally co-ordinated approach. The policy recommendation to government reflects this need on the premise that Samoan language structures are a factor that impinges on people's attitudes and choices, and the viability of Samoan as a language for modernisation. A systematic and principled approach to Samoan language development therefore requires governmental intervention and co-ordination. The policy recommends:

A Samoan Language Commission will be established as an independent statutory body, responsible to government, to provide a vehicle for ongoing language planning, modernisation and standardisation. It will act as a focus for discussion on the development of the Samoan language and develop a collective vision for the use and development of Samoan across all public and private sectors; community and religious groups; and government sectors, including education, broadcasting.

The Language Commission will be established as a statutory body with powers to:

- promote the status of Samoan language;
- provide advice to the government on the need for policies and legislation to support Samoan language;
- co-ordinate the input on considerations regarding Samoan status, form, and usage;
- make systematic decisions on orthography, standardisation, and modernisation;
- co-ordinate the implementation of recommended changes in communities, government departments, and business organisations;
- ensure international co-ordination with other Samoan communities;
- conduct regular surveys of community language attitudes and language usage.

The Language Commission will oversee the implementation of planned changes.

The Department of Education will work closely with the Samoan Language Commission to ensure that policies and practices within the education system are consistent with the required language developments and meet expected standards.

The establishment of an autonomous government-funded Samoan Language Commission with statutory powers acknowledges the important role of government in language planning. Communities and institutions on their own are unlikely to bring about large-scale co-ordination of language strategies, although, in the case of missions, there has been extensive contribution in terms of orthography and print materials. Government intervention in active policies and financial support in a co-ordinated and focused manner are critical to successful language development. A Samoan Language Commission is a mechanism that will co-ordinate government inputs within a legislated framework.

The policies acknowledge Samoa's participation in a world context necessitating English as a means for access into that context academically, economically and technologically, and make provision for its development in a systematic way throughout education. But more than anything the policies affirm the significant place of Samoan in our country's strategic direction, and the contribution it makes to academic and economic progress. The policies, then, are a commitment to address the socio-political imbalances inherent in the use of English for learning in a predominantly Samoan-speaking environment, and to reassert the status of Samoan as a valued language for learning, for scientific and technological dialogue.

Status of renewed language policies

Curriculum development

Based on the new policies, matrices and descriptors of achievement outcomes for language and literacy in Samoan and English were developed as an essential part of the reviewing and redrafting of current literacy assessment procedures, as well as informing curriculum change. The principles that underlie the conception of the matrices and descriptors for language and literacy in English and Samoan were also made explicit. These principles have not only curriculum and assessment implications but also implications for the teaching or delivery of the curriculum. The matrices have formed the basis of the primary curriculum development framework, which will result in curriculum statement development for Years 1 to 8 in 2005.

Assessment tools

The matrices and descriptors of achievement formed the basis of the re-design of the literacy and numeracy assessment tools (SPELL) for Years 4 and 6. The tools have since undergone two trials in 20 schools. Their full implementation has not yet been decided.

In-service training

In-service training was completed for teachers of Years 4 and 6, focusing on the literacy principles, descriptors of achievement, new assessment tools and implications for planning and teaching.

About turn – National Curriculum Framework 2004⁵

The policies for the medium of instruction, as endorsed through public consultation, have not been implemented. There is a general impression within the core executive of the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture that the new policies, in particular with regard to medium of instruction arrangements, would be difficult to implement. Subsequent to the development of the 2001 Language Policies, the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture has initiated the development of a National Curriculum Framework policy (NCF). As a component of that development, the Ministry recently constituted a bilingual policy committee to deliberate on the practicalities of implementing the 2001 language policies. By and large, the NCF policy statements on the objective, and the vision on languages and bilingualism are those articulated in the 2001 developments. However, there have been significant changes. The draft guide lines for medium of instruction as outlined in the National Curriculum Policy Framework October 8, 2004, indicate an about-turn on the 2001 policy developments. The new guidelines for the medium of instruction are:

Pre-school and Year 1

Pre-schools and early primary schools should use Samoan as the general medium of instruction but English should be introduced early through songs, stories, rhymes, simple greetings and social exchanges in day-to-day activities. Through these processes, children will become familiar with English and start to use English as part of their oral language.

Years 1 – 3

At this stage when literacy skills in reading and writing are being developed, English should also be introduced so that as students develop their Samoan

⁵ Since this paper was written the writer and Ainslie So'o made presentations to consultations on the language policy as included in the National Curriculum Policy Framework Draft outlined here. The language policy for education as it stood on 29 April 2005, shows a return to almost all of the concepts in the language policy agreed to in the public seminar in 2000 and endorsed in 2001.

literacy skills they are also learning about English and developing literacy in both languages.

