

# A Sociolinguistic Survey of Araki: A Dying Language of Vanuatu

**Hannah Vari-Bogiri**

*Pacific Languages Unit, University of the South Pacific, Emalus Campus, Port Vila, Vanuatu*

Araki is one of around a hundred languages of the Republic of Vanuatu. It is a language spoken by the people of Araki, an islet situated near the south western part of Santo, in the north of Vanuatu. Linguistic statistics have shown a gradual decline in the number of speakers. This study presents evidence to show that Araki is a declining language and adopts a diagnostic approach to finding out the underlying causes underpinning this gradual decline in the number of Araki speakers. This paper discusses why so many people of Araki within the younger generation have a passive knowledge of Araki while Tangoa, a closely related language, plays a dominant role in their daily communication. Literature on threatened languages in the world today exposes various reasons underlying these changes and steps that can be taken to revive these languages. The focus of this survey is to expose the reasons underpinning this language change and the Araki-speaking community's attitude towards this change. Furthermore, with reference to other models of language revival strategies in other countries, this study will propose a model that can be employed to revive this dying language. This study was carried out in 1998, using multiple data-collecting methods which comprised a questionnaire, interviews and observation of language use in various contexts, covering all the five extended families that make up the population of Arak, which stood at 121.

**Keywords:** Araki, sociolinguistic survey, dying language, language shift, language change, Vanuatu

Santo is the biggest island of Vanuatu (Figure 1). Both Tangoa and Araki (Figure 2), mentioned in this study, are situated south west of Santo. Tangoa, situated 2.5 km from Araki, was the settlement of early missionaries, causing Tangoa language to be the *lingua franca* of the area; a factor that contributes to the high currency of Tangoa language on Araki Island.

## Introduction

This study presents the findings of a sociolinguistic survey of Araki, one of around 100 languages of the Republic of Vanuatu. This paper shows evidence that Araki is a threatened language, and it explores the major contributing factors affecting the decline of Araki language usage as compared to the increase in the usage of Tangoa (the closely related vernacular language of the nearby island of Tangoa) and Bislama (Vanuatu's national language, an English-based pidgin). Furthermore, this study aims to expose the various linguistic attitudes found among the Araki-speaking community and to propose steps that can be employed to ensure longer-term survival of the language.

