



Samoan children's speech development



SAMOAN

Multilingual Children's Speech Development

Presented by: Elaine Ballard, Ph.D. and Ina Fautua

Samoaan Authors

- **Elaine BALLARD**, University of Auckland, New Zealand
e.ballard@auckland.ac.nz
- **Ina Fautua**, Ministry of Education, New Zealand
Ina.Fautua@education.govt.nz



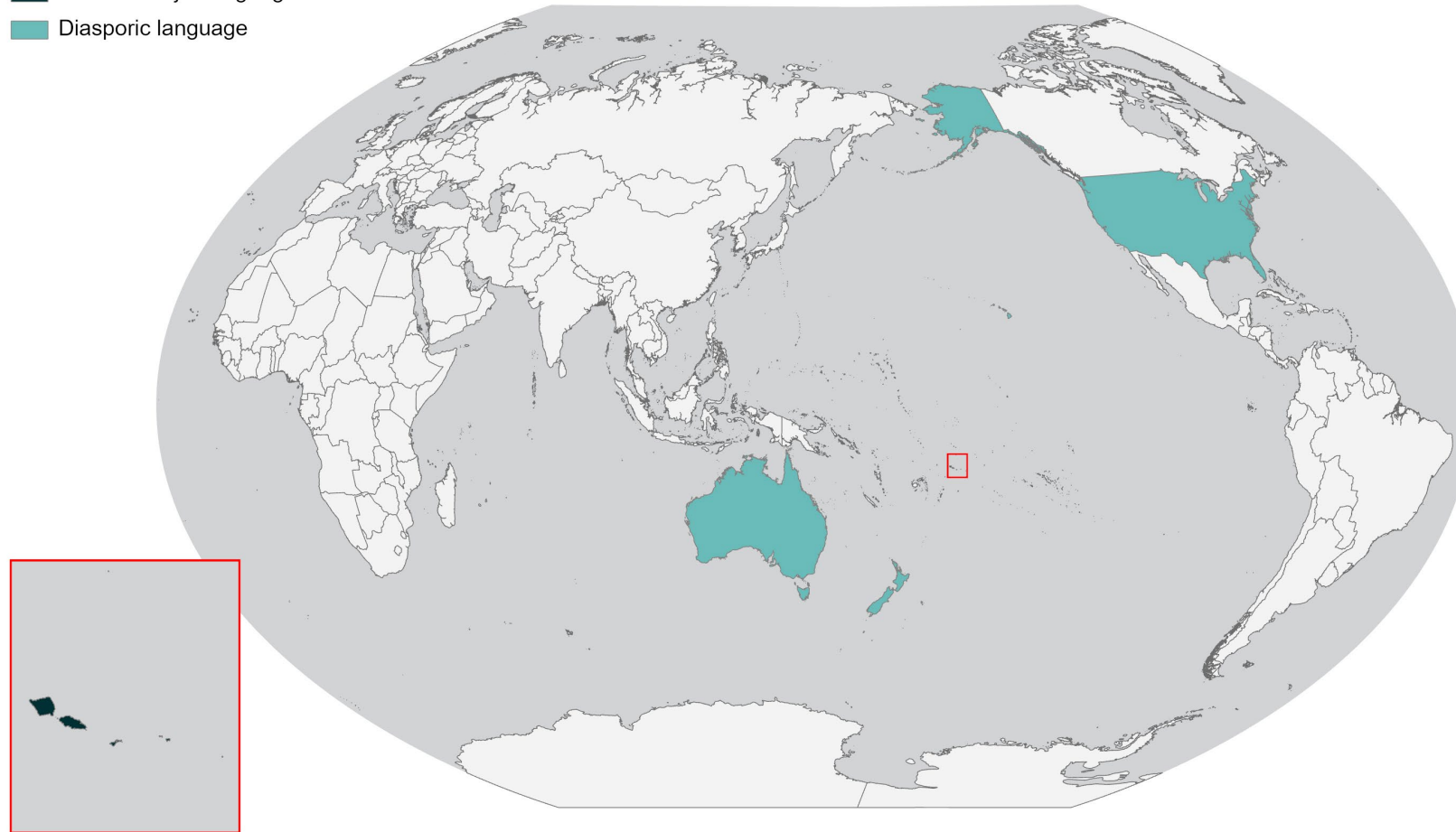
Source: Ballard, E., & Fautua, I. (forthcoming). Samoan speech development. In S. McLeod (Ed.). *The Oxford handbook of speech development in languages of the world*. Oxford University Press.