Years 4-6

As literacy skills are being consolidated in Samoan they should also be developed in English. Increasingly, some units of work may be in English and students should continue to use English as part of their discussion of issues.

When speaking and teaching in either language, teachers need to be highly competent in that language so as to act as models for the students. Teachers and students should read stories and other relevant material in Samoan and English. By the end of Year 6, a student must realise and grasp the importance of being able to read, write and speak in both Samoan and English.

Years 7– 8

Samoan should be taught as a separate curriculum area with rich and varied Samoan language resources. Stories and performances should develop students' understanding of Samoan language, culture and current issues. For other learning areas, English will generally be used as the medium of instruction, but where students seek clarification, Samoan should also be used to assist with learning.

Years 9– 13

The teaching of Samoan should continue with rich resources and high expectation of students' knowledge and use of the Samoan language for different purposes. As a study of language and culture, the content of the syllabus for each year should reflect a wide range of relevant topics and competency levels to be achieved in different genres and varieties of language use. English will be used for other learning areas and subjects. Students will be introduced to the use of reference materials and other resources in English and Samoan. Where some students may benefit from the use of Samoan to understand a particular concept, this should occur with the concept then being explored and expressed also in English. Through these processes students should be equally appreciative of and proficient in both Samoan and English (MESC 2004:28-29).

For Years 1 – 3 and Years 4 – 6, there is no mention of which is the language of instruction. Reference is made only to literacy skills being

developed for both Samoan and English. What is explicit is that Samoan ceases to be the medium of instruction at the end of Year 6 and becomes only a subject for learning. The role of Samoan in this arrangement is essentially the status quo under the transitional policy. In that case, the associated issues of Samoan language status, structures, and social justice issues of equity of access, treatment, and outcome remain are not addressed.

English is introduced early in the early childhood centres with the aim of having children become familiar with English orally. From Year 1, English literacy skills are expected to be developed as well as Samoan literacy skills.

The pre-dominant practice of code switching to Samoan to clarify English is endorsed without guidelines on the need to systematically develop the English structures necessary for learning. In this particular aspect there is a certain element of randomness about when to use code-switching.

The general impression of this proposed policy is the elevation of English and having Samoan as the language of clarification without giving it value as a valid language for learning, or attributing to it the status to be fully used for learning, as opposed to existing only to give meaning to English. In other words, it continues to withhold opportunities from the majority of children who are Samoan dominant, to legitimately use Samoan fully to access and display learning across the curriculum, at least till the end of primary education.

The work of the bilingual policy committee is not yet finished. It is expected that on completion of their deliberations, further meetings will be held with developers of the 2001 policies before reporting to the core executive of the Ministry. It is expected that a justification for the decisions taken will be clarified at that point.

Quite apart from the anticipated effects of these recent policy changes on both Samoan and English, there are issues about the development process. These are best expressed as questions:

1. Upon what principles are the choices here made?
2. Who made these choices?
3. What are the anticipated effects for learners' language proficiency? for learners in different contexts across Samoa? for Samoan language status and structures development? for English?
4. What is the status of the consultations and affirmation of policies in 2000-2001?
5. What was the consultation process for these recent views?

It must be noted that, while policies advocate the use of English for instruction, the reality is that Samoan predominates at all levels, more particularly in rural schools. Regardless of teacher practice, the language of written examinations remains English.

The Samoan Language Commission

The 2000-2001 policy recommending the establishment of a Samoan Language Commission received Cabinet approval on 17 September 2003, following a series of public consultation workshops facilitated by MESC to canvass opinion on issues regarding Samoan language structures. Participants overwhelmingly supported the need for a Samoan Language Commission. The MESC established a Samoan Language Committee within the Ministry and tasked it with drafting the framework for the Samoan Language Commission, following the recommendations of the 2001 policies. This work has now been completed through a series of committee meetings throughout 2004. The proposed framework includes:

- Description of the issues facing Samoan language
- Institutional framework
- Legislative framework
- Official languages act

Vision
Mission Statement
Policy Objectives
Goals and Function
Organisational structure
Governance structure
Operational structure
Recruitment and Terms of Reference for the Language
Commissioner
Office of the Commission
Recruitment and Terms of Reference for the Chief Executive
Officer
Budget

Following several readings at the Ministry's core executive level, consultation was held with the National Council of Churches. The proposed framework was submitted to Cabinet for its deliberations in December 2004.