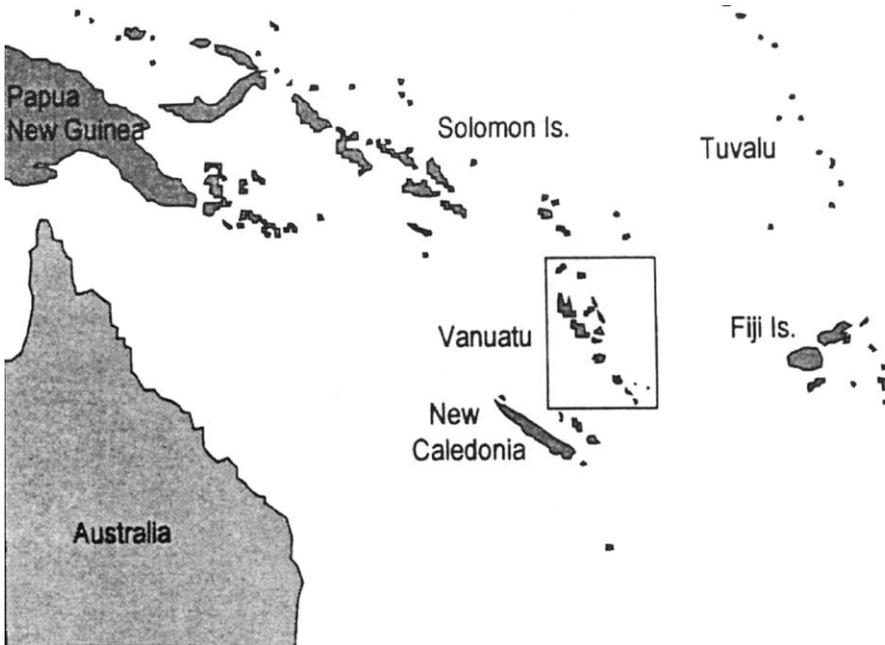


Figure 1 Vanuatu in the south-west Pacific Ocean

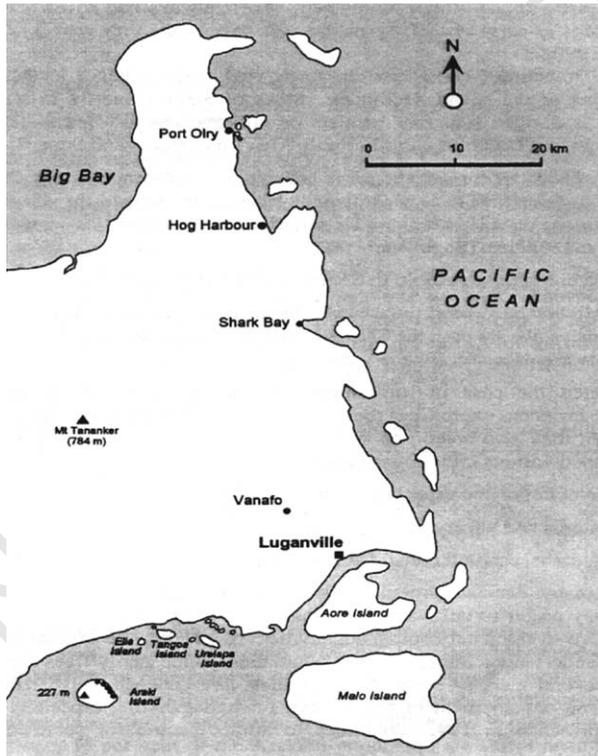


Figure 2 Araki located south west of Santo Island in Vanuatu

## Background

The Araki language is spoken on the small rocky islet of Araki, which has an area of 2.5 km<sup>2</sup>. It is situated three miles off the south western part of Espiritu Santo, the largest island in the archipelago of Vanuatu, known until 1980 as the New Hebrides. Vanuatu, a country comprising over 80 islands, has a high linguistic density, sharing over 100 different vernaculars among a population currently estimated at 200,000. According to a linguistic survey by Lynch and Crowley (2001: 4), out of the 106 languages of Vanuatu, 8 are already extinct and 17 are considered moribund, while 81 are still actively spoken. Apart from these vernaculars, English and French remain the principal languages of formal education as well as official languages, while Bislama, a Melanesian-base English-lexifier pidgin, is given a higher status, not only as one of the official languages, but also as the national language, the *lingua franca*, with a unifying force. Within this complex linguistic scenario, a vernacular education policy is currently in place, through the Education Master Plan. This policy directive is the first ever serious positive move taken by the government to actively implement the provisions of the Constitution to promote and preserve vernacular languages.

Araki is one of 80 islands within the group and is also the name of the language. The Araki language, like all Vanuatu languages, belongs to the Oceanic group of Austronesian languages. Within the Vanuatu group, it belongs to what Clark (1985) labelled as 'North and Central Vanuatu'.

The Araki language is spoken by members of five extended family clans living in five villages located on the long terrace on the northern flank of the island. The people of Araki are Melanesians. Statistics show a gradual increase in the population of Araki from 103 in 1897 to 112 in 1989 and 121 in 1999 (Statistics Office, 2000). However, part of one of the five extended family clans moved in the late 1960s and early 1970s to a coastal village on the mainland of Santo where the main language of communication is Tangoa.

Agriculturally, most people on Araki are subsistence farmers. Cash crops include cocoa and coconut. Apart from these two cash crops, people also depend on other ways to make their living such as owning small retail stores, owning boats for transportation, carving artefacts, weaving, sewing and fishing. The major problems at Araki are water and transport.

## Methodology

To increase confidence in research findings, a multiple data-collection method was employed. This approach to collecting data from various different resources is termed by Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 24) as 'triangulation'. Questionnaires targeted personal demographic facts and language use in various contexts, while follow-up interviews were concerned with people's opinion and attitudes towards change and the future of the language. General observation was carried out in relation to language use in various contexts within family situations and at other public venues.

## Evidence of Araki as a Moribund Language

Studies have shown that some languages may be small, yet thriving well and healthy as in some Melanesian countries, while others are being threatened (Crowley, 1995). Araki is small and evidence shows that Araki is a declining language and unless collective effort is made to revive the language, it will continue to decline.

Different studies have shown that there is a continual decline in the number of Araki speakers in comparison with the continual increase in population, as illustrated in Table 1. Figures collected during this study confirm Araki as a threatened or declining language.

