

Additional Papers

American Samoa Language Arts and Culture Program

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As early as 1965, the Samoan Director of Education mandated Samoan be taught to levels 1-4 in public schools. The concern at that time was the apparent deterioration of some of the basic Samoan courtesies expected from students. It should have started in Early Childhood Education, but the thought was nevertheless important in later thought about the place of Samoan in the Department of Education's Language planning. At about this time, television was a medium of instruction in public schools, and it was a convenient method for the non-Samoans in particular. The course included reading and writing.

During the 1970s, levels 7 and 8 were added. The high school program included Samoan as an elective. In the latter half of the 70s, the government of American Samoa through the Department of Education (DOE) launched a very aggressive bilingual program in public schools with federal funding. Much of the funding was used for developing instructional materials, training personnel, and providing workshops. Some of the workshops and fact finding missions were conducted in the independent state of Western Samoa, which at that time had a very strong program going in all public schools from kindergarten through high school.

Toward the end of the 1970s, the Samoan Studies section of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction (DCI) was developing a separate Samoan curriculum to be offered to Levels 1-12. By the mid-80s, the DCI began to shift its focus from bilingual programs to development of monolingual programs in Samoan for all levels. This section of the DCI has at this time changed its name to Samoan Studies. An ambiguity in the latter title as well as the nature of the instructional materials thus far developed are slowly giving preference to Samoan Language Arts and Culture (Gagana ma Aga a Samoa) as a more appropriate title.

It is no longer political rhetoric to say that "we're losing our culture." It is a reality, and language is a vital component of culture that is now being encouraged to prevent this loss. American Samoa is already fighting, hopefully not a losing battle, to recapture its culture. The impact of the mass media in these tiny islands and the high mobility of the people, especially to Mainland USA, are posing some very serious problems about the role and functions of the Samoan language. School students from early childhood to high school prefer to use English rather than Samoan both in classrooms and during social interactions. These students fall into two general classifications:

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- those who can speak English comfortably
- those who do because English is more prestigious than Samoan

The critics as well as those from the very mobile section of the population maintain that to know and to speak English means ensuring a good, money-earning occupation. In fact, these people equate this with academic capability and success. The students who are in the latter classification are fearful of being called “dumb.”

Teachers of Samoan language and culture are fearful that students are learning language only superficially, whether it be English or Samoan. Many of the students in all of the public schools have been born and raised where Samoan is widely spoken. For most, the primary language needs to be developed first before the second language can be learned and understood properly.

The instruction materials that we have developed are aimed at enriching the local language repertoire of the children. Carefully selected items of the Samoan culture are inserted into each level of the courses complete with its special language characteristics (polite/chiefly) so that, as the everyday language develops, other aspects of the language with the appropriate material culture that go with it are gradually fed into the language experience of the children. At the present time, we are writing a course for the non-Samoan students as well as those Samoans born outside of Samoa, including those who move back and forth between Samoa and the mainland.

A Samoan language arts and culture program is currently being implemented in American Samoa public schools from early childhood education through high school. The Director of Education has mandated that Samoan be taught in Samoan in public elementary levels in the morning either before or after English reading. The directive emphasizes that Samoan is of equal importance with English. A curriculum is being piloted in a six week summer session for early childhood education students to enable them to read in Samoan when they start at kindergarten during the 95-96 school year. The Samoan Language Arts and culture section of DCI also conducts a Samoan Literature Writing Contest for five months of the school year, which culminates in a Festival of the performing arts and showcasing the written literature in elementary and secondary levels. Finally, the maintenance of the Samoan language is further strengthened by the directive that mandates Samoan as a required course in all public schools.

Traditional chants and nursery rhymes are used to teach younger students. The content of their courses are closely aligned with topics about Samoan life. Many of their legends are narrated and accompanied with traditional chants. The traditional “Ava” ceremony that is an expression of love and friendship the Samoans offer to guests and friends when they are welcomed into a village, was demonstrated at the symposium. The Ava Ceremony stands at the very heart of Samoan culture and manifests in a special way some of the best elements of Samoan character. It is an expression of friendship and love we bear each other when we have the occasion to express it. It is a seal for the laws and agreements set by village councils for villages to live by and to live under. When guests

arrive at a village, whether they have been expected or have arrived unexpectedly, arrangements are immediately made for an Ava Ceremony. The leading orator (tulafale) will notify all available matai (chiefs) that guests have arrived and all are to gather at a place of welcome and to bring an Ava root for the reception. The ava root from which ava (kava) is prepared is the treasured possession of a Samoan Matai (chief). This very possession becomes the material link and bridge uniting us, one to the other, in friendship.

Beaufort-Delta Divisional Board Of Education

Pauline Gordon

The Beaufort-Delta Divisional Board of Education is located at Inuvik in Canada's Northwest Territories. Its educational programs include teaching Inuvialuktun and Gwich'in at most schools, teaching and learning centers, aboriginal heritage, and teacher education. Secondary aboriginal language programs were offered at Samuel Hearne Secondary School in Inuvik and in all junior high schools. There is also a language component to the Northern Studies course offering. Preschool programs with an emphasis on Inuvialuktun and Gwich'in language instruction were offered at Tuk, Paulatuk, and Fort McPherson. Inuvialuktun/English bilingual programs were offered in kindergarten in Tuk and Inuvik. Aboriginal heritage programs included Inuvik's Wilderness Training Program, Aklavik's On the Land Program, Tuk's Elders Program, and Paulatuk's Elders Data Project. A teacher education program to train bilingual teachers operates out of Tuk, Inuvik, and Aklavik and was in its second year of operation in 1995.

Hawaiian Language Programs

Kauanoë Kamana and William H. Wilson

During the first two decades of this century Hawai'i underwent a massive language shift from its indigenous Polynesian language to Pidgin (Hawai'i Creole English) as the primary home language of Native Hawaiians and also large numbers of locally born non-Hawaiians. This shift was the result of English-Only legislation that closed down the Hawaiian medium public schools of Hawai'i. The legislation not only nearly exterminated the Hawaiian language and culture but also had disastrous effects on literacy, academic achievement, and even the use of Standard English among Native Hawaiians. Out of nearly 200,000 Native Hawaiians in Hawai'i, the 1990 census listed only 8,872 speakers of Hawaiian. While there still remains one small island where Hawaiian is the language of the entire community, elsewhere Hawaiian speakers are scattered and often elderly. There is, however, a coordinated community and state government effort to save the Hawaiian language and culture from extinction