

Tracing Language Use and Policy in Cook Islands' Schools: 1827-2003

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Abstract

The language of instruction used in schools in the Pacific is an ongoing and contentious issue. The Cook Islands is a small nation with a rich oral history, in which formal education was initiated soon after the arrival of the British missionary John Williams in 1821. This paper traces the development of schooling, and the changes in policy of language use in schools in the Cook Islands from 1827 to the passing of the Te Reo Maori Act 2003. The predominance of use of either Cook Islands Maori or of English in the education system has alternated a number of times over this time period. The legacy of the shifting language policies is still evident in the Cook Islands today.

Key words: Cook Islands, education, English, history, language policy, Maori

Introduction

The language of instruction used in schools in the Pacific is an ongoing and contentious issue. Decisions regarding language choice are more than simply linguistic choices. Language is inextricably linked to culture and promotes worldviews that privilege certain beliefs and values. There are political, social and personal reasons for the choices of the language used by people groups. Proficiency in some languages gives people power and may open doors that otherwise would remain closed. Consequently decisions about the languages that are used for instruction in schools are important and have long lasting effects.

In this paper the history of the use of languages for formal education in the Cook Islands is described, and commentary is provided. Language policy and usage are very important aspects of the Cook Islands' schooling system given the cultural, social, economic and political aspects of life that require access through a language or languages. Pacific nations often utilise a range of their own languages and dialects,

as well languages from influential powers such as colonists and trading partners. The decisions to prioritise certain languages in a nation's schooling system have an ongoing impact on the students who are part of that education system. The language policies implemented over time in Cook Islands demonstrate the varying commitment of outside decision-makers to a range of ideologies, as well as Cook Islanders' own views on what should be prioritised.

Background

Cook Islands are a group of 15 small islands in the Pacific Ocean, located in two groups. The population across all 12 inhabited islands was 14974 in 2011, but many are sparsely populated (COOK ISLANDS CENSUS 2011). Approximately half of the population lives in Rarotonga, the largest island by area and the seat of parliament for the country. There are two main indigenous languages used in Cook Islands. Principally Cook Islands Maori is used in all but three of the populated islands. No single Cook Islands Maori language exists, except within dialectical forms but the 'standard' dialect used for print materials and central government and churches is Rarotongan, the dialect used on the largest island (TONGIA 2003). The islands of Pukapuka and Nassau use Pukapukan, a language more closely related to Western Pacific languages such as Samoan and Tuvaluan (CLARK 1980). Palmerston Island alone uses an archaic version of English as the first language of the approximately 50 inhabitants. English is now common and its use is widespread in Rarotonga, but for most of those living in outer islands, their own dialect or language is used in preference to English in day-to-day life.

Research Purpose and Method

The purpose of this paper is to chronicle the language use and policy within the education sector in Cook Islands by outlining key events and decisions through the time period 1827-2003. These dates are chosen as the boundaries of the study: 1827 marks the year the first English speakers moved to live in the islands, and 2003 marks the introduction of the Te Reo Maori Act, which is the current legislation with respect to the status of languages in Cook Islands.

The study comprised research of literature review with literature being accessed using university library databases as well as substantial print materials sourced from the Cook Islands Library and Museum Society, and the National Library, Avarua, Rarotonga. Key events and decisions have been chronicled to provide a record of policy and decisions regarding language use in schools.

Findings: The Story of Language Use in Cook Islands' Schools

Most chroniclers of Cook Islands recent history break the history into three periods of contact: the missionary period, the colonial period and the period since independence was gained (BEAGLEHOLE, 1957, CROCOMBE 1979, SCOTT 1991). With the addition of a short section on pre-European history, this structure has been maintained to provide background for the country's language use, policy, and its effects on schooling.

Pre-European period and language

According to tradition Cook Islanders come from the legendary homeland of Avaiki, although the whereabouts of Avaiki is lost in history. It has been suggested that Polynesians may have been seafarers who migrated from South-East Asia to the Pacific islands 500BC - 400AD (KIRCH 1997). It is assumed that these people would have originally spoken a common language and moved to gradually populate the islands in the Pacific. As they dispersed the language they used continued to develop and differentiate.

According to oral history chieftains founded lineage groups on the islands they discovered and a hierarchical social structure was formed. The *ariki* (paramount chief) ruled the people of a district, being supported by the next in rank - *mataiapo* (who headed lineage groups and their subdistricts), and *rangatira* (sub-chief). The position of *ariki* was bestowed upon a member of the chiefly families. *Ariki* exercised control over the people by the use of their *mana* (supernatural power) and the control of *tapu* (ability to decide what was forbidden for the people). *Ariki* led people in war, allocated land for the use of family groups, and represented the people to the gods in exchange for labour and gifts. *Ta'unga* (priests and knowers of important knowledge) were important and also held power over the people as they were thought to have the spiritual powers on their side. Each *ariki* governed an island or district and the peoples living in that area. Education was the concern of the family and the clan, with children learning by watching others and listening to their advice, as well as being active members in their community. The '*Are Vananga* (house of learning) was for esoteric knowledge, and special knowledge was passed only from the expert to an identified junior relative (VAI'IMENE 2003). Contact between islands did occasionally occur but there was enough separation for Cook Islands Maori dialects and Pukapukan language to develop.