The figures in Table 1 show that the number of speakers continually declined over a century. This study shows that 34 people, or 28% of the Araki population living on Araki, speak or claim to speak some Araki language. However, in reality the fluent speakers are only a handful, around 12% of the total population, the majority of whom are over 40 years of age. It is feared that the language will eventually die with that generation, as most of those who claim to speak the language are passively proficient in it but are actively proficient in Tangoa.

Table 2 shows that the large majority of Araki speakers in 1998 were from the older generation, over 40 years of age, followed by those less than 20 years old. It can be noted that the nine speakers less than 20 years old are mainly from the Lelemoli extended family who are the residents of Sope village whose main language of communication is Araki. Within the Lelemoli extended family, the fluent speakers spread over three generations, a crucial intergenerational transmission link that is lacking in the other extended families. This 26% from the Lelemoli extended family creates a promising picture, suggesting that the language is being maintained within that clan.

The minority of Araki speakers are within the age ranging between 20 and 40. There are certain trends among this age group between 20 and 40 which could be seen as a contributing factor to this decline.

Firstly, most of the people within this age group have moved out for educational and employment reasons for extended periods of time which has led to social contact with other language communities. Interisland marriage is

**Table 1** Fluent speakers of Araki: official figures versus estimate

<i>Year</i>	<i>Island population</i>	<i>Official speakers</i>	<i>Speakers, our estimate</i>	<i>Source</i>
1897	103	(103)	(103)	Miller (1990)
1972		72		Tryon (1972: 50)
1989	112	80	30?	Tryon & Charpentier
1996	105	105	45?	SIL
1998	121	34	15	This study

**Table 2** Analysis of the 34 people who claim to speak Araki language, by age

<i>Age</i>	<i>Actual figure</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
< 20	9	26%
20–40	4	12%
41 >	21	62%

common within this age group, which leads to the usage of languages other than Araki. Lastly, the habitual language of communication among this age group is mainly Tangoa, as the majority of this age group are only passively proficient in Araki.

Secondly, this study shows that members of only one out of the five extended families on Araki are actively proficient in both Araki and Tangoa, practicing intergenerational transmission of Araki in the home front (Table 3). The majority of Araki families shift to Tangoa as the main code of communication at home because only members of the family over 40 years of age are actively proficient in both Araki and Tangoa and are able to communicate actively in both languages. Although the older members speak Araki, the younger ones always respond in Tangoa.

This study shows that except for the Lelemoli extended family, the members of the younger generation in the other family clans, who make up the majority of the population of Araki, lack the proficiency to actively communicate in Araki. This scenario is bleaker than the situation three to four decades back because the younger generations today, who are the future custodians of this language, are not as well equipped as those three decades ago to ensure its survival. If steps are not taken individually and collectively as a community to remedy the situation, Araki will continue to decline with the death of older generations.

**Table 3** Language of communication in the five extended families by age

<i>Family</i>	<i>Age</i>						
	<9	10–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60 >
Vijinavari	Tangoa	Tangoa	Tangoa	Tangoa	Araki, Tangoa	Araki, Tangoa	Araki, Tangoa
Love Lui	Tangoa	Tangoa	Tangoa	Tangoa	Araki, Tangoa	Araki, Tangoa	Araki, Tangoa
Vari Livo	Tangoa	Tangoa	Tangoa	Tangoa	Araki, Tangoa	Araki, Tangoa	Araki, Tangoa
Vatu	Tangoa	Tangoa	Tangoa	Tangoa	Araki, Tangoa	Araki, Tangoa	Araki, Tangoa
Lelemoli	Araki, Tangoa	Araki, Tangoa	Araki, Tangoa	Araki, Tangoa	Araki, Tangoa	Araki	Araki

**Table 4** Language use in various contexts in 1998

<i>Contexts</i>	<i>Language(s) used</i>
Home	Tangoa, Araki, Bislama
Kindergarten	Tangoa; Bislama
Junior primary school	Tangoa; Bislama; English
Youth gathering	Tangoa
Women's Club	Tangoa; Bislama
Church singing	Tangoa ( <i>Buku Vete</i> ); Bislama ( <i>Oi Sing Blong Niulaef Buk Tri</i> ); English
Church prayer	Tangoa; Bislama; Araki
Church other	Tangoa; Bislama; Araki
<i>Hamal</i> (club house)	Tangoa; Bislama; Araki

The third piece of evidence that depicts Araki as a declining language is the dominant usage of Tangoa *vis-à-vis* Araki in almost all social contexts as illustrated in Table 4.

