

Resources

Diacritical Marks and the Samoan Language

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The Samoan-language community is now widespread in a diaspora that includes New Zealand, Australia, Hawai'i, and parts of the continental United States, with a large number of new speakers learning their heritage language in a search for identity and for becoming more connected with their ancestral culture. Rather than acquiring the language informally in traditional family and community interactions, Samoan learners are increasingly found in classroom environments, where they are heavily dependent on written materials such as dictionaries, textbooks, and anthologies. For these learners there is a strong need for the written form of Samoan to be accurate and consistent, but for linguistic and historical reasons, this is not currently the case. There are discrepancies in word composition, irregularities in lexical items, and variations in grammatical structure, but perhaps the most serious issue is the inconsistent use of what has been termed "diacritical markings" or "diacritics."¹ First used in the Samoan Islands by Christian missionaries, diacritics were later excluded from written Samoan by policies of the Department of Education of what was then Western Sāmoa, thus producing generations of heritage speakers who do not view diacritics as significant symbols in Samoan orthography. In recent times, however, with the introduction of the Samoan language into mainstream curricula in New Zealand and Hawai'i, written materials being produced as resources for learning Samoan typically include diacritics because of the changing nature of language learning among newer generations of Samoan youth. In terms of language transmission and language maintenance, it is critical that this problem in Samoan orthography be resolved.

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This article is aimed at promoting a better understanding of the function and use of two diacritical marks in written Samoan: the glottal stop and the macron. It presents the historical context of the use of these symbols, their treatment in educational materials, and recommendations for using diacritics in Samoan language-learning classrooms. Building on a Samoan presentation by one of the current authors (Hunkin) at the 2002 Fa'a-lāpotopotoga mo le A'oa'oina o le Gagana Sāmoa i Aotearoa (FAGASA) conference,² we present this information here in a substantially revised and expanded form so that teachers of the Samoan language can be more informed about the need for consistent usage of these symbols in classroom teaching. Teachers of Samoan need to understand what these marks represent, their pedagogical importance, and how they should be applied in written and printed Samoan so that this information can be accurately transmitted to their students. The use of diacritics has important educational implications for students in introductory Samoan-language classes and in early reading programs in bilingual classes. Thus we hope that the historical, linguistic, and cultural reasons that are presented justify why these symbols should be restored in academic settings.

WHAT ARE THE SAMOAN DIACRITICAL MARKS?

Diacritical marks are symbols that change the sound of the characters or letters that they are placed before, under, or above. For example, in written Vietnamese, diacritics indicate five phonemically different tones that can be attributed to vowels to change the meaning of a word. Diacritical marks are fundamental because they signify the pronunciation of the written form. In the Samoan language, only two diacritics are used. One is the *koma liliu* (literally, “inverted comma”), which was, as its name implies, originally represented by an inverted comma [‘]. Technically, this is not a diacritical mark in Samoan since it is used to represent the phonemic glottal stop [ʔ] and occurs in contrastive distribution with other Samoan consonants, for example *sa’a* (dwarf), pronounced [saʔa], and *saka* (to boil). However, it is commonly recognized as a diacritic and will be referred to as such in this article. The other diacritic is called *fa’amamafa* (heavy pronunciation), which is represented by a macron [¯] placed above a vowel to indicate a phonemic long vowel, as in *mā* (ashamed), pronounced [ma:], contrasted with *ma* (and). Some languages use diacritical marks in both their handwritten and printed forms. Other languages, such as Hebrew and Navajo, use them in their printed forms

but not always in their informal, handwritten forms, such as personal letters. In the case of Samoan, the use of diacritics is decided by individual writers, who make choices based on their education and beliefs, and this has led to a variety of different writing styles. The following history shows how this situation came about.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DIACRITICAL MARKS IN WRITTEN SAMOAN

Diacritics in the Samoan language can be traced back to the pioneering linguistic work of the London Missionary Society (LMS), the first permanent Christian mission in Sāmoa. By 1839 (nine years after their arrival in 1830), the LMS had developed a Samoan orthographic system, had printed religious tracts in the Samoan language, and, by 1860, had finished translating the Bible into Samoan (Tippett 1971; Gunson 1978). A local theological seminary at Malua, established in 1844, trained Samoans and other Islanders for missionary work throughout the Pacific using written Samoan-language publications and the Samoan Bible (Lovett 1899). Local literacy schools in Sāmoa (*ā'oga faife'au*) were established in LMS villages, and printed language materials were distributed widely throughout the country. The missionary efforts were so successful that as early as 1838 the number of Samoans under literacy instruction was estimated at 23,000 (Garrett 1985). Literacy spread, and, as the missionaries had intended, the Samoan population rapidly began to convert to Christianity.

To this day, the most widely disseminated and highly revered written document in Samoan is the Samoan Bible as translated by the earliest LMS missionaries, in particular the Reverend George Pratt. Pratt was a missionary and a linguist, fluent in the Samoan language, who spent four decades in Sāmoa during which he worked almost daily on translating the Bible and revising his translation (Lovett 1899).