The missionary period and language

This period stretches from the arrival of the British missionary John Williams on Rarotonga in 1823 to the declaration in 1888 of a British Protectorate over most of what is now Cook Islands. Before missionaries from the London Missionary Society (LMS) settled on the main island Rarotonga, the local people had little contact with

Europeans or with European languages. Pukapuka had been sighted by the Spaniard Alvaro de Menana in 1595 and Spanish explorers landed on various Northern Group islands at times in 1606 (on Rakahanga) and then in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Many of the Southern Group islands were discovered by Europeans in the 1770s and Maretu records the oral tradition that the *Bounty* arrived in Rarotonga after the mutiny (MARETU 1871). In the early 1800s Captain James Cook's ship, the *Endeavour*, and other ships sailed close to the islands. The first known foreign landing in Rarotonga was in 1814 by the crew of the *Cumberland*, in their search for sandalwood.

John Williams landed first in the second largest island, Aitutaki, in 1821 bringing with him Tahitian missionaries including the well-known pioneer missionary Papehia. Williams travelled to Rarotonga in 1823 and introduced Christianity to the Rarotongans, who accepted this new religion. John Williams and the missionaries who followed him recognised the importance of using indigenous languages when working with Cook Islands people, so they adopted the Cook Islands Maori language. Williams used Polynesian converts from the Society Islands and Tahiti as missionaries as part of 'native agency'. The Polynesians had linguistic and cultural advantages over Europeans. Similarities between the Cook Islands Maori and Tahitian languages meant the local language was easy to learn for the Polynesian missionaries. Williams observed that "it is a circumstance of very rare occurrence that a religious impression is produced upon the minds of a people, except by addressing them in their mother tongue" (BUZACOTT 1866). The first Europeans to reside in the islands were missionaries who came to live on Rarotonga in 1827. Their arrival heralded the first real introduction of the English language to Rarotongan people.

Missionary policy in the mid-1800s influenced the language use and choices for future Cook Islanders. In particular, the following guidelines were used by the London Missionary Society missionaries and were seen as of utmost importance:

- (1) The use of indigenous missionaries and the native language,
- (2) Missionaries' isolation from other Europeans and restricted relations with all non-Maori residents,
- (3) Application of schooling to promote literacy and spread Christianity among Cook Islanders. (GILSON 1991)

In particular the focus on schooling using indigenous languages only and promoting literacy in those languages.

With the arrival of the missionaries and their success in evangelising in Rarotonga, huge social change occurred for people of that time. By the late 1880s the results of social change were clearly apparent in Rarotonga (BEAGLEHOLE 1957). The establishment of missionary schools was an important change for Cook Islands, their purpose being to enable students to read the Bible in order to develop Christian attitudes, values and behaviours. Settlements were established near missionary stations to allow for ease of attendance at church and school, *marae* (cleared areas used for ceremonial and religious purposes) were destroyed, images of gods were destroyed,

new Western-style laws were written and enforced, warfare with associated cannibalism ceased, and many people converted to Christianity (GUIART 1970).

Aaron Buzacott, a LMS missionary who arrived in 1828 was trained in Tahitian and this enabled him to talk freely with Rarotongans in just a few weeks and preach his first sermon in Rarotongan within three months. Buzacott had a major impact on the Rarotongans. Rarotongan missionaries were subsequently sent to other islands where they made use of their mother tongue and continued the successful spread of Christianity across the Pacific.

Missionary families who had moved to Cook Islands maintained contact with the local people only on a level of formal teaching or informal friendship, but intermarriage between Europeans and Maori was strictly prohibited. This meant that a social distance existed and that exposure to the English language was limited. During this part of history English was never promoted among Cook Islanders, although some English loan words were introduced to their language e.g. *pepa* (paper), *kapu* (cup), *peni* (pen). The missionaries also strongly discouraged Rarotongan contact with 'white heathens' (the traders, sailors and whalers who called into port at Avarua, the main port on Rarotonga). Because of the language policy of the LMS, almost all interactions between Cook Islanders and Europeans were in Cook Islands Maori, both in church, school and community.

With the arrival of the missionaries came other disruptions and social change. The introduction of diseases never before encountered in Cook Islands meant large numbers of deaths within their population. The missionaries also brought their own culture and introduced the local people to western style clothing, tools, and the use of money. People were strongly encouraged to move out from the hills where they lived and to resettle in small coastal villages, each built around a church. This church also acted as a school setting.

In order to actualise the LMS guidelines relating to the use of the indigenous languages for the work of missionaries, an important part of their work in these early days was the construction of a written form of Cook Islands Maori language. Williams used a 13-letter alphabet, and Buzacott devised a grammar. Williams worked on a written vocabulary for Cook Islands Maori and later started to translate the New Testament. The missionaries prioritised literacy in order to give their new converts access to the Bible, so classes were introduced soon after their arrival. In the initial stages missionaries offered classes to the chiefs and their children and for some time chiefs tried to limit this new form of education to themselves. However, soon classes became available to everyone and hundreds of adults presented themselves for tuition. BUZACOTT (1866) reported that by 9am each day 2500 adults and children had received about an hour and a half of tuition. Many of the adults also learnt parts of scripture by memory (GILL 1894).

..However the Tahitian teachers were not well trained and so were limited in what they could teach. The lack of equipment was also a constraint. The greatest hindrance was the lack of books in Cook Islands Maori. In 1832 Buzacott obtained an old printing

press and began publishing books in the local dialect. Copies of the New Testament in the Rarotongan dialect of Cook Islands Maori were also now available and were in high demand. Books that were translated and printed included the Bible, hymn books, catechisms and children's books. A Rarotongan *Pilgrim's Progress* was printed in 1846 and the Aitutakian Laws (which were a series of strict laws imposed by missionaries) in 1847, which was apparently the only indigenous literature to be published at this time. The Bible and religious texts formed the majority of the content for lessons.

