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"TO LET DIE"

The state of the Samoan language in New Zealand

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Abstract

This paper argues that ethnic language retention is core to the productivity of ethnic minorities. The decline of ethnic languages such as the Samoan language in New Zealand signals a loss that poses a serious threat to the wellbeing and productivity of Samoans in New Zealand. The Samoan language is under serious threat in New Zealand. The absence of a language policy by New Zealand governments to ensure the maintenance of the Samoan language in New Zealand has largely contributed to the decline in the number of speakers. For nearly 40 years Samoans have been lobbying governments and the Ministry of Education for Samoan language programmes to be available at all school class levels. Its maintenance in New Zealand requires acknowledgement of a link between stable ethnic identities and ethnic group productivity and of the "killer" effect, as argued by Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (2002), of the hegemonies of the dominant English language on ethnic minority languages such as the Samoan language in New Zealand.

Keywords

assimilationist, bilingual, hegemonic, "killer" language, language death

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Introduction

The Samoan community is the fourth largest ethnic community in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). Samoan migrants migrated to New Zealand in the 1950s in small numbers. It was in the 1960s and 1970s that the biggest wave of migrants to New Zealand from Samoa and other Pacific islands happened and most settled in Auckland (Franken, May, & McComish, 2008; Misa, 2010). These migrants were deliberately sought by the New Zealand government during the 1960s to fill a labour shortage, mainly in the manufacturing sector. Over the next 40 plus years these Pacific migrants moved throughout New Zealand to settle mostly in the main urban areas of Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin and even as far south as Invercargill. Population forecasts indicate that the Samoan community is one of the fastest growing sections of the population: still a relatively young population with two thirds under 30 years old, with 60% born in New Zealand and almost all of that percentage (that is, 56%) aged under 15 years (Statistics New Zealand, 2006).

The Samoan language is spoken by about 77,106 speakers (63%) from a population of 131,100 Samoans in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). McCaffrey and McFall-McCaffrey (2010) find that this is the second largest number of speakers to use their language regularly after English. While Samoan is the third most spoken language in New Zealand, with 63% of its population being able to conduct a conversation in Samoan, it is experiencing a worrying downturn among its New Zealand-born speakers (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). A drop of 4% was recorded in the 2006 census: from 48% in 2001 to 44% in 2006 (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). Shigemoto (1997) suggests that such a drop is a natural result of ethnic immigrant integration into mainstream society. While this may be so, Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (2002) argues that there can exist within society structural forces that contribute directly to minority language loss.

The drop of 4% in numbers that are able to speak Samoan in this group in the space of only 5 years suggests a high rate of language loss. Given that for 10 years, the number of Samoan speakers in the group remained level at 48% from 1991 to 2001, the loss of 4% in half that time signals warning bells.

Also fewer than 10% of Pasefika children are learning a Pasefika language at school in New Zealand (McCaffery & McFall-McCaffery, 2010) although there are 25 bilingual units of English-Samoan classes in Auckland schools (McCaffery & McFall-McCaffery, 2010). Only three schools in Wellington offer Samoan to its pupils, to help them to learn English. There is no focus on Pasefika languages, the first or heritage language of many school children in New Zealand's classrooms. The significant point here is that, as this New Zealand-born group increases in numbers, language loss will also increase.

Language is linked to cultural or ethnic identity (Brown, 2009, p. 3). The health of a language indicates to some degree "the health" of an ethnic group. That is, because language carries the values and history of a people, it gives them an ethnic specificity that bestows them pride and defines them as a people with a particular cultural heritage. Without this cultural heritage, a people's—particularly those whose difference from the dominant ethnic group is so apparent in look and behavioural norms—emotional, cultural and intellectual capital is underdeveloped putting their proper engagement with society (a prerequisite for economic productivity) at risk. The higher the number of those who speak an ethnic language the more likely it is that the language and its attendant values are strong. Language loss suggests a weakening of these values and a questioning of ethnic identity. If the cultural heritage of ethnic minority people is unable to be integrated into dominant society and these people are unable to connect emotionally, intellectually or spiritually with the values of the dominant society, there is a risk of cultural

malaise which impacts on the ability to be a productive citizen. For New Zealand, the fact that Samoans make up a significant proportion of the Pacific population—which is the fourth largest ethnic classification—with a high projected growth rate over the next 10 years, means that if New Zealand were to support the maintenance of the Samoan language the benefits in the long run to New Zealand seem to outweigh the short-term costs. The history of New Zealand's political relationship with Samoa also provides some points for reflection on its Samoan community's call for a language policy that can assist in the maintenance of the Samoan language in New Zealand.