At first glance, Pratt's use of diacritical marks appears to be inconsistent. For example, Kenese (Genesis) 15:3–4 reads:

Faauta, ua e le foai mai ia te au sa'u fanau; faauta foi, e fai mo'u sulī le tagata ua fanau i lo'u aiga. Faauta foi, ua tūlei mai le afioga a Ieova ia te ia, ua faapea mai . . .

(Behold, you have given me no children; and lo, a slave born in my household will be my heir. And, behold, the word of the Lord spoke unto him, saying . . .)

Why is a diacritic used in the word *sa'u* but not in the words before it, which are pronounced with glottal stops: *fa'auta*, *foa'i*, *a'u*? Why is the diacritical mark breve [˘] used with the word *tūlei*, but a macron is not used in *fōa'i* or *fānau*? (A breve indicates a short vowel and is not used in modern-day Samoan). Although it was a common early missionary practice to frequently omit these markings in printed texts such as educational and religious material, a closer reading of the sample text reveals Pratt's logic. In the example above, diacritics are used sparingly, only in the words *sa'u*, *mo'u*, *lo'u*, and *tūlei*. Compare these words and their meanings on the left of table 1 with their homographs (words with similar spelling but with no/different diacritic) on the right.

Table 1

Samoan	Meaning	Part of Speech	Samoan	Meaning	Part of Speech
sa'u	(one of) my	pronoun	sau	(one of) your	pronoun
mo'u	(for) me	pronoun	mou	(for) you	pronoun
lo'u	my	pronoun	lou	your	pronoun
tūlei	speak	verb	tūlei	push, shove	verb

In the passage above, *sa'u fanau* (my child) would read as *sau fanau* (your child) if written without the glottal stop. Similarly, *mo'u suli* (my heir) would be confused with *mou suli* (your heir) and *lo'u aiga* (my family) with *lou aiga* (your family). Most humorously, instead of “the Lord spoke,” *ua tūlei mai le afioga a Ieova* would read “the Lord pushed.” Without diacritics, the written message could certainly be misinterpreted. In essence, if the diacritics were omitted with any of these particular words, they most likely could not be distinguished from their homographs, even by context.

By the same logic, Pratt omitted the use of the diacritics for words whose meanings could be derived from their contextual reading. To illustrate, the opening words from the example above are written here with full diacritic markings:

[Original] *Faauta, ua e le foai mai ia te au . . .*

[With diacritics] *Fa'auta, 'ua 'e lē fōa'i mai iā te a'u . . .*

First, we can ignore words that, if written without diacritics, have no homographic counterparts. The words *faauta* and *foai* do not exist, so even without a glottal stop, these words cannot be misinterpreted. That leaves five words to which diacritics could potentially have been added in the original text: ‘ua, ‘e, lē, iā, and a‘u. Again, a homograph chart (table 2) helps illustrate a point.

Table 2

Samoaan	Meaning	Part of Speech	Samoaan	Meaning	Part of Speech
‘ua		verbal particle	ua	neck; rain	noun
‘e	you	pronoun	e		verbal particle
lē	never, not, to	general particle	le	the	definite article
iā	until, to	nominal particle	ia	he, she, it	pronoun
a‘u	me	pronoun	au	flow on	verb

Note that not only are the words in each pair completely unrelated in meaning but their parts of speech are also different. Compare this to table 1, where the parts of speech for each pair are exactly the same. Essentially, there is little danger that the pairs of words in table 2 will be confused with each other because of their different meanings and functions. Pratt intended for his Bible to be read by Samoan readers who were already orally fluent in the Samoan language (or missionaries who would soon be so), and he knew that this audience could distinguish words by reading contextually. Accordingly, Pratt only used diacritics for ambiguous reading situations, and this resulted in his economical, but effective, use of diacritics. In fact, his writing style was so effective that today, when listening to a Samoan congregation read from his translation of the Bible in chorus, one will rarely hear mistakes. Pratt’s Samoan translation of the Bible and his subsequent *Grammar and Dictionary of the Samoan Language* (1984 [1893]) remained the gold standards of Samoan texts and orthography for over a century.³

Pratt’s work also formed the basis of what is perhaps the most significant linguistic work to address the issue of Samoan orthography, George Milner’s *Samoan Dictionary* (1966). Begun in 1955 as a joint project between the governments of American Sāmoa and Western Sāmoa, the

dictionary took eleven years to complete and resulted in the most comprehensive Samoan lexicon of its time. In the opening pages, Milner wrote:

It seemed desirable at first to take advantage of the compilation of the present dictionary to suggest certain changes in the present Samoan orthography [footnote: particularly with reference to the orthographical convention for the glottal stop]. Careful inquiries, however, have shown that the proposed spelling reforms would have met with considerable opposition and the compiler decided to abandon them. As an alternative he has endeavored to use the existing spelling more consistently than is the custom at present. (1966, xvii)

This remains one of Milner's most important contributions: the consistent use of diacritics throughout his dictionary (as well as his lexical representations and rules for word composition, which were based on well-researched morphological grounds). But it is important to note that Milner created a dictionary, not a flowing body of text. Therefore, his audience was reading words largely divorced from their context, so diacritics were essential to distinguish word meaning. Moreover, each entry in Milner's dictionary is formatted with only a headword followed by its definition. There is no pronunciation transcription behind each headword (as is commonly the case in English dictionaries); hence the diacritics also became necessary as pronunciation aids, a function they had not served in Pratt's work. The difference between Pratt's and Milner's writing styles continues to affect Samoan writing to this day, and it highlights a long-running debate among linguists (referred to by Milner in his footnote to the quote above): What exactly does the glottal stop represent?