Cook Islanders embraced literacy and achieved high literacy levels in Cook Islands Maori. BEAGLEHOLE (1957) noted that by 1857 almost all of the population could read and the majority could write and do some ciphering. As noted by BUZACOTT:

Mr Williams observes that from the moment the people received books in their own dialect, their progress has been so rapid, that at the present time there is a greater number of persons who can read at Rarotonga than at any of our other stations... By far the greatest majority learned to read, many also to write (BUZACOTT 1866).

Nearly all the educational activity of the mission was directed towards Christianisation and the literature available was Christian based. A few elementary texts in arithmetic, geography and history were printed, but education in these subjects and in special crafts was mostly restricted to the children of chiefs and other prominent people who were taught separately by the missionaries or their wives. The average Cook Islander received little more than basic reading knowledge and a drilling in catechisms from Polynesian pastors. As a direct result of missionary policy in the 19th century Cook Islanders became literate in their own language, but had little knowledge of English.

However the policy of the early missionaries ensured the continuation of use of their language rather than its demise. Critics of the early mission schooling system in Cook Islands condemn the imposition of western education, its method and content, rather than the language policy implemented and the choice of the language of education.

The colonial period and language

Near the end of the 19th century and as the first generation of LMS missionaries retired Cook Islanders' enthusiasm for Christianity waned and laws against intermarriage were repealed. At the same time as the isolationist policy of missionaries broke down, Cook Islanders' interest in English began to emerge. Commentators observe that colonised peoples demand education in the language of their colonisers in order to be better able to stand up for themselves in the context in which they are living (CARNOY 1974, CLIGNET 1971). Foreign settlers (mostly English speaking) began to settle in greater numbers in Cook Islands (75 settlers by 1900). These settlers began to exercise disproportionate power and it was largely in support of their interests that

the Cook Islands were annexed to New Zealand in 1901. At this time Cook Islands had been part of a British Protectorate, which had been declared in 1888.

New Zealander Frederick Moss was appointed as British Resident (who held this position from 1891 - 1898), and was said to be one of the more forward looking and effective leaders. He was keen to maintain the mana of the local people and appointed very few Europeans to key posts. As he explained to the New Zealand Governor, the Earl of Onslow:

It is important that they should not have more Europeans than possible placed over them if they are to preserve self-respect. I am told that in Fiji a man may live with a half-caste girl but if he marries her it is social death. Such a feeling is only possible when the Natives form an inferior caste altogether and it would be a pity to see it introduced into Rarotonga. (SCOTT 1991)

Because missionary policy had restricted classes in the schools to using only Maori language there was only a very small pool of bilingual people available for administration positions. Frederick Moss agreed with the strong feelings of Cook Island people that schooling should be available for all people in English. He prompted parliament to make English education mandatory in the mission schools and planned to provide free, secular coeducational English-teaching schools in every district. Moss believed that democratic self-government and economic development would follow naturally from such an education. The chiefs shared Moss's vision and English became a sign of progress in their eyes. This vision lasted in Maori perception and has been more recently described as persistent (POLYNESIA WAY 1989).

The London Missionary Society opposed teaching English language to Cook Islanders. 'Will it change their hearts? It will only lead them to read trashy novels as French has taught the natives to do in Tahiti', was a comment made by Rev Hutchin. However the LMS was persuaded by Makea Ariki, highest chief in Rarotonga, to open Tereora, the first secondary school in Cook Islands, in 1895.

In 1895 Parliament passed an Act to prohibit the operation of any school in which English was not the language of instruction. With the introduction of legislation and regulations pertaining to primary and secondary schools it was stipulated that the vernacular (any form of Cook Islands Maori) should not be spoken during school hours; a move in direct opposition to the earlier policy of the LMS missionaries which disallowed English to be spoken at school. Regulations required that all teaching be in English, and that a full range of subjects comparable to the New Zealand curriculum be introduced. This of course caused huge problems, as there were not enough trained teachers capable of teaching in English in the islands, so the system turned out to be unworkable. The students had no knowledge of English and their expatriate teachers could not speak the vernacular. The attempt to introduce education in English was a failure. Attendance dropped and the free public school system ended soon after. The LMS reverted to their original programme although they did add English as a subject

to their curriculum in Avarua, the main town in Rarotonga. Around this time other religious factions such as Seventh Day Adventists and Roman Catholics entered Cook Islands and offered educational services to schools. The LMS recognised their inability to teach entirely in English but threatened by other factions, they tried to keep their schools open.

The policies that Moss had tried to implement in his time as British Resident meant he neither pleased the *ariki*, who wanted an English education to be provided only for Cook Islanders from elite family lines, nor the European residents, who tended to oppose education in English for Cook Islanders. Moss resigned with ill health in 1898.

