

INVITATION TO ANOTHER WORLD: LITERACY IN THE PACIFIC

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Introduction

Great was the astonishment and delight of the people as they saw the marvels of the mission press. The Heathen at once declared it to be a god. And mightier far than their mightiest and most revered deities was that engine at which they wondered.... That Mission press began, with silent prayer, its great infallible work, which was destinedto confer upon its [Fiji's] many homes the blessings of civilisation, and enrich its many hearts with the wealth of the Gospel of Jesus.

(Williams and Calvert 1859: 397-398)

The quote is one of the many claims that have been made about the benefits of literacy right up till the present day. This paper discusses whether the claimed advantages of literacy are automatically bestowed upon the literate or whether literacy is only an intervening variable, with social variables likely to be more important factors that determine which aspects of literacy are incorporated into the social practices of any society. It begins by briefly looking at a history of literacy generally, before outlining the beginnings of literacy in the Pacific, and more particularly in Fiji. It discusses the types of literate behaviours that are currently observable in the Fiji/Pacific societies. It argues that literacy at the 'higher level' is an invitation to all, including Pacific peoples, to participate in other worlds.

A brief history of literacy

Writing has been a part of human experience for a very short while, no more than about 5,000 years (Crystal 1987). The first recorded instances of 'writing' were marks made in clay in order to record such "matters as land dates, business transactions, and tax accounts" (Crystal 1987: 196). In the eastern world the Chinese developed ideograms that represented words or morphemes. The original representation of 'sun', for example looked like [☉]. The word 'crowd' was represented by three men thus [人 人 人]. In subsequent years these symbols became much more idealised so that the symbol for 'sun' is now [☐].

In the west the Greeks developed the alphabet (the very word 'alphabet' is made up of the first two Greek letters, 'alpha' and 'beta'). The early Greek writing, according to Olson (1994: 180), was used as a reminder of spoken utterance, 'written records were thought of and treated more as reminders than representations' and this was the situation right through the Middle Ages. By the time the Magna Carta was signed in the thirteenth century, the written text had begun to be seen as an agreement, a text that embodied the intentions of the signatories. (In the Fijian context, the signing of the Deed of Cession to Britain by the chiefs of Fiji can be seen as another example of an agreement embodying intentions, at least by the British, if not completely by the chiefs.)

The development of the printing press, the wider dissemination of books, the Reformation with its emphasis on salvation embodied in the Bible, the rise of scientific thinking, the rise of newspapers and journals, the provision of more universal education, gradually made the practice of literacy a desired ability and one of the requirements for power.

The study of literacy, especially its actual or potential effects upon individuals and societies, did not begin until the latter half of this century. As this subject was explored and researched from a number of different perspectives, our notions of what constituted literacy also changed. For example, in 1954, UNESCO defined a person as literate if she or he had undergone four years of education. By the seventies it was obvious that this definition of literacy could not cover the various contexts in which people in both developed and developing countries (especially in urban areas) were required to engage in literate behaviours.

Great claims were made for the role of literacy in developing economies and for advancing societies. A UNESCO policy document (1975) cited in Olson (1994) claimed that literacy was crucial to the "liberation and advancement of man (sic)". This was in fact no more than a secular version of the value of literacy as propounded by religious and secular writers in post-Reformation England, who argued that a person who could read was better equipped to work towards his or her salvation than an illiterate person, because a literate person was more likely to lead a "life of duty and godliness" (Cressy 1980). Great claims were also made for the cognitive advantages of literacy (eg Goody and Watt 1968, Olson 1977). It was claimed that there is a "transition from utterance to text both culturally and developmentally and that this transition can be described as one of increasing explicitness with language increasingly able to stand as an unambiguous and autonomous representation of meaning" (Olson 1977: 258). This autonomy of text, he claimed, permitted a greater focus on logical meaning, truth value of statements, and on logical or ideational functions of language. More ethnographic studies of literacy in the seventies have produced evidence that question the notion that literacy per se invariably results in certain cognitive advantages or that it produces certain types of literate behaviours that are commonly found amongst certain segments of the society, namely the white middle-class in western societies (see Heath 1983, Street 1984, 1993).