Early in the twentieth century, there was considerable debate in academic circles about the nature of the Polynesian glottal stop. Some believed that the glottal stop was definitely phonemic, a view popular among those interested in comparative Polynesian philology or historical linguistics (eg, Stimson 1928, 1930; Churchward 1929; Hiroa 1930). The idea was that certain Pacific Island languages were so inherently similar that at some point in the past there must have existed a parent Polynesian language, which linguists refer to as Proto-Polynesian. (See examples in table 3.)

Linguists deduced that if Samoan descended from Proto-Polynesian, then the glottal stop represented a consonant that had been changed over time from the original phoneme. For example, if Samoan *a'o* stems from Proto-Polynesian *ako*, then somewhere in the historical development of

the Samoan language, the proto-Polynesian /k/ eventually shifted to a glottal stop. So it was for etymological reasons that some linguists sought to preserve the glottal stop mark [‘] in Polynesian languages because it indicated historical links to other modern Polynesian languages and the earlier proto-form of Samoan. This contrasted with, for instance, the view of the editors of the *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, who did not consider the Polynesian glottal stop to be a “recognized consonant” (editorial comments in Churchward 1929, 83–84). Missionary-linguist C Maxwell Churchward himself claimed that the glottal stop was not only a consonant but a critical one deserving its own character. For this, Churchward (1929) suggested using the letter “c,” and later Denzel Carr (1940) suggested the letter “q.” One can only imagine the increased awareness of the significance of the glottal stop if it had been assigned either of these letters or any full-size letter or symbol, as opposed to the small inverted comma that is still used today.

Table 3

Gloss	Samoan	Māori	Hawaiian	Tongan	Takuu	Proto-Polynesian
learn, teach	a‘o	ako	a‘o	ako	ako	ako
breadfruit	‘ulu	kuru	‘ulu	kulu	kuru	kulu
net	‘upeŋa	kupeŋa	‘upena	kupeŋa	kupeŋa	kupeŋa
chief	ali‘i	ariki	ali‘i	‘eiki	ariki	‘ariki
canoe	va‘a	waka	wa‘a	vaka	vaka	waka

What is evident from this brief overview of foreign approaches to Samoan orthography is both the early uncertainty as to the phonemic significance of diacritics in the written language and the inconsistent application and use of these symbols in written Samoan. As J Frank Stimson pointed out:

Is it not a fact . . . that this symbol [the glottal stop] is commonly printed only where it cannot be well avoided, and constantly omitted where it is unquestionably pronounced? . . . The fact of the matter is, simply, that intolerable inconsistency is at the root of the trouble. . . . [Let it] be printed just as any other letter is printed whenever and wherever it occurs in actual speech, and I venture to predict that it will soon become universally recognized for

exactly what it is—an integral part of the formal Polynesian alphabet. (1930, 273–274)

EARLY SAMOAN-LANGUAGE PUBLICATIONS

Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, significant linguistic, cultural, and scientific studies were published in Samoan that continued to make inconsistent use of diacritical markings. Many of the writers were missionary scholars who were heavily influenced by the earlier works of scholars such as Pratt. These texts—such as Henry Nisbet’s *Notes on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (1870), Thomas Powell’s *Samoan Manual of Zoology* (1886), and Pratt’s *Bible Dictionary in the Samoan Dialect* (1887, as well as C J Kinnersley’s 1927 revised edition)—were written primarily for Samoan speakers, who were able to distinguish words by reading contextually. Subsequent secular scholars, notably during the German administration of Sāmoa, often wrote about the language for non-Samoan audiences but continued to follow the established orthographic policies of the missionary scholars. Notable German authors who published collections of Samoan oral traditions, material culture, Samoan grammars, and Samoan lexicons included Bernhard Funk (1893), Wilhelm von Bülow (1895), Otto Sierich (1905), Oskar Stuebel (1895), Carl Marquardt (1899), Heinrich Neffgen (1902, 1904), and Eduard Heider (1913). Dr Augustin Krämer, in a marked departure from his contemporaries, was one of the very few scholars of that era to attempt to provide a phonemic orthography throughout his writings. His impressive two-volume ethnography of Sāmoa (1903), written in Samoan and German, makes effective and consistent use of diacritics and stands as a model for accurate early Samoan-language representations. The culmination of this early period of linguistic description was the production of a Samoan grammar by the Methodist mission (Churchward 1926). Although it was a more detailed description of Samoan than Pratt’s earlier grammar, Spencer Churchward chose to follow an inconsistent pattern of orthographic representations of Samoan. He did note, however, the phonemic nature of the glottal stop, which he called the “break”:

The break, represented by ‘, is not usually shown in printed Samoan . . . unless ambiguity would arise by its omission. It is most important, however, to observe it in pronunciation. . . . Beginners should therefore make a practice of marking the breaks in the text. . . . It is well to always show the breaks when writing the language. (Churchward 1926, 15)

EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS FOR USE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Between 1947 and 1962, New Zealand (which administered Sāmoa from 1914 to 1962) published language material for the Samoan Department of Education. These texts included the Samoan versions of the *New Zealand School Journal: Tusitala mo A'oga Samoa*, *Tusitala mo Vasega Laiti Samoa*, and *Tusitala mo Vasega Tetele*. But, in a manner similar to that in the early LMS materials, use of the diacritics was irregular. Samoan translations of popular novels first published in other languages (eg, Alexander Dumas's *The Black Tulip*, Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*, and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*) were also used in classrooms in Sāmoa, but again the use of diacritics was haphazard. Because of the confusing state of the printed language, after Samoan independence in 1962, the newly appointed director of education (the first Samoan appointed to that position) essentially prohibited the use of diacritics in written Samoan in a booklet of departmental guidelines for the teaching of Samoan in the public school system (Larkin 1969). The idea was to sweep away the inconsistencies that were becoming commonplace in Samoan texts. Another rationale was to teach Samoan students contextual reading skills, skills that English readers employ, for instance, to distinguish between [ri:d] or [red] (eg, I like to read; I have read the book) (Efi 2005; Le Tagaloa, pers comm, 2002). Whether the policy achieved either of these goals is debatable, but one clear effect of it has been the production of several generations of native speakers who have learned to read and write Samoan without diacritics. The nationwide language policy prohibiting diacritics was effective from 1969 onward. Milner's diacritic-heavy dictionary was released in 1966. These two documents, released within three years of each other, promoted incompatible positions on diacritics that have never been reconciled.

In contrast to Western Sāmoa, American Sāmoa did not begin to produce significant Samoan-language materials for its education system until the 1970s, through the US Department of Education as part of the Bilingual/Bicultural Education Project of American Sāmoa. These materials included a grammar of English in Samoan, guides for the teaching of Samoan language and expository writing in Samoan, a grammar of Samoan, and a guide to punctuation and intonation, all written in the vernacular. All of these materials followed Milner's strict usage of diacritics, although there was a tendency to overrepresent these sounds, especially in the case of the non-significant vowel lengthening, which Milner believed

was more closely associated with style rather than meaning (1966, xviii). The production of the American Samoan texts, however, provided a large corpus of Samoan-language materials suitable for use in the classroom, and its use of diacritics provided a consistent and unambiguous association of the written word and the spoken language. Unfortunately, the Bilingual/Bicultural Education Project of American Sāmoa was short-lived, and these materials are now difficult to obtain.

The migration and establishment of large Samoan populations abroad, particularly in New Zealand, Hawai'i, and the continental United States, created new demand for well-written Samoan-language materials for public school systems. In 1976, the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM) expanded its Polynesian language offerings to include Samoan, in part because of the increasing size of the Samoan community in Hawai'i. As this was the first university-level Samoan-language program outside of Sāmoa, pedagogical materials had to be developed by the program staff. Many of these early materials were adapted from language texts developed by the US Peace Corps and the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints, both of which treated the use of diacritics as an essential component for the development of language materials at all levels. At the same time, the Hawaiian-language program at the University of Hawai'i was confronting similar issues concerning the use of diacritics and eventually adopted a policy to standardize the teaching of Hawaiian, which included accurate and consistent use of the diacritics *kahakō* (macron) and *'okina* (glottal stop).⁴ This also became the policy of the university's Samoan program.

In 1977, the Pacific Area Languages Materials Development Center (PALM) was established at the University of Hawai'i to develop bilingual materials for grades 1–6 for languages in the American Pacific region, including Samoan. Developed as a support program for existing Bilingual/Bicultural Education Projects located (in the case of Samoan) in American Sāmoa and Hawai'i, the PALM Project was innovative to the extent that it developed the first local policy on language use and guidelines on Samoan orthography and word composition for public elementary schools (Barber, Iosefa, and Samisoni 1978). PALM produced a report that identified six basic sources of orthographic style: the Samoan Bible, Pratt's dictionary; Milner's dictionary; Fanaafi Larkin's *O le Gagana Samoa (Samoan Language; 1969)*; Semisi Ma'ia'i's 1962 translation of George Turner's *O Samoa Anamua (Ancient Sāmoa)*; and John Kneubuhl, Tuitele Moega, and Mila Sāpolu Jr's *Lā Tātou Gagana (Our Language; 1978)*. Based on inconsistencies between these systems and in some cases within each sys-