Under the rule of GUDGEON W. E., the next British Resident and then New Zealand Resident Commissioner (1898-1909) education was again relegated to the mission groups who ran both primary schools and Tereora College. Some English was taught at these schools but the majority of teaching was conducted primarily in Cook Islands Maori by the LMS missionaries. Gudgeon felt that education would actually cause problems and dissatisfaction amongst the local people, so it was not a priority for him. The traditional leaders were adamant they needed an English education but their pleas were not heard. In the federal council, one Maori speaker made an appeal for the introduction of state schools to replace mission schools:

We are children and are living in darkness, and we want to be as wise as those under whose wing we are living. That is one thing that we know will be of great benefit to the island...that everybody may learn, and also learn to speak the English language, and anything else that may be learned in school. (SCOTT 1991)

Because of rising operating costs, and because they were unable to ignore their lack of influence or the popular support for English education, LMS schools were finally offered to be given over to the state in 1914. However Gudgeon opposed this proposal and made it clear that he felt there was little need or benefit in Cook Islanders getting an education. Although George Hogben, an educationist of note from New Zealand, visited Cook Islands and voiced his opposition to Gudgeon's policies proposing reforms, Gudgeon prevailed. He left the schools to the LMS and enrolments continued to decline.

Tereora, the only secondary school in the country, remained open for a few more years with the help of a subsidy from the state and did provide an 'English education' for fifty secondary students. The academic standards at Tereora were not as high as New Zealand schools provided. With the need to charge fees, Tereora became a school for the elite and was finally closed down in 1912 due to a lack of funds, and three years after Gudgeon left office. This with the closing of this school, no secondary education was available in Cook Islands for the next 45 years. This has been seen by some as a type of colonial oppression. According to CROCOMBE (1979):

The colonial government abolished higher formal education to preclude the emergence of a new leadership... Apart from a very few who were later sent to Maori Colleges in New Zealand and for medical training in Fiji, Cook Islanders were effectively (and intentionally) denied the training that would have equipped them for senior posts in the government, commerce and the churches.

Pleas were made for better education opportunities for Cook Islanders by the traditional leaders of the people. In 1911 a *mataiapo* from Titkaveka pleaded for a government school for his district "so that by learning they may become helpers of the Government... Do not leave us to become as a lot of fools." (SCOTT 1991). The New Zealand Minister for Cook Islands 1916-28, Maui Pomare, reacted to the state of affairs in Cook Islands education by garnering support and money from the New Zealand government. Pomare was insistent that Cook Islanders be taught in the English language. So for the first time, compulsory education was introduced in 1914 by the Resident Commissioner and several primary schools were opened, using the English language as the language of instruction.

With the re-opening of schools parents were required to pay tuition fees and school committees were formed to keep the buildings repaired. European head teachers instituted an English curriculum in 'the three R's, crafts and elementary agriculture' and used Cook Islands Maori only to introduce the new language. The impetus for this policy came from the belief that Cook Islanders had rejected their own culture, which was "no longer useful to them" and wanted to imitate Europeans, with whom they "had been unable to compete commercially or intellectually" (GILSON 1991). It is interesting to note that the 1915 Cook Islands Act confirmed English as the only official language of the Cook Islands (GOODWIN 2003). This act also provided school regulations, and cemented to importance of English language instruction in schools. But little was done by the New Zealand government to support the development of schooling at this time, and observers have suggested that those in power had a conviction that Cook Islanders only required low levels of education (POLYNESIA WAY 1989).

The Resident Commissioner appointed 1916 - 1921, Frederick Platts, was a hands-on administrator and he worked to increase enrolments in schools. When he arrived in Rarotonga, formal education was at a very low ebb, with only three primary schools in the entire country, with 450 students taught by nine teachers, and no open secondary schools. He was able to increase this to a total of nine schools open in just three years, with more than 1000 pupils were being taught. He saw that Cook Islanders obtained scholarships to New Zealand schools. He became personally involved in finding the best way to teach English language to Cook Islands students. School readers prepared by the American Bureau of Education for use in the Philippines were finally selected and a curriculum for teaching English as a foreign language was introduced (SCOTT 1991). A technical school was also opened to help with apprentice training in areas such as radio operation.

In the early 1920s in New Zealand there was unease voiced over the use of

English as the sole medium of instruction in Cook Islands schools but this policy was defended by Ngata and Pomare, the New Zealand Ministers responsible for the Cook Islands, and officials in the New Zealand Department of Education. It was claimed that the islanders had been held back by an inadequate knowledge of English, that a number of essential concepts including those pertaining to disease could not be expressed in the vernacular, particularly as dialects differed from island to island. It was further argued that Cook Islands people needed a language that they could use when visiting New Zealand or other parts of the Pacific (GILSON 1991). Therefore English remained as the language of instruction in all schools.

During the 1920s the first steps were taken to centralise educational administration. Before this time schools were run independently. A temporary syllabus was developed by the newly appointed Superintendent of Cook Islands schools (who was also the headmaster of Avarua school). The perceived lack of self-esteem and pride in culture was addressed by the introduction of native arts and basketry, which were hoped to inspire 'pride of race'. A programme for teacher training was also developed. Up until this time teachers were mostly pastors or non-trained graduates of the primary schools. Teacher training was a three-year course and included the pastor-trainers from the LMS. The training college was opened in conjunction with Avarua School in 1927.

Between 1922 and 1935 there was great discussion about cultural contact and the role of education in 'Europeanising' the people. The use of English as the medium of instruction was an important feature and much time was spent stressing the importance of English and teaching the language, although the teachers were themselves poor speakers of English. Instruction in indigenous arts and crafts, legends and culture was limited. However Sir Apirana Ngata, the New Zealand Minister of Cook Islands was a force for educational reform, and he approached his position with a mix of Europeanisation philosophy and Polynesian pride and is reported to have said "To deny a sufficient education to the Polynesian tribes of these islands would not be humane; it would not be manly or sportsmanlike; it would not be worthy of decent British traditions." (GILSON 1991).