Language use in Araki varies according to different people and contexts. Switching from one language to another is very common in Araki. This survey shows that although Araki, Tangoa and Bislama are the three main languages used in the community, Tangoa remains the dominant language of communication among the majority in all contexts.

This study shows that Tangoa is the dominant means of communication in all contexts. On the other hand, Araki is the least used means of communication. It was also observed that within the contexts where Araki was spoken, it was mainly by the older generation, except for one of the extended families where Araki is also spoken fluently intergenerationally. Another sad observation was the usage of Tangoa and Bislama in kindergarten teaching as although the teachers are from Araki, they are not actively proficient in the language.

## Reasons for Change

Studies on threatened or diminishing languages around the world have exposed various reasons underlying this negative trend (Crystal, 2000; Grenoble & Whaley, 1998; Nettle & Romaine, 2000). The disappearance of languages can occur as a natural cycle of human society over many hundreds of years. Languages diminish or become extinct with the death of the speakers. People can sometimes be motivated by political, economic and other social pressures to replace their traditional languages by one which gives them access to the language of a more powerful culture, and in doing so this can pose threats to their own languages. In Vanuatu, although only 13 of the vernacular languages have a population of 5000 or more speakers, most of

these languages are surviving well. For example, Anejom, a language in Vanuatu which has 900 speakers (Lynch & Crowley, 2001), is surviving and thriving, while a big language like Maori in New Zealand, with over 50,000 speakers, is in danger of dying because of the social pressure towards the usage of English (Nettle & Romaine, 2000). Other languages have been replaced not by colonial languages or a pidgin, but by another vernacular. An example of this in Vanuatu in Lynch (1983) is the Ura language of Erromango, which was moribund in 1970 and was replaced by another bigger vernacular, Sie. Araki is one such language which has not shifted to English, French or Bislama, but it has, in principal, shifted to another vernacular, Tangoa, which is used as a *lingua franca* in the area.

This survey establishes that the major contributing factors, directly or indirectly responsible for the present linguistic situation of Araki, can be categorised as linguistic or social.

The first contributing factor affecting this change is the proximity of Araki Island to Tangoa Island. Araki is situated about three miles from Tangoa. In order to go to the mainland, Araki islanders have to go past Tangoa. Communication increases between these two islands due to the proximity. Furthermore, the language used during these times of communication is Tangoa because the Araki people understand and speak both Araki and Tangoa languages, whereas Tangoa islanders can only understand and speak Tangoa. Therefore, the common language of communication is Tangoa. The proximity and social interaction between Araki and Tangoa existed before the arrival of missionaries, leading to marriage links between these two islands, and therefore the existence of Tangoa language on Araki.

Secondly, Araki and Tangoa share numerous linguistic similarities and this could be one of the main reasons for the existence and usage of Tangoa in Araki as it is easier to change to a language which is not very different or which is similar. Typologically, Araki and Tangoa belong to a very small set of languages found only in Vanuatu which maintained a series of apicolabial consonants (François, 2002: 12). Linguo labials or apicolabial segments are rare in world languages and, according to Clark (1985: 205) and Maddieson (1988: 350), are known to occur as regular linguistic units in parts of Malakula and Santo, the two larger islands of the northern part of Vanuatu. Apart from the series of apicolabial consonants, both Araki and Tangoa also depict a phonemic difference between a trill and a flap on the same point of articulation. Both languages follow many Oceanic languages in contrasting five similar possessive classifiers of different semantic relations. However, although Tangoa alveolar plosive [t] and Araki alveolar trill [r] correspond in many words, it seems that Tangoa preserves an original *t* whereas Araki changed this to *r*.

Araki and Tangoa would be considered two closely related languages but according to lexicostatistical evidence, they cannot be considered dialects of a single language.

The Vanuatu language classification by Tryon (1976) established that Tangoa and Araki belong to the West Santo subgroup, lexicostatistically, sharing more than 50% cognates, but not meeting Tryon's more than 80% cognates or Clark's 70% cognates criteria to be considered two dialects of the

same language. Thus, according to Tryon's (1976: 897) internal lexicostatistical classification, Tangoa and Araki would be considered two different languages, but belonging to the same subgroup. The phonological evidence suggests that they form part of the northern Vanuatu subgroup. Although mutual intelligibility does not exist between the speakers of the two languages when communicating, it is easier to shift to a language which is similar.