A well-known study that addresses the issue of whether introduction to reading or writing automatically produces certain types of literacy-related behaviours that are commonly found in classroom and in academic contexts is Heath (1983). She studied three communities: Roadsville, a white working-class community; Trackton, a working-class black community, and a mainstream middle-class urban community. She found, for example, that while the Roadsville parents talked positively about reading, they did not actually provide many examples to their children of their own involvement in reading a wide range of genres. The Roadsville community had a strong fundamentalist religious bent and therefore preferred stories that were grounded in 'reality' rather than the imaginary. Children were not encouraged to fictionalise events or discuss them within a different framework from the original one, that is, enter into other possible worlds. Writing in this subgroup was used for a very functional purpose: as a memory aid, as a vehicle for messages, and for noting financial matters.

Similarly, the Trackton community, which was Afro-American, used reading and writing for very functional purposes: as a means to achieve something (instrumental), for social and interactional purposes and for purposes of news dissemination and/or discussion. The parents did not think they had a tutoring role and therefore they did not simplify their language for the children as mainstream parents did. Parents did not ask children 'classifying' types of questions such as, 'What is X?' The interactions in the community, however, did encourage children to form analogies such as 'What is that like?' The purposes for which writing was used paralleled the uses made by the Roadsville community, but also included keeping records related to church meetings. In short, the uses of literacy in both the communities were related to their particular social needs; they were functional in character and enabled the members of the community to fulfil social and personal needs.

For both these communities, literacy was not of vital concern in their daily lives. It served a purpose: it acted as a stimulus for socially exploring news (replacing 'Did you hear what John had to say about...?'); it replaced a reliance on memory in some aspects of their lives; it provided an alternative means of sending and receiving messages.

The children from the Trackton community came to school knowing how to read many examples of instrumental environmental print, but did not do well in their language arts classes where the emphasis was not only on reading but also on talking about the text that was read in particular ways. By the time they got to upper primary school they were even less well equipped to read in order to learn, to cumulatively build up knowledge in a structured way in various school subjects, to stand back from the subject matter and the language in which it was encoded in order to evaluate both the ideas and the form in which they were expressed.

The children from Roadsville, on the other hand, did relatively well in the early stages of schooling. There had been much talk about talk, even if there had been correspondingly little talk about the printed material, except to emphasise the informational element in what was read. The transition to 'decontextualisation' found in reading was easier for these children because they had some metalinguistic knowledge. But they too encountered difficulties at the upper primary levels when they were required to interpret texts and to abstract generalizable principles or observations from particular concrete events.

In the case of the Trackton children, there had been little social motivation to analyse language and to develop metalinguistic knowledge of their language. In the case of the Roadsville children, while there had been some metalinguistic development prior to the commencement of formal schooling, the uses of literacy in the community from which they came did not encompass those uses of literacy that lead to abstraction, analysis and synthesis of new knowledge and its resultant articulation through writing.

Compare these two communities with the 'townspeople' Heath wrote about. In this community there was also an emphasis on reading, but the parents went beyond the informational needs of the children into questioning children to think beyond the content of the text, to think about the motivations of the characters in the stories, to predict what was likely to happen and to give reasons for their predictions. There was a constant thrust towards abstraction of general principles. The stories were simply not read for entertainment; they underwent analyses and the children were pushed towards analysis by means of scaffolded questions, similar to the ways that good teachers operate in classrooms. In addition, in the daily lives of their parents, literacy was used to acquire new knowledge, to disseminate it and there was an institutional requirement as well as support for these activities. In order for these parents to function effectively in their sub-group, they had to use their literacy for a much greater range of purposes. To put it in another way, the functionality of literacy for this sub-group was at a level where abstraction, analysis and synthesis were frequently an inherent feature of these activities.

For these parents, as indeed with others who could be classified as members of the same sub-group in a society, all events in the life of a child are seized upon as literacy events or potential literacy events. Examples of this type of behaviour can sometimes be seen in places like lifts or places where there are notices of one kind or another. Heath's office was in a multi-storey building which housed the taxation department on the top floor. The lifts in the building were therefore in constant use. It was frequently observed that some mothers with little children in the lift used the opportunity to go through the numbers on the buttons in the lift or to ask what the various letters, for example 'G', stood for. Other parents would not even let the children touch the buttons, let alone talk about the writing on them.

Another important study that helped to expand our understanding of the consequences of literacy was conducted by Scribner and Cole (1981). They studied a traditional society in Liberia, the Vai, who had their own indigenous syllabic script which was used mainly for writing letters and by a considerable number of adults in non-school contexts. Within this society there were also people who were literate in Arabic, used for reading the Koran, and some who had become literate in English in formal school settings. There were also members of the society who could not read at all. Scribner and Cole examined how these different types of literacies (or illiteracy in one case) influenced the way people approached syllogistic reasoning tasks like:

All women who live in Monrovia are married.