tem, standardized guidelines were developed for diacritics, among other things. These guidelines generally followed the systems of Milner, Kneubuhl, and the University of Hawai'i's Samoan program and included all diacritics. However, the PALM guidelines proposed to delete these markings in cases where they were predictable, stylistic, or not significant. As one might expect, the determination of predictability and of just what constitutes significance led to further inconsistencies. The pronoun /matou/ (we/exclusive), for example, is written as *mātou*, even though all of the plural pronouns of this pattern have the same initial long syllable and are therefore predictable. On the other hand, the plural verb form /sosola/ (run away, escape) is written as *sosola* rather than *sōsola* because of what is judged to be the predictability of the initial vowel lengthening in similar three-syllable plural verb forms. While the justification for some of PALM's guidelines may have been questionable, their attempts to review existing spelling systems and present a comprehensive plan for the writing of Samoan remains important for its clear statement of the problems inherent in the Samoan writing system.

In New Zealand in the 1990s, after Samoan had been included in the New Zealand school curriculum, the printing of reading materials for classroom use incorporated the use of the glottal stop and the macron. Victoria University of Wellington (VUW), FAGASA, and Learning Media (a government-owned publishing company) decided collaboratively that adopting Milner's approach suited the direction and goals of language education in New Zealand. The close working relationship between the VUW and UHM Samoan-language programs also ensured that the writing of Samoan was consistent, at least at the academic level within the two academic centers of the Samoan diaspora. Learning Media itself had a forward-thinking leadership, which pursued modern principles in printing Samoan-language products, and it invited a VUW faculty member to be editor of its Samoan-language materials. This faculty member was, at the time, the program director of Samoan studies at Victoria University and was the national president of FAGASA during the early years of its formation. For the promotion of the consistent use of diacritical marks in the Samoan language, it was a fortunate turn of events that these key roles were held by one person and at one location.

In recent years, the issue of diacritics has been addressed at several levels. In 2000, the Fale'ula o Fatua'i'upu o le Gagana Sāmoa (International Samoan Language Commission) was created, in part, to address the issue. Comprising educators from every tertiary institution having a Samoan-

language program as well as representatives of government and church-based organizations, the commission met annually for several years to discuss issues facing the Samoan language in the new millennium.⁵ In annual conferences held over the last few years, FAGASA has provided sessions during which teachers and parents were introduced to the use and the writing of diacritical marks. The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and the Victoria University of Wellington continue to cooperate to provide assistance in understanding as well as using the glottal stop and macron.⁶ However, after more than a decade of meetings and collaborations, the problem of diacritics has not yet been settled.

There is clearly a need for a coordinated effort by institutions involved in the production of written Samoan to develop a writing system that will meet the needs of modern Samoan speakers. Even a cursory review of published materials in Samoan reveals that there is still no common approach to the use of diacritics. Inconsistency prevails. In everything from the Bible to newspapers, government publications, shop signs, and even casual correspondence, the use of diacritics is not standardized in written Samoan. This finding is supported by research on a frequency corpus for the Samoan language (Hunkin 2001), which found that even in a single story or article, it is possible to find the same word used with different spellings, for example, for Saturday: Aso To'ona'i, Aso Toonai, Aso Toona'i, and an erroneous modern variation, Aso To'ana'i.

CHANGING ATTITUDES AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Teachers of the Samoan language rely on their own knowledge of the culture and language. The extent to which they were exposed to the reading material mentioned earlier plays an important part in forming teacher attitudes, confidence, and ability in the use of the diacritics. For instance, when official advice was issued in the 1960s to teachers in Sāmoa that the diacritical marks should be used “only when they are needed” (though “need” was left undefined), this became the position adopted by many teachers at the time, and it is probably the most significant factor for omitting them today. Somewhat different advice was given in the 1990s to Samoan teachers who were utilizing the New Zealand Curriculum. More recently, the Samoan Department of Education has moved toward more consistent usage, but the situation remains confusing, with different publishers and institutions taking different views at different times. It is therefore important, when trying to develop a consistent approach,

to look at ways of changing attitudes toward the use of diacritics in the classroom.

Typically, Samoan-language teachers are fluent native speakers, though in countries such as New Zealand this is slowly changing as more New Zealand-born Samoans become involved. These newer teachers, and the majority of their students, do not have the extensive exposure to Samoan that their counterparts in Sāmoa bring to the language-learning classroom, and this lack of lived experience affects the educational process. Teachers may not know where words are divided, or how compound words are formed, or they may possess only superficial knowledge of Samoan syntax and be unable to articulate Samoan grammar to students. Most concerning for beginner students, non-native teachers may not have accurate knowledge about diacritics, and this undoubtedly affects how they teach pronunciation, reading, and writing. Teachers today face classes in which students may be learning Samoan as a first, second, or foreign language. To meet the challenge of catering to this diverse student body, teachers must equip themselves with an extensive body of linguistic and content knowledge and innovative teaching skills. Among this set of understandings are the rules for how and when diacritics should be used in printed Samoan.