Samoa

- **Commonly spoken in**
 - Samoa
 - American Samoan
 - Diasporic communities in New Zealand, Australia and the United States
- **Dialects and variants**
 - No information on regional variation
 - Two stylistic registers
- **Writing**
 - Left to right. Latin alphabet (Roman script).
 - The macron is used over vowels to indicate vowel length
 - Example: fōno /fo:no/ 'call out to someone at a distance'

Samoa Map

- Official / major language
- Diasporic language



The authors acknowledge assistance provided by the Spatial Data Analysis Network (SPAN) at Charles Sturt University, and in particular Craig Poynter, for his work creating this map. Figures/maps/imagery created using ESRI ArcGIS Pro 3.1 software and data contained within ESRI's Living Atlas.

Samoan Speech Components

- **Consonants (13):** /p, t, k, ʔ, f, v, s, h, m, n, ŋ, l, r/
- **Consonant clusters (0):** None
- **Vowels (5):**
 - short vowels /i, e, a, u, o/
 - long vowels (sequences of 2 identical short vowels)
 - diphthongs (sequences of two unlike short vowels)
- **Tones (0):** None
- **Phonotactic restrictions:** $C_{(0-1)}V_{(1)}$
- **Prosody:** Word stress based on vowel quantity (long vowel or vowel cluster). Little is known about phrasal stress apart from the last phrase of an utterance being stressed.

Samoan

Age of Acquisition

- **Consonants**

- Four-year-olds can articulate all consonants in the inventory

- **Consonant clusters**

- Not applicable

- **Vowels**

- Vowels are mastered by 4-year-olds
- Long vowels of Samoan speaking children growing up in an English language environment, although longer than short vowels, are not as long as those spoken by adult native speakers

- **Tones**

- Not applicable

Samoan Speech Development

- **Percentage correct**
 - Scant research on Samoan-English children shows over 90% accuracy with consonants /p, f, v, s, m, l/ and over 80% with /k, ŋ, ŋ/, but difficulty producing /t, n, r /
- **Intelligibility**
 - No studies exist
- **Common phonological patterns**
 - Word initial glottal stop deletion, insufficient length in long vowels, vowel deletion with concomitant lengthening of the remaining vowel in vowel clusters

Samoan Children with Speech Sound Disorders

- **Also called**
 - Not applicable
- **Research has focused on**
 - Not applicable
- **Studies (examples)**
 - To date there are no studies of Samoan-speaking children with speech sound disorders

Samoan Speech Assessments

- Samoan Word List
Ballard, E. & Farao, S. (2008). The phonological skills of Samoan speaking 4-year-olds. *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 10(6), 379-391.

Samoan Speech Interventions

- There are no available studies that have evaluated specific intervention techniques for the speech of children speaking Samoan. However, a family-based approach is recommended for working with Samoan children. It is crucial to build relationships and seek input from families regarding their cultural and community practices, if the SLP wants to improve responsiveness and ensure that any follow up sessions are successful.
- A culturally appropriate form of intervention for Samoan-English bilingual children is currently being developed. This intervention blends Pacific cultural wisdom *Talanoa* ‘talk or communicate freely’ with the Māori informed Braided Rivers approach.

Reference

Book chapter

- Ballard, E., & Fautua, I. (2025). Samoan speech development. In S. McLeod (Ed.). *The Oxford handbook of speech development in languages of the world*. Oxford University Press.

Presentation

- Ballard, E., & Fautua, I. (2023). *Samoan: Multilingual children's speech development*. Charles Sturt University, Australia.

<https://www.csu.edu.au/research/multilingual-speech/languages>

- Sharynne McLeod, Charles Sturt University, Australia
- Helen L. Blake, University of Technology Sydney, Australia