Kemu is not married.

Does Kemu live in Monrovia?

(Scribner and Cole 1981: 121)

The non-schooled subjects frequently injected their world knowledge into these tasks, such as 'Kemu could live with her mother in Monrovia'. The schooled literates performed the best on this task. However, where the form of syllogism was outside common human experience, the others performed almost as well as the school literates. Scribner and Cole concluded that syllogistic tasks related more to the type of discourse common in school and therefore learned through immersion in the school culture. Even though the non-schooled literates in Vai and Arabic could read and write, that did not automatically produce certain types of cognitive behaviours. They depended upon the context in which and for which such literacy had been developed.

Such studies have led researchers like Street (1984, 1993) to put forward another model of literacy which takes into account the "variety of cultural practices associated with reading and writing in different contexts". He calls this the 'ideological' model of literacy in order to emphasise that literacy practices are not only rooted in cultural practices, but are also a reflection of the power structures within societies. This model does not deny that there may be some cognitive consequences of literacy. Rather, it locates these outcomes within social and cultural behaviours and values and the structures of power that exist within societies.

Graff (1979), who showed that literacy did not necessarily precede industrial development but instead followed it, has in a more recent publication (Graff 1987: 19) summarised the many and various claims thus:

Writings about the imputed 'consequences', 'implications', or 'concomitants' of literacy have assigned to literacy's acquisition a truly daunting number of cognitive, affective, behavioral, and attitudinal effects. These characteristics include, in typical formulations or listing, attitudes ranging from empathy, innovativeness, achievement orientation, 'cosmopolitanism', information and media awareness, national identification, technological acceptance, rationality, and commitment to democracy, to opportunism, linearity of thought and behavior, or urban residence! ... On other levels, literacy 'thresholds' are seen as requirements for economic development, 'take-offs', 'modernisation', political development and stability, standards of living, fertility control, and so on.

A brief history of literacy in Fiji

Literacy in Fiji shares a common historical origin with other countries in the South Pacific, particularly Polynesia. Literacy arrived with the missionaries, whose aim was to convert Fijians to Christianity. One of the major means of conversion was literacy. The first missionaries arrived from the neighbouring island kingdom of Tonga, where Christianity and its concomitant literacy (in the Tongan language) had been introduced a few years earlier.

With the arrival of missionaries in Fiji in 1835, formal schooling was introduced into a society in which learning had previously been integrated into the everyday life of the people and in which particular types of learning were the prerogative of particular groups within a tribe. One learned to become a fisherman by going fishing with other fishermen and learning from the actual practice of fishing. One learned to be a canoe builder by working with the canoe builders. In short, traditional education was "practical, vocational and was concerned largely in maintaining the status quo" (Bole 1972: 1). The initial educational emphasis given by the missionaries was on the teaching of reading in the Fijian language, for which a Romanised alphabet had been devised. Some teaching of elementary

numeracy was later added. The primary focus remained, however, on the teaching of reading in order to read the Bible and other religious writing (see Mangubhai 1984 for further details).

However, there was not just one variety of Fijian language throughout the group of islands, and as the missionaries moved to other major islands the economics of printing forced a choice of one of the Fijian languages (or communalects) as the main literary medium (Geraghty 1984). The choice was most judicious on the part of the missionaries. The seat of the most powerful "state" at that time was the small island of Bau, so the Bauan dialect was chosen. Moreover, this language was similar to the "standard Bauan" which was the existing language of diplomacy. Hence the Bauan language was "objectified"; the written form became the standard against which language could be judged as correct or incorrect. It became an objective yardstick.

Literacy not only affected the language, but it also altered the positions of authority at certain levels of the society. The Wesleyan Methodist Church, to which the first missionaries belonged, soon established village schools run by pastor-teachers who underwent a rudimentary form of teacher training. Thus into Fijian society was injected a new elite, associated with the Christian church, who could read and write and who eventually supplanted the *bete*, the priest of the old order, whose communication with the spirits was through oral rituals and ceremonies.