USEFUL REFERENCES FOR TEACHERS OF THE SAMOAN LANGUAGE

Aside from the sources mentioned above, such as the PALM and the numerous American Sāmoa bilingual publications, there are many modern references using the glottal stop and macron consistently that can help teachers teaching Samoan-language beginners. The New Zealand Ministry of Education provides a useful list of language-teaching resources in *Samoan in the New Zealand Curriculum* (1996), updated in *Ta'iala mo le Gagana Sāmoa: The Gagana Sāmoa Guidelines* (2009). Both are available, free on request, to any teacher teaching Samoan in a New Zealand school. Another useful reference is *'O Si Manu a Ali'i: A Text for the Advanced Study of Samoan Language and Culture*, written by longtime educator 'Aumua Mata'itusi Simanu and edited by John Mayer of the University of Hawai'i (Simanu 2002). This and their later work, *'O Fāiā Fa'atūmua o Sāmoa mai Tala o le Vavau* (Simanu 2011), use Milner's dictionary (1966) as a broad reference for the use of diacritics and word composition, but Simanu and Mayer have in some instances chosen their own conventions

based on their collective experiences as lifelong speakers and educators of the Samoan language (Simanu 2011, 9). Ideally, this will be how guidelines for the use of diacritics will be formulated in the future—based on the broader, collective experiences of the speech community.

SOME SUGGESTIONS ON THE USE OF THE DIACRITICAL MARKS

In the spirit of promoting consistency and a language pedagogy responsive to learner needs, the following are some general guidelines to help teachers put the diacritical marks in Samoan words. They were formulated to cater to students learning Samoan primarily in classrooms, and they are based on native knowledge, decades of research, teaching, and editing Samoan, as well as on the methodical use of primary reference materials such as Milner's dictionary (1966). These suggestions should not be seen as prescriptive (as any changes to Samoan orthography should be made in consultation with the speech community at large), but they are published in the hope of bringing the issue of diacritics back to the fore and of encouraging further dialogue among researchers, educators, and speakers.

- (a) The first point to note is that the glottal stop is a valid Samoan consonant and should be represented by its own symbol in writing. In phonological terms, it is a consonant-stop, similar in manner of articulation to the other Samoan stops: /p/, /t/, and /k/. It is in contrastive distribution with the other Samoan consonants and therefore follows the rules of Samoan word formation, namely, it occurs only in syllable-initial positions (before a vowel) and may not occur adjacent to another consonant. For example, consonants occur before vowels (*pau*, *tau*, *kau*, *'au*) and between vowels (*apa*, *ata*, *aka*, *a'a*), but never with another consonant (**p'a*, **t'a*, **k'a*) or at the end of a word or syllable (**mau'*, **lei'*, **i' solo'*, **ua'*).

Likewise, the macron over a vowel represents a change in pronunciation (length) that is phonemic. The short pronunciation of a vowel, such as *o*, is phonemically different from the long pronunciation, *ō*. Therefore, a long vowel should be accurately represented in the writing system with a macron above it, for example, *se* (a/the) versus *sē* (grasshopper) or *mālō* (government) versus *malō* (to be hard).

- (b) When deciding where to place the glottal stop or macron in a word, determine how the entire word is pronounced and write

each sound with a letter (or symbol). Listening to a native speaker pronounce the word in context can assist with this point. For example, the Samoan word for breadfruit clearly has four phonemes: /ʔ/, /u/, /l/ and /u/, whereas the word for head only has three sounds: /u/, /l/ and /u/, so they are written *ʻulu* and *ulu*, respectively. The word for child has all short vowels: /t/, /a/, /m/, and /a/, whereas the word for father has a final long vowel: /t/, /a/, /m/, and /a:/; these should be written *tama* and *tamā*, respectively. To be consistent, the glottal stop and macron should be used in cases where their absence could lead to misunderstanding in spite of the context. Its use will minimize confusion and promote accurate pronunciation.

- (c) Despite the tendency to omit the glottal stop in writing where the pronunciation is obvious, the best practice is consistency. Therefore, words such as *faʻafetai* (thank you) and *faʻamolemole* (please) should be spelled with all their sounds represented with letters or symbols. From a student's point of view, the examples given above are simple to decipher even if written without a glottal stop (eg, *faafetai*), but the difficulty arises when a student is unfamiliar with a word, either in spelling or pronunciation. Remember that teachers cannot assume that all students bring the same knowledge or linguistic experience to the classroom or to the written text. For instance, if written without a glottal stop, the word *faaalaala* (make frivolous or facetious remarks) could be mistakenly read as *faʻaalaala*, *faʻaʻalaala*, or *faʻaalaʻala*. The correct intended pronunciation is *faʻaʻalaʻala*. Glottal stops should be used so that learners will correctly pronounce words that they may not be familiar with and also so that they gain confidence in being able to write new words correctly so that they can be pronounced correctly when they are reread.
- (d) Either the inverted comma or the apostrophe may be used to represent the glottal stop.