Samoa's developments within international perspectives of language planning policy

Language planning policy

Language planning includes 'all conscious efforts to affect the structure or function of language varieties. These efforts may involve the creation of orthographies, standardisation and modernisation programmes, or allocation of functions to particular languages within multilingual societies. Language policy is commonly accepted as language planning by governments'. Discussions by Fasold (1984), Crystal (1987), Robinson (1988), Lo Bianco (1990), Crawford (2001) point to common features of language planning as being consciously created efforts regarding the use and status of a language and its structures; they have official status in that they involve government legislation; they are a response to socio-political needs that arise out of linguistic diversity.

Three types of language planning efforts are distinguished as corpus planning, status planning and acquisition planning. The distinction is “based on whether the changes affect primarily linguistic structure or linguistic use. In corpus planning, the changes are introduced into the structure (or ‘corpus’) of a language variety—as when changes are proposed in spelling, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary. In *status planning*, changes are proposed in the way a language/variety is to be used in society (thus altering its status)—as when it is permitted for the first time in law courts or in official publications” (Crystal 1987:366). Acquisition planning is directed at language spread through increasing the number of speakers of a language (Cooper 1982). Though different in focus, status, corpus and acquisition are unavoidably interrelated and co-dependent. Decisions on structure, for example, modernisation of vocabulary, increases the usability of a language which in turn creates positive attitudes towards it, thereby improving its status. Bilingual education or the use of two languages as mediums of instruction in its various arrangements, formalises acquisition planning in schools, which in turn improves its status.

Status planning

Constitution and Parliament

The constitution of Samoa does not explicitly have an official language/s statement. It does however state in Clause 54 "Samoan and English to be the languages to use in all debates and discussions in the Legislative Assembly. The 49 members of parliaments use Samoan in parliamentary proceedings, which are aired on the government’s radio station. The other channel of the government’s radio station is set aside for the English interpretation of these proceedings".⁶

In 1991, the then Prime Minister, Tofilau Eti Alesana, insisted that all ministerial documents be written and discussed in Samoan during cabinet proceedings. The initial translated documents following this decree were of such a low standard of Samoan members needed to refer

⁶ 1997 reprint of the Constitution of the Independent State of Samoa

to the English version for clarification. This was indicative of a prolonged period of thinking and documentation of government material in English.

Education

As discussed earlier, the renewed policies and arrangement for bilingual education respond to the issues of access, treatment, and outcomes in education, raising the status of Samoan while putting in place strategies for acquiring English. However, efforts to include and expand the role of Samoan as a subject began much earlier; in the 1966 syllabus Samoan was to be taught as a subject in all levels of schooling. The inclusion of Samoan in national examinations for selection purposes did not start until 1971 when it was part of the Year 8 National Examination for selection to secondary schools. Since the early 1990s, Samoan has been included in the Pacific regional examination for the Pacific Senior Secondary Certificate (PSSC), for students of Year 13. Following Year 13, on the basis of their PSSC performance, students are selected for the University Preparatory Year at the National University of Samoa (NUS). One of the NUS's major goals is to "retrieve, analyse, maintain, advance and disseminate knowledge of Samoa through Samoan language and Samoan culture".⁷ One of the means of realising this aim is through having Samoan as a compulsory component in the selection of students for scholarships.

The Institute of Samoan Studies at the NUS was established in October 1999 to meet issues relating to Samoa. One of its nine major objectives is "to establish a centre of excellence in research and teaching in Samoan Studies,"⁸ of which language is a major part.

Courts

In a recent appeal case in the Supreme Court of Samoa, the Chief Judge resorted to the interpretation of an original Samoan word that was translated into English to confirm his decision. This is seen as a landmark decision in that, for the first time, Samoan interpretation has

⁷ The National University of Samoa Calendar 2001 page 3

⁸ The National University of Samoa Calendar 2001 page 34

taken precedence over the literal English version where a dispute was evident.

Media

Government funded print, audio and visual media are obliged to use both Samoan and English in their programmes. Our local Samoan television news is reported in both languages. Many other local and public service programmes, such as in health, agriculture and business development, are all broadcast in Samoan. Church services in Samoan are a daily feature before the start of transmission. Our government-owned radio station has been broadcasting bilingually for many years. The government-owned newspaper, *Savali*, is published in Samoan and English. A recent film documentation of our history is produced in both Samoan and English versions.

Corpus planning

Corpus planning in the form of vocabulary expansion, grammatical description and standardisation of written forms has been a strong feature of the Department of Education's developments for Samoan. Similar developments are undertaken in other government departments, though mainly in the form of word lists. Examples are the creation of translated word lists for the legislative and the creation of a dictionary by the Ministry of Youth Sports and Culture. Other influential developments are undertaken by various religious organisations and individuals.

