

Pasifika language weeks - Why should we celebrate them?

Home / 2017 / October / Pasifika Education / Pasifika Language Weeks – Why should we celebrate them?

The last New Zealand Census conducted in 2013 recorded the following information for the most common languages spoken by multilingual people. There are distinct regional differences and the rise of European and Asian languages. Despite more French-speaking people in Wellington and Christchurch, Hindi has replaced French as the 4th most spoken language.

Most common languages spoken ⁽¹⁾ by multilingual people								
For Auckland, Wellington, and Canterbury regions, and New Zealand								
2013 Census								
Rank	Auckland region		Wellington region		Canterbury region		New Zealand	
	Language spoken	Number	Language spoken	Number	Language spoken	Number	Language spoken	Number
1	English	372,615	English	86,757	English	59,310	English	730,743
2	Samoan	51,336	Māori	15,000	Māori	8,277	Māori	139,959
3	Hindi	47,157	Samoan	13,380	French	6,117	Samoan	76,953
4	Northern Chinese ⁽²⁾	32,649	French	8,886	German	4,731	Hindi	63,342
5	Māori	29,253	German	5,928	Samoan	4,059	French	48,777
6	Yue ⁽³⁾	25,044	Hindi	5,067	Northern Chinese	3,714	Northern Chinese	44,967
7	Tongan	23,088	Yue	4,137	Dutch	3,477	Yue	36,516

1. Includes all people who stated each language spoken, whether as their only language or as one of several languages. Where a person reported more than one language spoken, they were counted in each applicable group.
2. Includes Mandarin.
3. Includes Cantonese.
Source: Statistics New Zealand

Almost all multilingual people (99.0 percent) spoke English, and almost 1 in 5 (19.0 percent or 139,959 people) spoke te reo Māori.

Source: Statistics New Zealand.

The most commonly spoken languages in New Zealand are:

- English – spoken by 3,819,972 people (96.1 percent of people who stated at least one language)
- te reo Māori – 148,395 people (3.7 percent)
- Samoan – 86,403 people (2.2 percent)
- Hindi – 66,309 people (1.7 percent)
- Northern Chinese (including Mandarin) – 52,263 people (1.3 percent)

- French – 49,125 people (1.2 percent).

Every year the Ministry of Pacific Peoples launches various language weeks from the Pacific. The reason for this may not be clear in terms of the origins of these weeks. You would be correct in guessing that the language weeks celebrate the different indigenous or heritage languages of those Pacific nations who have made their home in Aotearoa New Zealand. But, probably what is not commonly known, is that the purpose of these language weeks has a wider vision that includes the Pacific Languages Framework.

The Ministry of Pacific Peoples has a vision that the Pacific Languages Framework is a commitment to ensuring that Pacific languages are flourishing. This vision will be realised by evidence of more people using Pacific language with skill and fluency in everyday situations, particularly children and young people. Those Pacific languages now at risk will be revitalised, and their future assured. Pacific people's sense of personal and cultural belonging in New Zealand will be enhanced by the support given to Pacific languages. New Zealanders will appreciate and value Pacific languages as a source of pride in New Zealand's rich cultural diversity. The government and Pacific communities will be working in partnership to maintain and promote Pacific languages.

Samoa, Cook Islands, and Tonga have celebrated their Pacific languages in May, July, and September this year. And just this month, October, the following have celebrated their languages:

Tuvalu – Sunday 1st October – Saturday 7th October

Fiji – Sunday 8th October – Saturday 14th October

Niue – Sunday 15th October – Saturday 21st October

Tokelau – Monday 23rd October – Sunday 29th October

Did you celebrate any of these weeks?

Challenge:

How can we ensure that our Pacific Languages will continue to be spoken, to keep them alive in our communities?

If you are interested in learning multiple languages, why not make one of them a Pacific language?

To celebrate the Pacific Language Weeks in your centre, school, or organisation in future, or to carry the point of these "Weeks" further, seek further information from:

1. [NZ Online](#)
2. [Coconet TV](#)
3. Your local library
4. Your local city council
5. [Pacific Education Centre](#)

The Pacific Language Weeks are a great way to start recognising, valuing, and celebrating Pacific nations in Aotearoa, but you might be asking yourself, how can I offer some meaningful and practical support that will enhance the work we are doing in our team, in our school, and in our communities? How can we offer support beyond the Pacific Language Weeks? This would involve being able to help people who have yet to develop a disposition for working with people of other cultures, different to their own. This process is called developing your “cultural intelligence”.

I have blogged about this concept in a previous blog post about [Multiculturalism](#). If you would like to attend a CORE Breakfast seminar and workshop, there is the final one for the year in Auckland on Friday 10 November. Be sure to [register](#) as places are limited!



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Aiono Manu Faaea-Semeatu is a practicing ethnomusicologist and educator. She has been a secondary school teacher in Music, Social Studies, and English. As a member of Komiti Pasifika with PPTA, Manu has been involved in creating submissions and providing consultation feedback for various policy documents such as the Pasifika Education Plan for the Ministry of Education, the Pacific Languages Framework for the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs and the Pasifika Strategy for the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. She has also provided Pasifika perspectives for the Senior Learning and Teaching guides, in the curriculum areas of Science, Accounting, and Economics with Learning Media.