In the 1930s a new curriculum was introduced which focused on instruction in English to support the expression of modern concepts (such as western medicine) and the provision of a lingua franca among the island dialects and throughout the Pacific. However due to poor teacher training, lack of supervision from Wellington, New Zealand, irregular inspections and inadequate budgets, Cook Islanders were still receiving an education far inferior to what was received by New Zealanders. With a paucity of resources, large classes, and poor teacher pay, morale was low in schools. With all of these constraints, students did not show a high level of proficiency in English.

English did not replace the vernacular outside the schools however, so many Rarotongans became bilingual. It is reported that literacy in English went from 16% to 50% from 1936 to 1945. The standards of proficiency are not known but it is presumed that few used English of a standard much higher than that taught at the primary

schools. Knowledge of English did little for the prospects of local people. There were no regular library services or newspapers in English. English was useful when dealing with officials but not essential. Some jobs required special training in New Zealand and three Cook Islanders per year were involved in this training. Having a working knowledge did enable local islanders to seek unskilled work in New Zealand and migration to Auckland and other parts of the country became an option for many Cook Islanders.

The educational programme developed in New Zealand for Cook Islanders while Pomare and Ngata were responsible for the Cook Islands remained in place until 1945. During this time enrolment numbers increased and many more Cook Islanders became teachers. There was little supervision from New Zealand and New Zealand's expenditure on education in Cook Islands was very limited. The Teachers College was not open fulltime and teachers with a good knowledge of English and 'first hand' knowledge of the outside world were in very short supply. The school regulations prohibiting the use of the vernacular in schools meant that subjects such as geography, traditional culture and technical subjects were neglected while teachers and students struggled to learn English. In only a few schools was New Zealand Standard VI level reached (the standard achieved by New Zealand 12 year olds).

Veterans returning from both World War 1 and World War 2 greatly added impetus to the calls for quality education in English. These soldiers returned with stories from Europe, but also had experienced prejudice because of their lack of English. A number of returning veterans found it difficult finding work and became interested in migration.

In 1945 a visit from a committee of three experts from the New Zealand Department of Education confirmed that schools were using English as the medium of instruction. However they found, reportedly, that children were not acquiring a firm grasp of the language, nor were they learning to express themselves adequately in the vernacular.

The lack of control of English as a medium of thought and expression would not be so serious if there were a compensating facility in the vernacular...But ... the vernacular languages are rapidly breaking down and are ceasing to be accurate and sensitive instruments of thought and communication... There is cause for serious concern that a generation should grow up with no language clear-cut and delicate enough to enable them to think out the problems facing them, and to understand and discuss anything beyond the simple concrete situations of daily life. No people can have thought that is clearer and more disciplined than the language in which it is conveyed. The problems of health, education, trade, religion, morals and politics with which the Cook Islander must grapple if he is to take a real part in the government of his country, cannot be handled by men and women whose control of some language, either English or the vernacular, is not accurate, sure and free from confusion. (BEEBY *et al.* 1945)

This committee recommended a return to the vernacular, Cook Islands Maori, as the sole medium of instruction for the first two to three years of primary school, with the gradual introduction of English as a second medium of instruction. The hope was that English would be learned more quickly by this method and that most students would be able to use both languages on completion of their primary education. The committee proposed that the Rarotongan dialect should be the standard vernacular for textbooks and that more time be spent learning local social sciences and traditional crafts, dances and legends.

There was widespread resistance to the reintroduction of Maori language by Cook Islanders, the large majority of whom still regarded the teaching of English as the most important function of the schools. As a compromise with the community some use of the vernacular was introduced to all classes and some English was taught to infant classes: oral English was taught in the first year and reading added in the second year with writing added in the third year. Some textbooks were written in the Rarotongan dialect to help with the extreme shortage and a journal was published bimonthly. By 1950, 19 children had been sent to New Zealand secondary schools, several teachers had been sent to New Zealand for short courses at training colleges, and just two Cook Islanders had taken degrees.

Tereora College was reopened as a secondary school for students from all islands in 1954. The problem of recruitment and retention of well-educated and qualified teachers continued (and still continues up to the present day), especially at the secondary level. New Zealand expatriate teachers were used as organising teachers with overall responsibility for policy, training and development in schools. However local teachers still struggled with basic teaching skills.

In the early 1960s New Zealand funded a major study to improve the curriculum for teaching English (TATE 1963). As a result the Tate Method was adopted and used in schools for many years. This was a comprehensive structured oral English course that teachers with little linguistic knowledge or expertise could use. Tate's English programme was used for students in Grade 1 - 6. Vestiges of the use of the Tate method could be observed in some schools up to the end of the twentieth century especially in the Northern Group islands (personal observation). In the mid-sixties major educational developments took place on the outer southern group islands with the establishment of Junior High Schools catering for students up to 15 years old. New Zealand standards were used to measure the effectiveness of education in local schools but because of the low level of education of many teachers, the syllabi were not followed well.

By the end of the colonial period a level of bilingualism had become widespread amongst Cook Islanders, despite inadequately funded and implemented educational programmes. It was the Cook Islanders themselves that had made their wants known by being more likely to attend schools when English was offered as the language of instruction.

Independence period and language

When Cook Islands became a self-governing Associated State in 1965 English was granted the status of statutory national language, and Cook Islands Maori was granted the status of statutory language of national identity (COOK ISLANDS CONSTITUTION 1965). Therefore at this time English retained its role as the only official language of the Cook Islands.