To minimize the number of keys on the keyboard, early typewriters used ambidextrous or one-directional single quotes ('). These days, computers have fonts that can produce the *koma liliu* (ˆ) and the *faʻamamafa* (˘) over the long vowel. Macintosh computers come with a pre-installed Hawaiian font that can reproduce these symbols with simple keystrokes. Most teachers, however, find that it is easier and quicker to simply use the apostrophe

(ʻ) to represent the glottal stop. There is no risk of confusion with the English usage of the apostrophe because in Samoan the *koma liliu* is not used to indicate possession (eg, Simi's), nor is it used for contractions (eg, we will > we'll). It is used solely to represent the glottal stop. The use of the apostrophe is the most frequently used symbol for the glottal stop in most modern Samoan publications.⁷ For consistency, it is advisable to use one-directional or “straight” apostrophes as opposed to “smart” apostrophes because the latter face one way or the other based on where they occur in relation to other letters.

According to Milner (1966), macrons have generally been omitted above capital letters, although Simanu's 2011 text consistently uses macrons above all characters, both upper and lower case. Milner's suggestion reflects the technology of his time; typewriters could not accommodate diacritics above capitals. Today's teachers should use them above all letters to be consistent.

When inexperienced teachers are unsure about how to use or where to place diacritics, they should refer to reliable reference materials. Time and experience help one become familiar with the use of diacritics, but for the benefit of their students, non-native teachers should aim to develop competence in recognizing word patterns, understanding the meanings of words (semantics) and determining grammatical functions. There is no shortcut or easy way to deal with these diacritical marks, but further research may provide good guidelines in time.

PRESERVING SAMOAN CULTURE

The final justification for seeking consistency is to minimize cultural misunderstandings and to prevent unintended offense. As stated by Simanu:

E aogā tele fa'amamafa ma komaliliu e fa'aleo sa'o ai 'upu ma suafa o tagata ma alaafaga moni e alaala ai. Mo se fa'ata'ita'iga—E tatau ona sa'o le fa'aleoga o le suafa Mataafa, 'auā 'ā fa'aleo i le nu'u o Lotofaga i Aleipata ona tu'u lea 'o le fa'amamafa i le "a" lona lua, 'ae tu'u le komaliliu i le "a" lona tolu, ona fa'aleo loa lea Matā'afa, 'a 'o le Mataafa i le nu'u o Palauli i Savai'i, e tu'u le fa'amamafa i le "a" mulimuli 'ae tu'u le komaliliu i le "a" lona tolu ona fa'aleo lea fa'apea: Matā'afā. (2011, 19)

(The use of the macron and inverted comma is very useful for the pronunciation of words and names and their true origins. For example—the pronun-

ciation of Mataafa must be correct, because if said in the village of Lotofaga in Aleipata, the macron is on the second “a” and the inverted comma before the third “a” and it is said Matā’afa. But the Mataafa from the village of Palauli in Savai’i has a macron over the final “a” and an inverted comma before the third “a” and it is said Matā’afā.)

Simanu went on:

‘O le ala lea ‘o le fesāsia’i o fa’asalalauga a Sāmoa ‘ona ‘o le lē iloa fa’aaogā sa’o fa’ailoga o le gagana. E matuā ‘ili’tata [sic] lagona o tamāli’i ma o lātou ‘āiga pe ‘ā sesē ona tusia ma fa’aleo mai o lātou suafa ma o lātou fa’alupega ma a lātou measina. ‘Ua alagātatau ai fo’i ona a’oa’o lelei fa’ailoga mo le fa’aleoga o aganu’u. (2011, 19)

(This is why Samoan public notices are confusing because [they] don’t know how to use diacritics. Chiefs and their families become very irritated when their chiefly titles and genealogies and cultural artifacts are written or pronounced wrongly. This is why it is important to properly teach diacritics, for the articulation of culture.)

The value that Samoan speakers ascribe to names of people and places cannot fully be described within the scope of this paper, but it is not something to be taken lightly. Even unintended offense can have significant repercussions, so for cultural and pragmatic reasons, the use of diacritics in written Samoan is strongly recommended. For teachers, this is our final recommendation:

- (e) Always use diacritics in Samoan proper nouns, that is, names of people, events, and places, and use diacritics whenever referring to cultural artifacts or when using specialized terms in traditional arts and crafts (eg, weaving, tattooing).

CONCLUSION

The issue of diacritics is a controversial and divisive one, and no one solution will satisfy everyone. Pratt’s discretionary use of diacritics in his Bible meant for fluent Samoan speakers is difficult for non-native readers to understand. Milner’s more comprehensive use of diacritics in his dictionary is excellent for learners, but those not accustomed to using these symbols often state that the words appear “overdone” when put into a body of text. The post-independence Samoan policy of removing all diacritics ignored the terms identified by Pratt—those that share spelling and func-

tion—and this continues to cause confusion among both native and non-native readers. It is almost four decades now since the last serious attempt was made to review and reconcile the competing guidelines for using diacritics, but we are not much closer today to a solution than we were then. With Samoan being taught at all levels of education in some diasporic communities, this situation is unacceptable for our students.