By the time Fiji was ceded to Great Britain as a crown colony in 1874, reading was widespread enough for the first governor of Fiji to comment upon it. Over 50 years later, Mann (1935: 13) was to say that due "almost entirely to the efforts of the missions, most adult Fijians can read and write their own language". Fifty years after Fiji had become a British crown colony, the churches, Methodist and Catholic (the latter having arrived in Fiji a decade later than the former), continued to play a leading role in the education of the Fijian people. The Methodists emphasised the use of the Fijian language in their schools while the Catholics had begun to teach some English during the 1890s. The introduction of English into the school curriculum and the colonial government's policies after 1916, when it established a Department of Education, were to change dramatically the emphasis on the language used in educational settings in the 1900s.

After 1879, the racial composition of the country also underwent a dramatic change. The colonial government of Fiji brought people from the subcontinent of India to work on the sugar cane plantations. By the time this indentured labour system was abolished in 1920, over 60 000 indentured labourers had been brought to Fiji, many of whom elected not to return to India (Lal 1983). With natural increase and some further migration from India, the country rapidly became multiethnic and multilingual, with the present composition being about half Fijian and just under half Indo-Fijian.

By the mid-1930s, the Methodist Church had relinquished control of most of the elementary schools to the government. The use of Fijian as the medium of instruction thereafter became less widespread; a new policy was implemented whereby the medium of instruction for the first three years was to be the vernacular language, Fijian or Hindi (and more recently Urdu and Rotuman), but was thereafter to be replaced by English¹. This ensured the predominance of English in the educational system right to the present time, even after political independence in 1970.

Literate behaviours and culture

This section of the paper discusses the ways in which literate behaviours are rooted in a culture and are shaped by cultural practices. In the previous section the works of Heath (1983) and Scribner and Cole (1981) have been discussed. Earlier I discussed the development of literacy in nineteenth century Fiji and noted that reading was fairly widespread by the time it was ceded to Britain.

However, there is little evidence that writing was widespread because it seems that Fijian society saw limited use for it within their social practices, as indicated by the quote below:

¹ Such a policy was facilitated by the monoracial characteristic of most of the elementary schools, a situation that has historical, political, sociological, and geographical roots; these separate school systems have continued to the present day.

While he [a chief] might offend the qase [the older folks, those in traditional authority] in Natewa bay [sic] by sending for their youths to build houses for him at Somosomo by letter in the European fashion, not by word of the accredited matanivanua [diplomat] as etiquette dictated ... (Blythe to Colonial Secretary, 23 September, 1881, FCSO 81/1913, quoted in Scarr 1980: 96, emphasis added.)

Kulick and Stroud (1993) describe the literate behaviours they observed in a village in Papua New Guinea. The most prominent of these behaviours was related to Christianity. Unlike some other writers, Kulick and Stroud argue that the very link between Christianity and literacy arises out of the villagers' belief that Christianity is the key to obtaining the Cargo. As Kulick and Stroud put it

the Cargo will materialise as a result of their actions; it is they themselves who can bring about the change. They are therefore always on the lookout for a 'road' which they can manipulate to obtain the money and the factories they want. And it is at this juncture that the villagers' literacy skills fit into their scheme of things (1993: 40).

Traditionally, these villagers have regarded words as having power, be they part of a magic chant or the power imbued in a name. It was believed that certain words uttered in particular ways in certain contexts bring about desired outcomes. The Christian Word of God has been interpreted in the same manner, with the difference that these words seem to link to a more powerful god who could also provide the devotees with material things like an outboard motor, aeroplane, money and so on. The fact that 'God's talk' was to be found on paper and that anyone who could learn to decipher it could access material goods was a powerful reason to learn to read.

The other literate behaviour observed by Kulick and Stroud was the practice of writing notes to one another. The actual language that was used in writing these notes and the functions they performed were very much like oral requests that were made formally. These requests were heavily disguised so that there could be no loss of face if they were denied. In other words, the practices of their society as they existed were translated into the written medium, which presented another

powerful means of distancing themselves from words when making requests. The purpose to which literacy was put to use by this village reinforced their already existing patterns of behaviour and had little cognitive consequence as has been suggested by some writers.

Another example of literate behaviours that shows that such behaviours are rooted in the practices of a society, or a sub-group in a society, is provided by Zinsser (1993). She looked at the way 'reading' was conducted in fundamentalist Sunday schools in a town of about 50,000 people. There were many features which were common with the pedagogical discourse in formal classrooms: there was turn-taking, the I-R-E (Initiate-Respond-Evaluate) pattern was present, contextualization clues were provided and so on. There were, however, no 'what-if' behaviours because the Bible had all the answers and there was no need for people to make reference to things outside it or to add further details out of their own imaginings, or to suggest alternatives. Wrong answers were ignored (as in the example below) or corrected.