New Zealand continued to supply a number of well-trained teachers to assist with education, especially at the secondary level in the Southern Cook Islands group, and this continued through until the 1990s (CROCOMBE 1992). These teachers were English speaking. An Education Act was passed which prescribed the administrative components of a free, equal and universal system of education. In mid- 1975 the first Education Policy Statement was issued. This policy included directions to raise standards in schools and in teacher training programmes. A strong Cook Islands Maori identity was recognised as important and was to be fostered in all schools. This policy was well received throughout the country and one of its lasting effects was to lay a powerful ideological base for Cook Islands education (POLYNESIAN WAY 1989). One of the key components of this was bilingualism. Students were to be taught in Cook Islands Maori for the first three years of their schooling, after which English was to be introduced. However it was observed over the next decade that the political will to provide acceptable levels of funding for the resulting initiatives did not materialise. Very few teachers had any training in language teaching, making the bilingualism goal difficult, especially when coupled with a lack of virtually any texts or resources. Most teachers were not well qualified and there was little incentive for teachers to pursue professional development. Rates of pay for teachers remained very low, the job seemed to be onerous and boring under the conditions and there were few opportunities for promotion. This meant that well-qualified teachers defected to other government departments or to the private sector (POLYNESIAN WAY 1989).

Although Cook Islands Maori had been reintroduced into the curriculum in the 1940s, and the policy shifted so that Cook Islands Maori was to be used in early schooling, teachers continued to punish students for speaking Cook Islands Maori at school into the 1980s in attempts to address problems with English proficiency (EDWARDS 2003). By 1980, a survey of language use and preference in Southern Cook Islands primary schools found that some schools were able to impart English and maintain Cook Islands Maori successfully (TIXIER and EARLY 1990). The authors cautioned that Rarotongan youths' preference for English signalled a language shift in progress. This was been noted by a number of concerned people and there was a renewed call for the protection and promotion of the Cook Islands Maori Language by way of the development of a language policy (HERMANN 1990).

One way of ascribing value to a language is its place in the school qualifications offered to students. A number of other Pacific Islands nations that depended on New Zealand for qualifications, in particular New Zealand School Certificate, were assisted by New Zealand in phasing out this qualification in the 1980s because of the neo-

colonial implications of its retention. However the Cook Islands decided to keep the New Zealand system for qualifications, as they were seen as the goal in high schools because of their international recognition, allowing Cook Islands students better access to higher education and employment overseas (CROCOMBE 1992). As a result of the ongoing dependence on New Zealand qualifications the Cook Islands curriculum was designed so that students could achieve proficiency in Standard New Zealand English. Cook Islands continued to be influenced by New Zealand through the use of New Zealand qualifications for secondary students (New Zealand School Certificate, University Entrance, Sixth form Certificate and University Bursaries examinations) and the provision of secondary teachers especially to work at the senior secondary level. A number of other Pacific nations had elected to use the New Zealand qualifications system at mid-century but most phased this out later. In 2000, the New Zealand qualification system changed and Cook Islands Ministry of Education again changed the local aspects of qualifications to be in line with the new standards based assessment called the National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) as implemented by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). However, one benefit in this system is that Cook Islands Maori is one of the languages assessed in this qualification, so many Cook Islands students can gain credit for proficiency in their own language.

The education system continued to operate through the late twentieth century with minimal funding sufficient to maintain teachers' salaries but little else. Community fund-raising efforts from time to time paid for other basic school requirements but there was little input of resources and the government budget for education gradually declined (CROCOMBE 1990). A financial crisis causing the loss of approximately one third of government jobs in the mid-1990s meant mass migration of Cook Islanders to New Zealand and Australia, including teachers. Many of the teachers who emigrated were the better qualified teachers who were able to get work overseas. Because of the large number of Cook Islanders who had emigrated in the 1970-80s and then in the mid-1990s, there was a substantial support base in these receiving countries for others planning to move overseas. This meant the idea of moving to New Zealand or Australia for work was a real option for young Cook Islanders, which in turn meant that the learning of English was a logical goal. Additionally the returning of retiring Cook Islanders with *papa*'a spouses often to raise grandchildren also had a net effect on language shift towards English. This shift meant that in Rarotonga in particular, Cook Islands Maori was not known by a number of students entering schools.

By the mid-1990s, schools' resources such as books were very limited and out-of-date and teacher morale was low. In a bid to improve schools and education an Education Development Project funded by an Asia Development Bank Loan in the late 1990s meant an injection of much needed money to do basic building maintenance, fund some curriculum development and policy writing, and provide resources for schools. The schools received resource materials, library books and teacher resource books for all curriculum areas, and almost all were written in English. The resources provided in the language area were mostly junior readers and books that were found to

be useful in New Zealand settings. Few resources were specifically written as English as a Second Language teaching resources. Instead most have been used successfully with native speakers of English in teaching to the New Zealand English in the New Zealand Curriculum (ENGLISH IN THE NEW ZEALAND CURRICULUM 1994).

A further development in education was the growth of private schools on Rarotonga, in particular schools that promoted an English curriculum, such as Te Uki Ou School and Immanuela Akatemia. Te Uki Ou was used by expatriates in particular, but also by affluent Cook Islands families who were unhappy with the education available in other schools. The only other school teaching wholly in English at that time (Avatea School) had long waiting lists, which would indicate that many parents preferred their children to be educated in English medium, and by first language English speakers if possible.