It is our belief as Samoan-language educators that an appropriate policy for the use of diacritics should be based on the theory that at the elementary level, language learners need a system that will provide a direct correspondence between the meaningful sounds of the language and the symbols used in writing. At the beginning level, therefore, all written materials should follow the guidelines outlined above and use as models the linguistic forms as represented in Milner's *Samoan Dictionary*, Kneubuhl and coauthors' *Lā Tātou Gagana*, and Simanu's 'O Si a Manu Ali'i.⁸ Elementary texts should be written with consistent phonemic use of the macrons and glottal stops. As students acquire basic vocabulary and demonstrate significant recognition levels for this vocabulary, the markings may be slowly phased out until, at progressively more advanced levels, familiar words can be written unmarked unless meaning or recognition factors determine the necessity of their inclusion; for example, *la'u* (my) should be written with the glottal stop to avoid confusion with *lau* (you). Since almost all of the contemporary materials written in Samoan—including personal letters, newspapers, and most self-published language and cultural texts—tend to omit the glottal stop and macron, this approach ensures that the student will be able to read native-level materials that are encountered yet retain the ability to correctly use the macron and glottal stop if needed.

Recent efforts by the government of Sāmoa have begun to revisit language policies. In late 2012, it was reported that diacritics would be reintroduced into the Samoan language (Radio New Zealand 2012), and, in 2013, the Samoan government passed legislation establishing a Samoan Language Commission (Efi 2013). It is hoped that any reforms resulting from these developments will be linguistically and pedagogically sound and will not attempt to add a new set of rules to what is already a crowded playing field. Most importantly, any guidelines for using diacritics should take into account that the future of the Samoan language relies heavily on its transmission to younger generations, and these learners need an unambiguous, consistent orthography to aid their learning and comprehension.

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Notes

1 For a discussion of these variations see, eg, Mosel and Hovdhaugen 1992, 4–47.

2 FAGASA is the national organization of Samoan-language educators in New Zealand.

3 It is interesting to note that even in texts produced for teaching Samoan language and culture to non-Samoans, missionary writers continued to follow the same pattern of selected usage of diacritics. See, eg, Turner 1884, Beveridge 1902, Newell 1905, Hough 1924. In contrast to the London Missionary Society orthographic standards, the Catholic Church in Sāmoa produced a French-Samoan dictionary (Violette 1879) that indicated long vowels with a macron and marked word initial glottal stops with an apostrophe before the vowel but placed the diacritical mark *over* the vowel when a glottal stop occurred within a word. This practice was discontinued in favor of the LMS orthography.

4 For an excellent account of the history of Hawaiian language studies, see Schütz 1994.

5 A compilation of many of the papers produced by the commission was published by American Samoa Community College (see Kolisi Tu'ufaataasi o Amerika Samoa 2008).

6 For example, it is planned for a version of this current article to be translated into Samoan for Samoan teachers so they can be informed about the history and developments of the written forms of the Samoan language in the language itself.

7 While the inverted comma was used in the early religious publications, modern writers now use both the inverted comma and the apostrophe. For example, Milner 1966; Moyle 1981; Sunia 2000; So'o 2000; and Simanu 2002 use the inverted comma, as have certain publishers, most notably Books Pasifika (Auckland—formerly Polynesian Press) and Learning Media (Wellington). However, the great majority of modern writers prefer to utilize the apostrophe: Shore 1982; Freeman 1983; Meleisea 1987; Mosel and Hovdhaugen 1992; Efi 1989; Aleki 1996; Tavale 2012; and Simanu 2011.

8 Other Samoan-language publications that have made careful use of diacritics include *Fāgogo* (Moyle 1981); *Say It in Samoan* (Mosel and So'o 1997); *O le Kalama o le Gagana Samoa* (Samoan Ministry of Education 1999); *Utugagana* (Samoan Ministry of Education 2000); the *Samoan Contemporary New Testament* (Bible Society of the South Pacific 2009); *Mua Ō!* (New Zealand Ministry of Education 2009); and *Tusi'upu Sāmoa*, volumes 1 and 2 (Ma'ia'i 2010).

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Abstract

The issue of diacritical marks in the Samoan orthography has long been a contentious one, and it is almost four decades now since the last serious attempt was made to review and reconcile the competing guidelines for their use. This article is aimed at promoting a better understanding of the function and use of diacritical marks (the glottal stop and the macron) in written Samoan, as the use of diacritics has important educational implications for students in introductory Samoan-language classes and in early reading programs in bilingual classes. It presents the historical context of the use of these symbols, their treatment in educational materials, and the contemporary situation in which inconsistency prevails. Using historical and linguistic analysis, it investigates how the use of diacritics became so variable and why some Samoan-language users do not consider them to be significant symbols. The article argues that diacritics should be used in the Samoan language, particularly for academic settings, and offers recommendations for teachers to assist with the Samoan language-learning classroom. Our key motivation is that the future of the Samoan language relies heavily on its transmission to younger generations, and for this we need an unambiguous, consistent orthography.

KEYWORDS: Samoan language, diacritics, glottal stop, Pacific linguistics, Samoan history, orthography