Language policy in New Zealand

The Ministry of Pacific Islands Affairs commissioned the Ministry of Justice to formally clarify the place of Pacific peoples constitutionally in New Zealand (Ministry of Justice & Ministry of Pacific Islands Affairs, 2000). The report stated that there is a special relationship between Samoa and New Zealand, different to other ethnic groups, due to the unique nature of New Zealand's administration of Samoa under the League of Nations and United Nations 1921–1962 protectorate mandate and the Treaty of Friendship (Ministry of Justice & Ministry of Pacific Islands Affairs, 2000). In 1982 the Privy Council ruled that all Samoans born in Samoa during the period of 1924 to 1948 were entitled to be New Zealand citizens (Ministry of Justice & Ministry of Pacific Islands Affairs, 2000). This decision prompted the New Zealand government to pass legislation—the Citizenship (Western Samoa) Act 1982—which effectively limited the number of Samoans to be granted citizenship to those who were in New Zealand on 14 September 1982 and those who arrived in New Zealand as permanent residents after that date. This history informs the special relationship between Samoa and New Zealand. Samoans as a distinct ethnic people have since contributed significantly to the cultural fabric of New Zealand life—from politics, arts and film through to the sports, business, industrial and educational fields. And this is in spite of the challenges of assimilation and trying to move against the hegemonic forces of monoculturalism.

For Samoans during the 1970s, government assimilation policies were most evident in the prohibition of the use of Samoan in the work environment and when immigrant workers such as Seleni Taufao asserts that her Samoan language does not belong to her new life in New Zealand (personal communication, September, 1978). The lack of relevance to New Zealand was the basic message of assimilationist policy (Cummins, 1984). From the Samoan language retention statistics cited earlier, the Samoan language has suffered in this battle against assimilation. Because of the importance of language to cultural survival, the ability of policy support language retention and maintenance cannot be overstated.

I recall during the early days of the New Zealand government's assimilationist policies, one policy that effectively expected Samoan parents to teach their Samoan children "broken English". That is, schools suggested to all parents, including immigrant parents, that they should speak only English to their children to help themselves and their children to learn English faster (Spolsky, 1988). In my role working for the Pacific Islanders Educational Resources Centre (PIERC) helping immigrant Samoan families to integrate as smoothly as possible into New Zealand society, I came across families where the policy had more of a deterrent than supportive effect. For these families the "broken English" of the parents was a setback for their children's learning of English in the short term, which never really got fixed and so became a longer-term problem. Attending to such issues when they arise requires acknowledging the structural inequalities associated with language maintenance.

Today Samoan and other Pacific

communities are awaiting the launch of the Pasifika Languages Strategy being developed by the Ministry of Pacific Islands Affairs (Human Rights Commission, 2011) soon to be given to government for consideration. A newly formed organization called Bilingual Leo Coalition (Coalition for Pacific languages) in Aotearoa New Zealand presented a petition with 6,000 signatures to Parliament on 4 August 2011 asking for their languages to be legally recognized as minority official languages in New Zealand. The New Zealand Māori Party supported this call in a media release (Turia & Sharples, 2011).

New Zealand has never had a comprehensive languages policy as argued by Peddie in Bell, Harlow, and Starks (2005). In fact, according to language experts (Smith, 2004; Shackleford, 1996; Hoffman, 1998) language issues are unplanned and uncoordinated with decisions relating to language matters made on an ad hoc basis. This occurs when there is an absence of a formal language policy (Hoffman, 1998; Shackleford, 1996). In 1991 a languages policy project was set up by government and operationalized by the Ministry of Education (Waite, 1992). This was prompted by the first National Conference on "Community Languages and English as a Second Language". The conference was held in Wellington in 1988.