Since 1997, the Department of Education has concentrated mostly on corpus planning with the aim of reviewing, revising written forms since the time of the missionaries, and reinstating where needed signals such as diacritical marks to aid pronunciation and reading. In addition, the Department has instigated the systematic application of principles in the modernisation of our vocabulary to deal with new concepts. The Department has also made use of technological advances in the documentation and standardisation of written forms.

Through the production of *The Samoan Grammar*, teachers will be assisted to understand and teach the grammar of their own language. The aim of the grammar book is to explain to teachers ways in which Samoan can be systematically analysed to arrive at a description of its system. While it is not the first grammar book, a distinguishing feature of it is its basis on the Samoan language itself and not a grammatical description based on comparative analysis with other languages such as English. One of the changes to Samoan structures arising out of this grammar book is the rewriting of some words as single units, based on their meaning, where for about 150 years they were written as two or three words.

The production of the Samoan monolingual dictionary *Utugagana* strengthens and maintains the form of standardisation and modernisation of Samoan orthography as stipulated in *The Samoan Grammar*. It confirms the reasons for its analysis as well as providing more examples of correct pronunciation of words when the diacritics are used.

The Samoan Grammar for teachers and the Samoan monolingual dictionary for students complement the effect of teaching and learning in a much more meaningful and effective way. What the teacher is teaching about Samoan grammar and its orthography can be confirmed by students in their monolingual dictionary. All curriculum resources for students and teachers that have been developed since standardisation was implemented now adopt the revised written forms. National examinations for the subject of Samoan and all of the Department's translated documents comply with the changes.

Samoan database

The compilation of translated words with the aim of consistency in all documents is another effort at standardisation. Different government departments and organisations go through the process of translation, and uniformity of usage is required if documents in both languages are to be closely connected and interpreted according to their true meaning. With the Department of Education, a database is set up for keeping records of these translated words that are already used in the written documents.

The database also consists of list of words that are commonly written as two or three words when they should be one word, and a list of words that are commonly mispronounced.

Samoan AutoCorrect

A Samoan AutoCorrect is also being developed and installed for use by the Department, with the intention of distributing it to other departments and organisations that are involved in writing Samoan. The AutoCorrect is a further attempt to maintain the status of Samoan. It makes use of technological advances to enforce a uniform orthography and facilitates speedier processing by computer users.

If we took the language planning decisions regarding the status and corpus of our language to be straightforward processes of logical analyses of problems and implementation of solutions, we would be seeing language planning policy as an exclusively linguistic activity. We would be discounting the links between language planning decisions, social relations, and their association with power between linguistically diverse populations and within homogenous communities. The creation of the AutoCorrect, like dictionaries and databases, has associated issues with regard to who makes the decisions on the 'correct' forms and on what basis. For example, a form such as *avatu (to give)* is auto corrected to *ave atu*. Decisions can be challenged on the basis that conventionalised forms through natural use become the norm over attempts to conform to a view of what words are. The creators of the AutoCorrect, like those dictionaries, assume power in the role of 'arbiter' of Samoan.

A recent perspective in the field of language planning considers the relations between language planning policy and power, and makes a very important contribution to policy analyses on language.

Conclusion

The language-planning policy decisions in education are very much part of a continuous process by which policies in education are being developed to drive a national language plan that encompasses all sectors. The changes to our language policy decisions as accepted at public consultation in 2001 were an attempt to address the nature of participation by individuals and groups, and in particular to address the structural inequalities that have been the heritage of a system that emphasised learning and achievement through a new language, English. The emphasis on English had subsequent effects on the development of the Samoan language itself. Our policy decisions are very much conscious efforts to affect the status and structure of Samoa. In a way, the changes were to reclaim the status of Samoan through balancing the use of the two languages.

The 'reclaiming' of Samoan status has not been without its issues of power, as seen in the recent policy changes, and so we have another level of language-planning, that of the politics of language planning within. Crystal (1987:368) sums it up well:

One of the most important ways in which a country's language policy manifests itself is in the kind of provision it makes for the linguistic education of children. Which languages are taught in schools from what age and for what purposes and for how long? ... [A] wide range of positions are found. Languages can be actively promoted, passively tolerated, deliberately ignored, positively discouraged, and even banned.

We have come some of the way, and we have determined other paths, but settling on which path when it comes to language in education is a political decision, for language policies become instruments in structuring and ordering social relations when they impact on access, treatment and outcomes in education and the extent to which individuals can participate in society.

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