- Teacher: What did Jacob do with the rock?
Child: He put oil on it.
Teacher: (ignoring the incorrect answer) What did he do with the rock?
Children: (no response)
Teacher: (supplies correct answer) He marked the spot where Jesus talked to him. (p. 63)

Compare this exchange with the following which has been taken from Knobel (1993: 300):

- 281T: Right. Can you imagine, these children are about your age, and they don't have their parents with them, they only have one set of clothes, they don't have any toys. (1.0) How would you feel? Think about it. (2.0) You'd feel great?
282S: No.
283T: How'd you feel, Jamie?
284S: Um (1.0) I'd feel horrible, really.
285T: Why would you feel horrible?

- 286S: Oh, lone. 'Cause you don't have your mother anywhere.
 287T: Right. What a good word - lonely.
 288S: Depressed.
 289T: Depressed. Why depressed Luana?
 290S: Um (1.0) Because, like, they might have lost their good friends and their, their nice bed to sleep in.

When we look at the type of literate behaviours seen in Pacific societies, especially in the Eastern Pacific, we note that reading of the Bible and other religious materials has become a part of the culture of the people (Clammer 1976, Spolsky et al. 1983, Mangubhai 1987, Crowley 1989). In the Eastern Pacific the first and prolonged exposure to print related to the introduction of Christianity. In the urban areas where newspapers are published they are read for local news and, from observation, the sports news. Comics, where they are available, are very popular, partly because of the characters in them and partly because they are not as demanding as reading books. In non-urban areas, neither books nor comics are easily available. Reading for pleasure - particularly, solitary reading - is not a practice that is encouraged in the societies because it is regarded as socially isolating. Activities in Pacific societies tend to be communal and not solitary and literacy practices like reading for one's own pleasure or exploring information or knowledge for the sake of interest do not fit well into this pattern. The practice of reading widely is not encouraged either by the way many rural homes are built; there are no separate rooms for people to call their 'own' as happens in western societies. There is therefore no 'refuge' to which one could escape to sit down with a book and enter another world. Living conditions in conjunction with cultural practices have not encouraged the development of the practice of wider reading.

With regard to writing, it is used for those purposes which have become a part of daily life. Duranti and Ochs (1986), who studied a Samoan village, record that the most common uses of writing were for purposes like making a list of names of people, especially, in the Samoan context, for the purpose of money collection or contributions, and fines to be paid to the village judiciary committees or to religious congregations. It is also used to keep in touch with relatives who live overseas, either as temporary workers or permanently as migrants. Much of other writing that occurs tends to be related to record keeping and filling in forms. In short, the major purposes for which writing is engaged in is either to make or keep

a record or to provide information or seek monetary assistance from those who are separated by distance.

There is also some evidence that when literacy was introduced in the South Pacific, it was restricted to reading and there was little emphasis on the development of writing skills in the missionary schools. Clammer (1976: 164) cites from the report of a commission appointed to investigate certain alleged errors in the 1880 census of the population: "We remember them [births and deaths], some of us by writing, but others do not write them down". And a quote from a scribe who kept returns of births and deaths in books: "There are some village teachers that cannot write. Those that cannot write use pieces of reed for the purpose of reckoning up the births and deaths that occur in their villages. **They can read, although they cannot write.**" (emphasis added).

Using Fiji as a case in point, it seems that in the nineteenth century, missionary education fostered and made socially acceptable only a narrow range of uses of literacy, primarily in the Fijian language. It was, in fact, a very subtle form of control since information was available to the Fijian public at large only through the Fijian language, the publication of which was in the hands of the mission and the colonial government. The English newspapers were devoted largely to advertisements and public and trade notices. There was little overseas news and the small amount of local news reported was discussed from the perspective of the colonial settlers (Clammer 1976). It was therefore unlikely that English newspapers were read by even the small urban part of the Fijian population which had access to them. This was to change in the twentieth century, especially in the latter half, and more particularly after independence in 1970.