The languages policy project was called "Aoteareo: Speaking for Ourselves". It explored the need for a coherent and comprehensive New Zealand languages policy that would enrich and expand the diversity of languages used by New Zealanders. I was fortunate to be a part of this inaugural conference. As a participant and assistant coordinator I saw hope for the maintenance of the Samoan language in New Zealand. When a curriculum statement for Samoan language was included in government education policy 2 years after *Aoteareo* I got excited. Draft language curriculum statements were launched also for Spanish, English, Chinese (Mandarin) and Māori. The message stressed by government (namely the Minister of Education, Secretary of Commerce and the Prime Minister at the time) was not bilingualism but the economic gain in developing competency in these languages (Education Review Office, 1994). Nevertheless, the statements were made. My excitement dwindled as time passed for it was not until 1996 that the Samoan language policy was actually implemented (Benton, 1995).

New Zealand's policy stance on Samoan language maintenance has not progressed since 1996. Today New Zealand has three official languages: English, Māori and New Zealand Sign Language. English is the default language for New Zealand, although not officially legislated for. Māori became an official language after the Māori Language Act 1987 was passed in recognition of the tangata whenua or indigenous people status of New Zealand Māori. And, after the passing of the New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006, New Zealand Sign Language became the third official language of New Zealand.

By the 1990s the education policy classification of Samoan language in schools shifted from being that of a "community language" to being a "foreign language" (May, 2005; Waite, 1992). This had the effect, at least conceptually, of making it easier to move responsibility from the New Zealand government to the "foreign" community for the maintenance of the "foreign" Samoan language. This shift manifested itself in the grouping of Samoan together with languages traditionally considered foreign such as German, French, Spanish and Japanese. The school policy used to enable the shift was called the "Learning Languages" policy. The implication was that learning of these languages, including Samoan, was to be a learning decision that would be over and above that required to engage in New Zealand society and so at the discretion of the learner. It was optional. This thinking is only persuasive if one believes that loss of an ethnic language will not have any negative impact on the wellbeing of the people to whom that ethnic language belongs. Many linguists and social scientists have suggested otherwise (see the work of Stephen May and Skutnabb-Kangas for example).

Because of the historical relationship that is also underlined by a treaty of friendship between New Zealand and Samoa and the number of Samoans contributing to New Zealand's public life, and despite the Citizenship (Western Samoa) Act 1982, New Zealand continues to attract and take in Samoan immigrants. The Samoan community in New Zealand has clearly established itself over the last 50 years to be a core part of the New Zealand identity and community. Samoan language, spoken by first, second and even third generation language speakers as their first, second or third languages, contributes significantly to the life of those Samoans—over 100,000 of whom identify as Samoans (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). Starks, Taumoefolau, Bell, & Davis (2005) record very high levels of support for the use of Samoan language by the Samoan community of Manukau, where many Samoans reside. This is to be expected. The decline in numbers of speakers overall, however, indicates that the level of support in other places in New Zealand is not as high.

For those of us who have been involved in the fight to retain Pasefika languages since the 1970s, bilingualism (at least as a first goal post) was and still is considered the main policy aim. We believed and I still believe that a bilingual community would enable better appreciation among its members of the richness of having more than one cultural norm, which in itself is a prerequisite for cultural tolerance. Tolerance of diversity is a trait highly desirable for harmony in multicultural societies such as New Zealand. Gaining the kind of bilingualism we were after was not going to be achieved through the Samoan as "foreign language" thinking advanced by the New Zealand government. The ineffectiveness of this approach to bilingualism was reported on by Baker (2001) in a study conducted within schools in the United States of America. In this study it was reported that only 1 in 20 students became effectively bilingual from participation in foreign language instruction. For Samoan language maintenance a coherent policy that can advance our aims of biculturalism is required not only for the regulation and monitoring of teaching, curriculum and learning standards, but perhaps more importantly for the preservation of a cultural heritage for successive generations whereby the heritage does and is believed to contribute to the positive growth of individuals and communities who claim it.