A third contributing factor is the early church and missionary influence. During the early missionary era in 1887, a Teacher Training Institute was established on the island of Tangoa, the purpose of which was to train local people throughout the country about Christian teachings for the purpose of converting the local people from heathenism to Christianity (Miller, 1990). In order to reach the people with their teaching, translation work began in the language of Tangoa. As a result of missionary settlement on Tangoa and translation work, Tangoa became the main vehicle of communication as well as the standard dialect and *lingua franca* within the area of Tangoa, Araki and the surrounding villages on the mainland.

The vernacular hymnbook used in Araki church today is the Tangoa hymnbook, in Tangoa language, called *Puku Vete*. The other hymnbook widely used now is in Bislama, *Ol sing Blong Niulaef Buk Tri*. The Bible versions used are those written in English and Bislama.

Everyone on Araki is Presbyterian. Today, church plays a very important part in the lives of Araki people starting from the young to the elderly through Sunday school, youth group, women's group and the community as a whole, as well as the church regional session which includes other villages on the mainland. But during these various gatherings, languages like Tangoa and Bislama seem to be dominant.

Another reason why Bislama and Tangoa are now taking over from Araki language is due to interisland marriage. Most of the people on Araki are closely related in one way or another. This therefore leads to a lot of marriage connections outside Araki with other parts of Vanuatu. The majority of the Araki daughters married outside Araki and have consequently moved to their husbands' places (see Table 5), while most of the young men are marrying girls from other islands (see Table 6).

**Table 5** A breakdown of Araki daughters from each extended family clan, spanning two generations, who have married out

<i>Family</i>	<i>Total number of daughters married</i>	<i>Daughters married out of Araki</i>
Vijinavari	11	11
Love Lui	8	7
Vari Livo	9	8
Vatu	3	2
Lelemoli	4	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>30</b>

**Table 6** A comparison of married women originally from Araki with those originally from other islands or countries spanning three generations

<i>Family</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Women originally from Araki</i>	<i>Women from other islands</i>
Vijinavari	12	3	9
Love Lui	6	2	4
Vari Livo	6	1	5
Vatu	8	3	5
Lelemoli	6	1	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>28</b>

Table 5 establishes the fact that around 85% of Araki daughters have married out of Araki while only about 15% remained married on Araki Island. These 85% of Araki daughters have moved out of Araki to their husbands' places or islands.

The survey of married women showed that only 26% or a quarter are originally from Araki but the majority, around 74% or three quarters, are women from other islands, who have married into Araki.

A survey of children coming from Araki parents in comparison with children from mixed marriage, spanning three generations showed that only 34% of children are from dual Araki parentage while 65% are from mixed marriages.

The survey also showed that women from the older generation who are married to an Araki speak Araki language fluently. On the contrary, women who have married into the current second and third generation either speak Bislama or possibly Tangoa.

These results prove that interisland marriages or mixed marriages are a big contributing factor to the decrease of Araki language and the increase of Tangoa and Bislama, particularly within the second and third generations. At

**Table 7** A breakdown showing the women from other islands, in terms of their islands of origin, spanning three generations

<i>Family</i>	<i>Tangoa</i>	<i>Mainland Santo</i>	<i>Other islands in Vanuatu</i>	<i>Region outside Vanuatu</i>
Vijinavari	1	4	4	
Love Lui	1	1	2	
Vari Livo		1	3	1
Vatu	3	1	1	
Lelemoli		2	3	
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>

the village level, women are the ones who spend most of their time at home with the children, bringing them up. They, therefore, are the ones who communicate a lot with the children. So if these women do not know Araki language, they will either speak Tangoa, Bislama or even their own vernacular. Consequently, the children will grow up speaking that particular language as their first language.

Although the population census between 1989 and 1999 showed an increase of nine people, this did not reflect reality as a lot of migration of the people of Araki takes place in relation to girls marrying out, education, employment and agricultural purposes.

Education is one big factor that keeps the children away from their homes, their language and culture, and exposes them to other languages. The first two years of kindergarten and the next four years of junior primary are spent at Araki. The last two years of primary education are usually spent away from home at a boarding school on the mainland where they are exposed to other languages such as Tangoa, Bislama and English. Some children continue on to high school and because of lack of finance, hardly come home for holidays. This means that children going to high school could be kept away from home, away from their language and culture, for as long as ten months to one year before coming home for the big Christmas vacation. Most schools encourage students to use English and French at the expense of vernacular for the sake of doing well in schools.