A language policy report completed in 1997 commented on the status of languages in the Cook Islands (LANGUAGE POLICY REPORT: EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT PROJECT 1997). In outer islands the status of Cook Islands Maori was found to be higher than on Rarotonga with Maori being widely spoken in the community and in schools. In Pukapuka the Pukapukan language was almost exclusively used in the community, and was used at school, with Rarotongan and English introduced later in the school's programme. The standard of Rarotongan Maori was noted to be declining in Rarotonga, having been eroded by English through wholesale use of English structures within oral and written Maori texts, and the overwhelming use of English in the media and entertainment. Rarotongan Maori was subject to intergenerational loss over the previous 25 years.

According to the Language Policy Report, Rarotongan schools taught English in an unprincipled and unsystematic way, arbitrarily mixing Maori and English. It was noted that students had inadequate English language necessary for school learning despite being fluent in conversational English. Reading comprehension, writing and vocabulary continued to be areas of weakness, and teachers were not using active and interactive pedagogy. Data from the 1999 national Grade 6 examination showed that English language achievement was generally higher in Rarotonga than in the outer island schools but that Cook Islands Maori language achievement was proportionally higher in Southern Group schools than in Rarotonga (ETCHES 1999).

A language syllabus was prepared in 1992, and then in 1997 and 1998 draft primary and secondary English Curricula, based in part on the Samoan curriculum (primary) and the NZ Curriculum Statement (secondary), were written. These were officially adopted but many teachers had little awareness of the current curriculum (BROADBENT and ROGERS 2000). The area of reading teaching was causing serious concern as many teachers who were self-taught in their methods of teaching reading appeared to have little understanding of the process. Even after the injection of reading materials into schools in the late 1990s there were still not enough resources available. The lack of resources in Cook Islands Maori meant that even in outer islands schools readers of Cook Islands Maori could not move into the area of independent reading

before they moved to English text. The 2000 UNESCO Education for All report stated that achievement in Grade 5 English had declined since 1994 while achievement in Grade 6 Maori had also decreased since 1994, probably reflecting the state of affairs in schools at that time.

A Cook Islands Language Policy was written in 1997 as part of the language report but was not adopted. However a language commission was reconvened to discuss important issues and be responsible for ongoing planning. The need to have Cook Islands Maori declared an official language of the Cook Islands was seen as a priority. In 1998 Cabinet approved the enactment of an Official Language Act to establish the Cook Islands Language Commission, and declare Cook Islands Maori as an official language of the Cook Islands. The Te Reo Maori Act 2003 changed the status of languages in the country so that Cook Islands Maori was made co-official with English. The Act tasked the Ministry of Cultural Development:

- (a) To give effect to the declaration that Maori is an official language of the Cook Islands
- (b) To bring out a status for Maori that is equal to English in the Cook Islands. (TE REO MAORI ACT 2003)

Given that this change in status had been planned for quite some time, some of the education policy developed before the Act was passed reflected this shift. The Cook Islands Curriculum Framework placed considerable emphasis on Cook Islands Maori and stated:

Cook Islands Maori is the language of the indigenous people of the Cook Islands and is the essence of Maori identity. Without language, culture will cease to exist, for the loss of a language spells the loss of a culture.
(COOK ISLANDS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK 2002).

The principles underlying the framework referred to the need for a commitment to bilingualism for Cook Islands students.

The Cook Islands Curriculum recognises the primary importance of language in the delivery of the curriculum. It promotes the use of an effective bilingual approach. The Cook Islands Curriculum supports bilingualism where high levels of proficiency in Cook Islands Maori and English are aspired to as a goal of language development and learning in schools.

The education policy mandating the use of Cook Islands Maori as the language of instruction the first three years of schooling, and then gradually shifting instruction to English was followed in the outer islands, but was no longer the practice in all schools in Rarotonga in 2000, where much teaching even at Grade 1 level was done in English or an English /Maori mix sometimes called 'Maroro' (EDWARDS 2003). Maroro is the local name of the flying fish that lives in the ocean - the term Maroro Maori refers to the way communication consists of two languages - flying backwards and forwards between Maori and English. Teachers were known to code-switch between English

and Maori on Rarotonga, and between Rarotongan and the local island dialect in outer islands (BALAWA 1996). Cook Islands Maori was still a compulsory subject up to Year 11 level at this time. The teaching of this subject however faced several problems including a lack of resources, lack of specific language teaching training for teachers and the attitudes of the general public who felt that Maori was an inferior language. It is in this context then, with increasing importance placed on English, declining use of Cook Islands Maori and a history of erratic and piecemeal colonial intervention that the Cook Islands Ministry of Education had to develop strategies for Maori language development and maintenance irrespective of the preference of some Cook Islanders to prioritise English for their children. The Cook Islands educational guidelines have as one of two goals: Develop all students as bilingual and bicultural members of Cook Islands society by developing their ability and confidence to communicate in a range of purposes in Cook Islands Maori and English (COOK ISLANDS EDUCATION GUIDELINES 2002).

With the introduction of the Curriculum Framework in 2002 the Cook Islands Ministry of Education recognised that language profiles and language acquisition vary depending on the island involved, with the implication being that a universal policy would be ineffective in achieving the national aim. With this in mind individual schools have been given the mandate to develop their own language policy based on a set of general guidelines, taking into account their own community. Schools are then tasked to choose strategies and approaches best suited to achieve high levels of bilingualism, and to monitor the achievement of their students in this domain (HERMANN 2005). Given the constraints of population mobility, attitudinal mind sets, and limited resources, this was a visionary but challenging mandate.