A key difficulty of hegemonies such as monoculturalism is that monocultural governments know no better than to perpetuate their privilege because they find it difficult to critique themselves outside their own structures and logic. Stephen May (2005) suggests that the "usefulness" of a "foreign" language in New Zealand when measured against the English language and the subsequent social mobility that comes with it can highlight the privilege given to English in New Zealand education policies. English is considered a necessary tool or instrument for New Zealanders to advance within society and internationally. All other languages are measured against the benefits of English. This assumes that the languages of trade are the only languages to influence human productivity. This is clearly not the case.

Phillipson (1997) argues that the linguistic imperialism of colonial languages such as English reflects persisting colonial mentalities within governing bodies. Linguistic imperialism is a term he uses to describe the structural circumstances that contribute to the loss of minority languages such as Samoan in New Zealand. This linguistic imperialism is equivalent to colonial imperialism but organized through a condition of linguicism. Linguicism may be overt or covert, conscious or unconscious, in that it reflects dominant attitudes, values and hegemonic beliefs about what purposes particular languages should serve, or about the value of certain pedagogic practices (Phillipson, 1997, p. 240).

Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (2002) argues that when powerful languages such as English affect languages such as Samoan in the manner

described above, then Samoan is learnt subtractively. That is, it is replaced as its speakers learn English. Skutnabb-Kungas (2002) describes English in this case as a "killer language". Her argument is that a language does not just die (commit suicide), even if it appears that its speakers voluntarily abandon it in pursuit of an elite or trade language such as English. Rather, as a "killer language" it creates no alternative. In other words, the danger of such languages is its monocultural assumptions.

In further refining Skutnabb-Kangas's thinking on the killer effects of languages such as English, McMahon (1994) suggests there are two subtypes of language death. The first is *language suicide*. This occurs when a language slowly but surely absorbs material (for example, by borrowing words) from the more prestigious one until the two languages are scarcely distinguishable from each the other. The result of older generations of speakers of a minority language deliberately choosing not to use their mother tongue with their children but instead to adopt the majority language as the language of instruction is, as Beck and Lam (2008) explain, the wilful contribution to the loss of the language excluded because of the interruption caused to the transmission of the language from one generation to the next.

The language/s of the home environment provides an indication of the degree to which there is intergenerational loss in ethnic minority languages. Research by Starks et al. (2005) affirm a link between reductions in the amount of Samoan language use in the home and the diminishing importance of language as an issue for the younger Samoan generation. This process of loss is typical in immigrant situations. However, it need not be so.

Skutnabb-Kangas (2002) suggests that the real culprits of this minority language loss are not individuals but the global economic, military and political systems that privilege some languages over others. These hegemonic influences are part of a colonial mindset that brain-washes parents into thinking that the best future for their children is only via the English or dominant worldview (Eckert et al., 2004). This is of concern and can be found in the ill-informed logic of a growing number of New Zealand-born Samoans who claim that competency in one's ethnic language is not needed in the right to assert belonging to that ethnic identity or group (Anae, 2001). While this may be true on one level, the fullness of that truth is mitigated by the fact that asserting "Samoan-ness" is ultimately rendered redundant if one is unable to articulate the nuances of that Samoan-ness, most of which are best captured and made apparent through the Samoan language—Samoan terms and expressions. It may well be that the Samoan language itself may change to be more accommodating of new contexts for knowing and being, but this does not usually require doing away with an entire linguistic system.

The so-called divide between "overseas-born" and "New Zealand-born" Samoans in New Zealand, while outside the purview of this paper, is worth noting as a possible contributor to language loss. That is, when proponents and dissidents of the "no need to learn Samoan to be Samoan" approach engage in this labelling exercise they often argue their points defensively, reflecting a sensitivity to the exclusionary politics that operate within the divide. Moving beyond the divide requires acknowledging such sensitivities and political manoeuvrings and finding ways to overcome them.