Life in Araki is quite difficult and so young and middle-aged men sometimes migrate to town to search for employment so that they can earn some money to buy what they need or want or to pay for school fees. Others move their families temporarily to their wives' islands such as mainland Santo, Malakula, Efate, Pentecost, etc., where there is more chance of improving their lives and finding ways to make a living or earn money to pay for school fees. In this instance, they are again exposed to different languages, especially Bislama.

People from Araki also have relatives and own land on the mainland. From time to time, they migrate for short periods to the mainland to visit their relatives, do their gardening and plant or harvest their cocoa or copra. In doing so, they are exposed to other languages and the main language used by families on the mainland is Tangoa.

As noted, the Araki community is made up of five extended families, each of which is made up of people spanning three to four generations. The small size of the community and the continual contact through education, church and other socioeconomic activities with other nearby islands like Malo and Tangoa and other surrounding villages on the mainland, as well as the urban area of Luganville, contributes to accelerating the change from Araki language to others like the language of Tangoa and the use of Bislama. Furthermore, the elders of the community have welcomed and continue to freely embrace these changes into the society, without much restriction. The implications are that changes within such a small community take place at a fast rate, resulting in the change in language. However, Crowley (1995), in his study on the future of the Melanesian languages, mentioned that although some Melanesian

languages are threatened, there are others which although may be small, are thriving well and healthy.

## Attitudes to Change

The members of the community have various attitudes to the change that is currently taking place in Araki language. The older and fluent speakers of Araki, who are few, are more conservative and would like to see the Araki language maintained and this is obvious in their continual usage of Araki in almost all contexts or in reprimanding those who respond in Tangoa. They speak Araki with pride and see it as a very important aspect of their identity and do not want to see it die out. A statement by an older fluent speaker of Araki seems to put the blame on the young people for not putting any effort into using the language as the older people often use the Araki language.

I don't know what it is with the young people today. We speak to them in Araki, but although they understand, they don't speak it. I speak almost every day in Araki, but the young people speak to me in Tangoa. They don't even make any effort to speak the language. . .

Although these older and more fluent speakers are concerned about the current status of the language, practically, they have not made much effort towards the revival and maintenance of the language, and are blaming the younger generation for this failure. Furthermore, these older people have also contributed to the changes in the language by embracing the changes that are taking place in the island as a result of socioeconomic and cultural influences. The changes in diet, the construction of many modern houses, modern means of transport and communication, small retail stores and an establishment of an aid post, education, and their devotion and dedication to the church-related activities, all serve as a testimony to this change in the culture of the society and consequently the changes in the language. While in the process of putting more effort into improving their life and social status, they unknowingly contribute to the decline of their language, something they treasure so much.

The scenario with the majority who are less fluent speakers and who have a more passive knowledge of the language is quite different. This group of people have a more *laissez-faire* attitude towards the dying status of the language, as they know that they still can get by with the usage of another language like Tangoa or Bislama.

From the interview of people on the attitude towards Araki language, a mixture of responses was recorded and could be summed up in the following statements.

A lady from another island married to Araki speaks to her child in her own vernacular. When I asked her what she thinks about the present state of the Araki language, she responded:

We (women who are married to the island) should not be blamed for this situation which existed before our arrival. My husband does not even speak the language. He speaks to me in Bislama, so how am I supposed to speak the language when my husband does not even speak it. The

older people themselves are not making any effort to revive the language... most of them are speaking Tangoa language. I don't think I am doing anything wrong in speaking my own language to my child...

Another man's response illustrate their knowledge of what is happening, but shows lack of will to do anything constructive:

Most of us understand when spoken to, but reply in Tangoa. Those who are older than us speak the language fluently, but we don't. Even those of us who teach kindergarten (Pre-school) use Bislama and Tangoa. Maybe if we decide and are willing to teach the younger ones, and have some activities in place to support the use of the language then maybe something positive might happen. So far, nobody is doing anything about it.

The interviews on attitudes show that although an awareness of what is happening to the Araki language exists, on the same token, there is lack of willingness to do anything constructive to revive the language.

Lack of cooperation and collective effort is obvious from the fact that different groups of people are blaming each other for the failure. This study exposes a situation whereby almost all groups are aware of what is happening to their language without making any collective effort to analyse the cause(s) and come up with some practical solutions to combat the problem. Such an attitude contributes to the acceleration of language change in the community.