Both reading and writing have served a limited purpose for Pacific societies. From this it cannot be inferred that reading and writing are not regarded as important by parents for their children. Children are told both by their parents and their teachers about the importance of reading and writing in the school contexts. However, the rhetoric is not matched by corresponding encouragement or social approval for school-based activities to spill over into the society. Within the formal school system, however, if there is encouragement to read and suitable books are provided, children readily take to reading for pleasure or information. This was evident in the Book Flood Project carried out by Elley and Mangubhai in the late seventies (Elley and Mangubhai 1981, 1983). A number of teachers

reported the eagerness with which students awaited their reading time. Similar enthusiasm was witnessed by this author when he helped set up the Fagamalo School/Community Library project on the island of Savaii in Western Samoa in 1984 and took the first lot of children's stories into the school. It seems that Pacific children will read for pleasure or for information within the culture of school-settings, provided the school provides appropriate books and an appropriate atmosphere for such activities. Many Pacific schools fail to provide these for a variety of reasons, including a purported lack of money. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is also a lack of appreciation on the part of many teachers, head teachers and principals about the role of reading and writing in academic learning, many of whom are non readers themselves - non readers in the sense that they do not show any love of reading and writing themselves. (This observation also applies to teachers in other non-Pacific countries, including developed countries!)

The early 1980s have seen an increase in the use of one of the forms of writing (at least in Fiji), that is, writing letters to the editor of a newspaper. Geraghty (1984) reports a very lively letters-to-the-editor column in one of the Fijian newspapers and an equally lively one in the English newspapers. A randomly chosen copy of *The Daily Post* (24/12/94) shows this type of literate behaviour may be becoming more established despite the military coups and changes in Fijian power structures. The first letter-to-the-editor in that issue complains that soldiers who had been on peace-keeping duties had still not been paid and questions the good faith of the government and its agencies. The second letter complains about the recent actions of the Trade Minister. Thirty years ago such letters would not have been written by 'ordinary' people. This is a new development.

We all live in many different worlds: the world of our own household, the world of work, the church, sports clubs, women's clubs and so on. Gee (1990) refers to this as participating in different discourses in different settings. The world of the formal school system is a literate world in which full participation requires one to be initiated into particular literate behaviours that "instil problem-solving abilities and knowledge-creating resources" (Heath 1987: vii) and lie at the other end of the literacy continuum which promotes only basic reading and writing. Schooling invites students to participate in the higher forms of literacy even though their occurrence may not be widespread in the communities in which the institutions are set. The world that students can inhabit in school settings can be a very different one from their own social world, with different values and different ways of

interacting. In some cases there might be minimal intersection between the two. This is the dilemma that Pacific children and teachers have had to face and continue to face. This is the dilemma faced in a social science classroom where one looks at one's society and questions 'Why is it like this?' 'Why is it not like that?' or 'What if it were like this, what advantages or disadvantages would accrue to the people?' The relationships and structures in Pacific societies are clearly delineated and define the society and permissible, or ideally desired, behaviours within them. Questions of the types that could be asked in the social science classroom - or for that matter, any other classroom - do not reflect the existing social order or practices.

Many Pacific people have, however, overcome this dilemma and have learned to operate in dual worlds and have attained high academic achievements. When the context calls for 'higher' literate behaviours, they engage in them; when they have to operate in their own particular social world, they do so according to the norms of that world. It may sound as if this is a recipe for schizophrenia but in this increasingly complex world, 'other worlds' are increasingly impinging upon one's own and demanding that an accommodation be made. One way of doing this is to incorporate parts of the other world into one's own - this occurs over time - or to keep the two (or more) worlds separate and behave according to the norms of each as the context demands.

The early initiation into this literate world is through the development of reading skills. In recent years there has been a great deal of work done in the South Pacific in making this transition possible for all students. The Institute of Education at the University of the South Pacific, which organised this Conference, has been involved in numerous projects from the Reading Project in the late 70s to the Book Flood Project, to the Ready-to-Read Project, to the South Pacific Literacy Project, to the current UNDP-UNESCO-AusAID-UNICEF funded project. At the same time the Institute has encouraged the writing and publication of children's stories in the vernacular so that literacy will not be associated solely with the English language. These developments are an invitation to participate more fully in another world, a literacy-orientated world.

In order to understand the extent to which this invitation to participate in another world is being accepted, and why, there needs to be more ethnographic research carried out, ideally by Pacific people themselves. The University of the South

Pacific is ideally situated to encourage such research. It has been suggested that the real revolution in Polynesia was not Christianisation but "the adoption of literate culture in the place of the old non-literate mode of life" (Parsonson 1967: 56). This warrants further investigation.

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