Research by Starks et al. (2005) suggest that there is a desire among Pacific parents not to do away with their indigenous ethnic languages wherever possible, but acknowledge at the same time that the realities of not living within communities of fluent speakers may cause significant loss anyway. Moving from a desire to protect to actually carrying out protective strategies is for Crawford (1996) about acknowledging that for many Pacific peoples, including for Samoans and the Samoan language, the church and the home are still useful sites for the teaching and maintenance, and thereby retention, of the

Samoan language and its attendant values and practices that might necessarily be described as Samoan. The role of the (Samoan) church and its establishment of āʻoga ʻāmata as a Samoan language nest that works to teach Samoan language alongside or instead of the home, is of huge significance to the Samoan community's strategy for the maintenance of Samoan in New Zealand.

Community initiatives for Samoan language retention and maintenance

Since 1974 Samoans began to lobby for the inclusion of their language in the formal school curriculum of their children. A prominent church minister and leader, Leuatea Sio of the Pacific Islanders Church in Newton, Auckland, together with other educationalists and Samoan community representatives, expressed a clear wish for this in 1974 at a Department of Education conference held in Auckland (Department of Education, 1975). This initial work by Reverend Sio and others was later supported by the Samoan teachers of the Auckland PIERC in 1976. I was co-founder and active member of this PIERC group, which later became FAGASA (Association for the Teaching of Samoan in Aotearoa) in the 1980s.

FAGASA consists of Samoan teachers and parents. It has actively lobbied for the formal inclusion of Samoan language into school curricula for nearly 40 years. PIERC (renamed Pacific Education Centre—PEC) today offers Samoan language night classes to adults. Teaching resources in the Samoan language were developed by PIERC for use in the classrooms. Work done by organizations such as FAGASA is, however, largely voluntary.

Another voluntary Samoan organization involved in Samoan language maintenance is the Fono Faufautua a Samoa / Samoan Advisory Council, which was set up in the mid-1970s to coordinate assistance to newly arrived Samoan migrant families. The Council assisted PIERC in providing cultural and language advice to employers of Samoan migrants. As secretary of the Auckland branch of this organization I was assigned the task of liaising between PIERC and the Council. The Samoan Advisory Council would add their support to the lobbying strategies of PIERC for use of the Samoan language in schools. So too would come the support of the Samoan churches.

Samoans were mainly Christians and tended to be Catholic, Methodist, Pacific Islands Church (PIC) or Congregational. Church programmes or services conducted in Samoan gave Samoan language a space for teaching and learning Samoan. The teaching/learning exercise was not conducted in formal classroom type settings; rather it was, before the establishment of āʻoga ʻāmata, through individuals taking note of how the language worked and practising in their own time.

In the mid-1980s, the setting up of Samoan preschools (āʻoga ʻāmata) was the result of the conscious drive by Samoan parents within Samoan churches to address language maintenance if not language loss issues. Āʻoga ʻāmata was modelled after the āʻoga faifeʻau, or pastor schools run by congregational churches in Samoa (Tanielu, 2008) in the 1950s. It is suggested here that the establishment of Te Kōhanga Reo, the Māori preschool, in 1981 and its exciting and successful reception by Māori motivated the Samoan community to follow suit and set up āʻoga ʻāmata. The first āʻoga ʻāmata was set up in 1985 in Newtown in the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (Burgess, 1998). They spread throughout New Zealand, from the main centres of Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch to the more rural communities of Tokoroa and Wanganui, even as far south as Dunedin and Invercargill. The teachers are usually non-working parents from the church who are trained in Samoan preschool education and speak Samoan fluently (Burgess, 1998).

In a study by Roberts (in Bell, Harlow, & Starks, 2005), she points out that the Samoan

community's pro-active initiative to set up Samoan language nests clearly demonstrates a positive orientation to language and cultural maintenance in New Zealand. Parents setting up structures (having rules) for speaking Samoan at home was a point also raised by Fairbairn-Dunlop (1984, p. 105) as something that sent a strong message to their children and families about the importance of the Samoan language to them.