## Conclusion and Recommendation

Statistical evidence portrays Araki as a threatened and declining language, while Tangoa is depicted as the killer language due to its status as the *lingua franca* of the area and its high currency in all sociolinguistic contexts.

Forces that have adverse effects on Araki language are both internal and external as well as social and linguistic. Negative mental attitude and lack of intergenerational transmission of Araki at home are examples of internal forces with adverse effects. Socioeconomic interactions and interisland marriages as well as the church and missionary influence of Tangoa as the *lingua franca* of the area are examples of external contributing factors towards the decline of Araki.

If people are serious about reviving or maintaining the Araki language, then reference needs to be made to other models of revival to decide on what is best for the Araki context. With the present situation, the opportunity is there for its revival. Neettle and Romaine (2000: 179) argued that the preservation of a language in its fullest sense ultimately entails not only the maintenance of the people who speak it but also the preservation of its culture and habitats because all these make up the linguistic ecosystem. Such a small linguistic community like Araki that has opened up to change thorough socioeconomic interactions is likely to have a vulnerable linguistic ecosystem.

As a revival strategy, both top-down and bottom-up strategies need to be considered and applied simultaneously. The application of top-down strategies without bottom-up support will be counterproductive. Top-down

strategies would involve language policies on local, regional and national level. On the national level, the government of Vanuatu has shown commitment to the preservation and revitalisation of vernacular languages through its vernacular education policy. Examples of various models of bottom-up strategies can be drawn from other linguistic communities in Vanuatu as well as in other parts of the world. Promoting vernacular through education and literacy has shown some increase in proficiency (both passive and active) such as Maori-medium pre-schools, *KoŪhanga Reo* 'which was responsible for a 22% increase in 1966 and Irish with an increase from 32.5% to 41.1% of people who claimed proficiency in Irish'. An outside evaluation of the Hawaiian immersion pre-schools '*PuŪnana Leo*', based on the *KoŪhanga Reo* model, in 1988 also proved successful (ibid.) However, learning language in an artificial environment such as schools needs to go hand in hand with continual support from the natural environment such as the intergenerational transmission in the homes and community, if any positive outcome is to be expected. Experience of some 70 years of state intervention in Irish learning shows that although they have achieved most of what can be expected from formal language education, they have not led to its usage in everyday situations. They have failed to activate their knowledge in their natural environment, a vital step that is necessary for intergenerational transmission to eventuate. This link with the community is also echoed in Fishman's (1991) Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), which comprises eight steps through which reversal of language shift could be attained. The sixth step in the GIDS is considered watershed for all languages because it encourages the intergenerational and demographically concentrated home-family-community as the basis of mother tongue transmission. Hence the lesson learnt here is that the home front and community support are crucial if active language proficiency is to be maintained.

If the Araki community is serious about maintaining and promoting Araki, then it needs to target not only the children who are the future custodians of this language, but also the adults through the promotion of language in the domain of education, literacy and other culturally and linguistically supportive activities within the community at large as well as through adult literacy. Social changes will continue to take place as Araki is now a part of a wider national community. However, collective community effort is needed if any positive change is to eventuate. The national language policy framework is already in place. Three important lessons can be learnt from the Maori and Irish experiences as well as from Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS). Firstly, Araki-medium pre-schools will need to be established so that the language can be promoted through literacy and education. Unfortunately, so far, only Tangoa and Bislama are mediums of instruction at pre-schools (see Table 4). Secondly, intergenerational transmission of the mother tongue needs to be encouraged at home and within the community as a sustainable means to maintaining the language. Thirdly, promoting the language through education and literacy needs home and community supports to ensure that active proficiency in the language is attained. Within this framework, education needs to go hand in hand with

home and community support to enable the survival and sustainability of the language.

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### Correspondence

Any correspondence should be directed to Hannah Vari-Bogiri, Pacific Languages Unit, University of the South Pacific, Emalus Campus, Port Vila, Vanuatu.

### Notes

1. My father, a fluent speaker of Araki, who helped me carry out the research in 1998, a year before he passed away.
2. A French Linguist of LACITO-CNRS, Paris, who did a grammatical study of Araki and established the first Araki orthography.
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4. Jim Henderson, SIL.
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6. Dr. Robert Early, Senior Lecturer at the Pacific Languages Unit of the University of the South Pacific.

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