With the passing of the Te Reo Maori Act 2003 Cook Islands Maori and English were given equal status for the first time in history. The informal and formal language policies that have directed the language/s of instruction in schooling have been, and will continue to be, very influential for the students passing through the education system. The Act provides a foundation on which to continue the demanding work for Cook Islanders working within the education sector.

Discussion

The chronicles of language use and language of instruction in Cook Islands' schools is interesting and raises a number of issues that have impacted past and current education provision in the country. The story is also comparable to accounts from other colonised nations in the Pacific. Nations such as Samoa, New Zealand, Niue, Tokelau, and French Polynesia have similar stories to tell, so in some ways this chronology from Cook Islands is not unique.

Many Pacific Nations have a history affected by missionary endeavour, and with the missionaries came the establishment of formal schooling. Missionary organisations

preferred using the vernacular and were responsible for the first writing of vernacular languages and the production of the first printed materials in these languages. However the colonial powers that arrived alongside the missionaries meant that the locus of power changed, and language was seen as an essential element in being able to engage in the new colonial system. As observed by WIGLESWORTH (1996),

It has been suggested that the use of Maori-only was part of an isolationist policy depriving Cook Islanders of knowledge crucial to future self-government, not that self-government required English, but that participation in a system with an English speaking overlord did. (WIGLESWORTH 1996).

And so it was initially through requests from Cook Islanders, who saw English as the way of progress, that English was taught and was later used as the medium for instruction in schools (although the history of Cook Islands shows that this was steadfastly opposed by the LMS missionaries).

The change to English-only schools, and the turmoil that resulted because of the lack of teachers who could teach in English, as well as a lack of funding, meant that education was provided only for a very few students, and it was of low quality. This is again a pattern that was common throughout countries that were colonised by the English and the French in the Pacific. Low calibre educational experiences led to low outcomes for Cook Islands students, and although the poor grasp of both English and Cook Islands Maori was acknowledged by New Zealand educational experts, Cook Islanders still chose to send their children to schools offering English because of the benefits of learning this language. After Cook Islands gained independence, New Zealand continued to support its development and has supplied a number of teachers and educational experts over the years. These teachers usually had little or no knowledge of Cook Islands Maori. A shift to using Cook islands Maori as the language of instruction the first three years of schooling has met with mixed success, and is certainly more prevalent in the outer islands. However as students progress the lack of reading texts in Maori continues to be a hindrance to students' literacy development.

With the realisation that Cook Islands Maori was at risk of dying as a language, a language commission was formed and the legislation of Te Reo Maori Act (2003) was passed. Since this time there has been more political commitment is made to true bilingual education in Cook Islands. We see a parallel journey in many countries. In recent years Tahiti and French Polynesia have engaged in the expansion of language teaching to ensure students are both confident and literate in their mother tongues as well as in French. Calls for a change in language policy in French Polynesia were heard from both local and international writers. For example LEVY (1970) argued for the use of Tahitian language in schools because of the links between language and the culture. From the early 2000s there has been a commitment made to multilingualism in French Polynesia (GABRILLON and AILINCAI 2015). In Samoa there has been a focus on language policy development since late 1990s and the Western Samoa Education

Policies 1995-2005 (Government of Samoa 1995:19) set bilingualism as a principal aim of the education system there (LAMETA 2005). In Pacific countries the development of language policies and a commitment to vernacular languages is a widespread pattern in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

One aspect of the education systems from these countries that has not changed with the shift in language policy is the qualifications on offer. In Cook Islands, New Zealand's NCEA is the assessment used in senior secondary schools. Cook Islands Maori is a subject that can be studied within this system, but all subjects except for languages are examined in English or New Zealand Maori. Similarly in many other Pacific countries that have a history of colonial influence from English, the qualifications are offered in English only, rather than vernacular languages. As observed in Samoa by LAMETA (2005):

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. (LAMETA 2005).

The fact that English is required to access qualifications and open doors for employment motivates many people to prioritise the learning of this language, and many regard literacy in Cook Islands Maori as unimportant for the younger generation.

For Cook Islands and many other Pacific countries there is considerable fluidity in living arrangements, with many Pacific Islanders moving to and from New Zealand and Australia. It is estimated that 90% of ethnic Cook Islanders live abroad. Because Cook Islanders have New Zealand citizenship they do have the right to reside, study, and work there should they wish. This certainly motivates some Cook Islanders to prioritise English medium teaching and learning.

The legislation of the Te Reo Maori Act (2003) means that Cook Islands Maori and English are both recognised as official languages in Cook Islands. In education, bilingualism for all children across all learning areas in the curriculum is a stated goal (COOK ISLANDS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK 2002). However there are still reservations about how effective the implementation of this policy is. Many teachers do not seem to have training in teaching Maori, and it is unclear what provision is made for Maori as a Second Language (SALLABANK 2013). Older teachers are still affected by the "no Maori at school" policy they or their parents endured. As a result some are not implementing the current policy in their classrooms, as they believe this reflects their communities' wishes (EDWARDS, 2013). At the end of the day it is down to the people of the Cook Islands to decide which languages they will use and which they prioritise. As observed by LYNCH (1998):

If people want to shift to another language that they think is more useful, it is their

right to do so. Very often this debate is held in the rarefied circles of academe, without much input from the speakers of the language themselves. Those speakers will of course have the final say (and perhaps the last laugh) by choosing the course of action that seems most sensible and practical; from their perspective.

The current situation is not a simple one. It is the result of the chequered history of education in Cook Islands and will be determined by the Cook Islands communities themselves.

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