After 20 years of lobbying by organizations such as FAGASA, the Samoan language was included as a university subject in 1989 and as an optional subject in New Zealand schools in the mid-1990s (personal communication with former Minister of Parliament Arthur Anae, 30 July, 1997). The teaching of Samoan language at the university level was first done in New Zealand by Victoria University of Wellington (VUW) in 1989. This led to the publishing of Samoan language resources in 1996 for a national Samoan curriculum led by the Ministry of Education. Around this time there was a noticeable increase in the use of Samoan language in different media such as Samoan community newspapers and radio programmes.

In 1998, Samoan was offered as a School Certificate (now superseded by the National Certificate of Educational Achievement—NCEA) subject in national school examinations and more recently (in 2011) was added to the list of high school scholarship subjects. And, Samoan can be studied today at VUW and The University of Auckland (UA) as part of a Bachelor of Arts degree: at VUW as a major and as a minor at UA. The 1997 Ministry of Education curriculum document was revised in 2009 providing new guidelines for the teaching of Samoan language from preschools up to the high school level. However, the 2001–2009 Pasifika Education Plan published by the Ministry of Education excluded Samoan language preschools in its outlay of education sites that it needed to focus on. McCaffery and McFall-McCaffery (2010, p. 105) suggest that this move by the Ministry of Education undermines all the lobbying efforts of the Pacific language retention and maintenance advocates and "perpetuated the myths of Papalagi [non-Samoan] ECE [early childhood education] educators and policy makers, that Pasifika children under 5 years old are better off in English-speaking ECE centres than they are at home in their extended families".

Late in 2010, the Samoan school journal series *Folauga* and *Tupu* were put on hold by the Minister of Education while the Ministry of Education looked for ways to improve the English literacy of Samoan children (Human Rights Commission, 2010). It was effectively, to use the old saying, "taking from Peter to pay Paul". The removal of a valuable language resource for Samoan language maintenance seemed a highly harsh price to pay for a problem that is not going to be resolved by pitting one language against another.

With the recent decline in levels of Samoan speakers in New Zealand, the success of these provisions and programmes is undermined. Some considerable work is required to understand the causes of the decline so that the efforts and gains made at the formal education level are not wasted and the trend can be reversed. Without a comprehensive language policy the resources necessary to get a sector wide approach to ethnic minority language maintenance, such as Samoan, is limited. Communities, including universities, have limited budgets and should not have to take full responsibility for the care and delivery of something fundamental to the wellbeing of society.

Ways forward

It seems to me that one way forward is to rethink and re-invoke biculturalism/bilingualism as discussed earlier so as to reconceptualize and re-invigorate ethnic minority languages that are important to the wellbeing of ethnic minority peoples such as Samoans. In this case the private and public learning spaces of the

Samoan student, from childhood into adulthood, must be better understood.

McCaffrey and McFall-McCaffrey (2010) argue that Samoan and other Pasefika languages are not seen as part of the responsibility of the public domain but rather part of the private (home) domain and so trace a direct link between this and the absence of state funding support. Through this absence the state suggests responsibility only for the maintenance of those languages that fall within its public responsibility. Defining this public space and who takes responsibility for what, is not, however, as easy as it sounds. Bilingualism could be argued by some as a responsibility for the state to encourage maintenance of English and Māori: the language of the two founding peoples of New Zealand. However, this would create problems not only for other ethnic minority language speakers but also for languages such as sign language.

At the individual level biculturalism can be used to encourage bilingualism in English and any other language relevant to the situations of New Zealand citizens. Education linguists (Baker, 2006, 2007; Cummins, 2003, 2007; May, 2004, 2005) have suggested that this approach can develop cultural tolerance that can potentially develop into societal tolerance for different cultures and norms, a trait that can have useful consequences for developing versatile workers. Moreover, bilingualism and biculturalism assume what Amituanai-Toloa and McNaughton (2008) describe as "biliteracy". In plotting patterns of the results of reading comprehension exercises among groups of Samoan students in bilingual classrooms in middle to upper primary school years in New Zealand, they noted a marked improvement could be achieved in English (second language—L2) reading comprehension after simultaneous development of Samoan as their first language (L1). Finlayson Park and Richmond Road schools in Auckland were highlighted as success stories in the biliteracy approach (McCaffery & McFall-McCaffery, 2010). The essential feature in both these schools (on their own initiative without a Ministry policy) is its ability to assess and then implement a need for such an approach (McCaffery & McFall-McCaffery, 2010). May (2009) finds that such bilingualism in a Pasefika language and English can have significant social and educational advantages for students if actively recognized and supported in schools. To this I would add the need for recognition and support from the workplace, the home and core community groups that families belong to. Bilingualism/biliteracy/biculturalism, however, is not looked upon as the core business of government and so it is not a priorityof the Ministry of Education. For such minority communities this spells death for many of their ethnic community languages.

Spolsky (2004) offers some hope. He suggests that the loss of Samoan in this case can still be saved. It is the community itself rather than government who decides at the end of the day what language works best for them in helping them to be true to themselves and be part of their wider society. Given rigorous national and international research findings that evidence the hegemonic tendencies of colonial languages and its attendant superstructures of power, such as English in New Zealand, moving beyond these to re-energize meaning in the retention and maintenance of ethnic minority languages must begin and end with these ethnic communities, with the Samoan community, drawing together to make deliberate decisions to keep its Samoan language, to make it as inclusive as possible, and to gain and retain as best as possible high biliteracy standards.

The hegemonic forces of the English language should not paralyse the Samoan community from acting on saving the Samoan language through continued and focused lobbying of appropriate public bodies, including government, and of the Samoan community itself, to develop resources and standards for biliteracy. Clearly, from the studies cited in this paper there are a large number of parents who want the language of their children's cultural heritage

legitimized in the public and private spheres of the society they live and work in. A way forward is thus to rethink how we (as Samoan language advocates) think about working together as a community and with government in making the point that ethnic minority languages carry the heart and soul of the ethnic community. To keep that healthy is to keep the potential productivity of that community healthy.

Conclusion

Samoan language, as an ethnic minority language in New Zealand, is core to the productivity of Samoans who privilege their Samoan identity. The decline of ethnic languages such as the Samoan language in New Zealand signals a loss in identity that poses a serious threat to the wellbeing and productivity of Samoans in New Zealand. But maintaining Samoan in New Zealand requires acknowledging a link between stable ethnic identities and ethnic group productivity and of the "killer" effect, as argued by Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (2002), of the hegemonies of the dominant English language on ethnic minority languages such as the Samoan language in New Zealand. For governments dominated by monolingual speakers this is not easy to admit and so, unsurprisingly, there has never been a comprehensive language policy put forward by New Zealand governments. It just seems either too hard, or worse, irrelevant.

Ensuring that the decline in Samoan language speakers in New Zealand does not continue to increase requires recognizing the significance of the work that Samoan language advocates have done over the last 40 years, and a generosity of spirit to find ways to draw together both community and government to recognize that teaching and learning Samoan is both a strength for the Samoan community and a strength for government. The strength for the government lies in its potential for building productive Samoan citizens and the strength for Samoans is the potential to hold on to what is beautiful and soul energizing of its Samoan cultural heritage. The decline has jolted us to halt this seeming journey "to the grave", to re-evaluate and rebuild.

To let die is not an option: not for Samoans in New Zealand and not for the New Zealand government. The historical relationship between Samoa and New Zealand is not irrelevant; it is part of what joins the spirit of both peoples—a spirit that is held strong by the firm recognition that the strength of a people and nation, which includes Samoan New Zealanders, is its commitment to its various cultures and languages.

Glossary

ā'oga 'āmata	Samoan language nest
ā'oga faife'au	pastor schools run by congregational churches in Samoa
Papālagi	European; white person
tangata whenua	indigenous people of the land

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