

# Phonological and cultural innovations in the speech of Samoans in Southern California

**Alessandro Duranti & Jennifer F. Reynolds**

*University of California at Los Angeles*

Department of Anthropology  
UCLA (University California at Los Angeles)  
3207 Hershey Hall, Box 951553  
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1553, USA  
aduranti@ucla.edu

## **Abstract**

Bilingualism is a concept that critically relies on and interacts with a variety of other theoretical constructs, including the notions of “language”, “speakers”, and “community”. Subjecting these key notions to new empirical and theoretical challenges, this study struggles to invent a new language able to describe what we are learning to see without the faulty presuppositions of earlier labels. This is particularly difficult in the study of what is probably the most emblematic phenomenon of bilingualism, namely, code-switching. Starting from these considerations, this paper examines audio-visual recordings of spontaneous interactions collected during a three year project in a Samoan community in Southern California, with the goal of applying an anthropological approach to code-switching. The paper concentrates on three phenomena: (i) the routine adoption of kinship terms like *Dad* and *Mom* in Samoan discourse; (ii) the “island-like” status of certain proper names which are not adapted to the Samoan phonological register called “bad speech” spoken at home; (iii) the code-switching to Samoan words that do have an English equivalent and are associated with church activities. It’s argued that all three phenomena are indexes of social change, albeit in different ways and for different reasons. The variation found in this corpus suggests that linguistic phenomena like code-switching should be considered as indexical of degrees of cultural assimilation and different types of positioning vis-à-vis “tradition”.

**Key words:** code-switching, anthropological approach, indexes of social change, kinship terms, proper names.

## **Resumo**

O de bilingüismo é un concepto que se apoia nunha diversidade de constructos teóricos, incluídas as nocións de “lingua”, “falantes” e “comunidade”, interactuando con eles. Sometendo estas nocións clave a novos retos empíricos e teóricos, esforzámonos por inventar unha nova linguaxe capaz de describir o que estamos aprendendo a ver sen as presuposicións erróneas das etiquetas precedentes. Isto é particularmente difícil no estudio do que probablemente é o máis emblemático dos fenómenos do bilingüismo, isto é, a alternancia de códigos. Partindo destas consideracións, neste artigo examínanse gravacións audio-visuais de interaccións espontáneas recollidas durante un proxecto de tres anos nunha comunidade samoana no sur de California, co obxectivo de aplicar unha achega antropolóxica á alternancia de códigos. Este traballo céntrase en tres fenómenos: (i) a adopción rutineira de termos de parentesco como *Dad* e *Mom* no discurso samoano; (ii) o status de “propio da illa” de certos nomes propios que non están adaptados ó rexistro fonolóxico samoano chamado “*bad speech*” falado na casa; (iii) a alternancia a palabras samoanas que teñen un equivalente en inglés e que están asociadas con actividades da igrexa. Arguméntase que estes tres fenómenos son indicadores de cambio social, aínda que de xeitos diferentes e por diferentes motivos. A variación atopada no corpus utilizado suxire que

fenómenos lingüísticos como a alternancia de códigos deberían ser considerados como indexicalizadores dos graos de asimilación cultural e dos diferentes tipos de posturas fronte á “tradición”.

**Palabras clave:** alternancia de códigos, perspectiva antropolóxica, indicadores de cambio social, termos de parentesco, nomes propios.

### 1. Introduction

In this article we identify a set of phonological innovations in the speech of Samoans living in Southern California and propose an analysis of the cultural implications of such innovations. Starting from an ethnographic understanding of the speech community, we look at bilingual conversation as a cultural practice. By ‘cultural practice’ we mean an activity that establishes a meaningful connection between the here-and-now and one or more traditions (Bauman, 1992). Such a connection may be at times explicit, like when immigrant speakers quote ways of speaking that are recognizable as uniquely belonging to their “home country”, or implicit, like when the logic of linguistic choice or linguistic structure suddenly changes without an immediately apparent reason. We are assuming that in both cases connections are being made, whether or not we can speak of communicative intent.

Like in any other kind of ethnographically oriented study of language, in this case as well speakers are not simply seen as producers of utterances to be collected and analyzed but also as social actors, that is, members of communities organized in a variety of social institutions and tied through a set of cultural expectations, beliefs, and moral values about the world (their own actions included) (Duranti, 1997a: 3). In this perspective, language use becomes part of a larger set of practices.

We believe that in studying an immigrant community, one must take into consideration not only the culture of its members, but also the culture of what they consider their “home” country. In our case, this country is the Samoan archipelago. Despite some important differences between Samoa (formerly Western Samoa, an independent country since 1962) and American Samoa (an American territory), the following cultural traits are common among the islands communities globally called “Samoa”: (i) the extended family (*‘āiga*), with its rights and obligations; (ii) a hierarchical notion of social relations at all levels of social organization, from the family to the village and beyond, as represented by the *matai* system –matai are title holders who act as family heads and family representatives in the village council (*fono*) and other local institutions (Duranti, 1994; Ochs, 1988; Platt, 1986; Shore, 1982); (iii) a collectivistic view of basic activities and responsibilities with a sharp division of labor according to rank (for titled individuals), age, gender, and skills; (iv) a contextually defined notion of person, which includes an anti-individualistic perspective on social responsibility and interpretive practices and a favoring of positional over private identities in more spheres than in western societies (Duranti, 1993; Shore, 1982).

After introducing the Samoan community where we carried out our fieldwork and its linguistic repertoire, we will provide some basic information on the type of code-switching phenomena we recorded. We will then focus on two phenomena that we analyze as phonological and cultural innovations: (i) the adoption of kinship terms and proper names that violate Samoan phonotactics (i.e. syllable structure and phonological inventory) and (ii) the violation of the cooccurrence rules characteristic of a particular phonological register (“bad speech”) for Samoan proper names of members of the younger generation. In both cases, we will speculate on the cultural implications of these linguistic phenomena, drawing on our ethnographic experience.

## **2. Samoans in Southern California**

After World War II, thousands of Samoans left their villages in American Samoa (US territory) and (Western) Samoa (independent since 1962) to migrate to New Zealand, Australia, and the US (Shankman, 1993). Within the United States, Hawaii and California house the largest Samoan communities. Members of Samoan American communities involved in social services estimate that currently more than 90,000 ethnic Samoans live in California; most of them born and raised here (Pouesi, 1994) (official census estimates are roughly one third lower).

The data presented in this paper are drawn from a corpus of over fifty hours of video taped interactions among children and adults in four Samoan families living in the same neighborhood and attending the same Samoan church in Southern California. The recordings are part of a three year study (January 1993-December 1995) sponsored by the US Department of Education to examine socialization to problem-solving strategies among families of Samoan descent (Duranti and Ochs, 1997). We video recorded each family four times for several hours after the children had returned from school. During our visits, we were able to observe and videotape the children as they were involved in a number of activities, including playing, eating, doing homework, taking care of their younger siblings, interacting with their parents and grandparents, and watching TV (Duranti, 1997b). We also recorded the same children during Sunday school classes and other activities at the local Samoan church (Duranti, Ochs and Ta'ase, 1995).

A common feature of the families in the study is the continuation in the urban environment of the traditional Polynesian extended family structure: in three of the four families three generations lived under the same roof and there was an understanding that it is common and socially acceptable for relatives or even close friends to come and live with the family for an indefinite period of time. The extended family structure is also sustained by a continuous flow of relatives coming to visit or work for varying lengths of time from Western Samoa, American Samoa or other Samoan communities in the US.

Social ties between each family and the larger Samoan community (in the US and abroad) are mostly organized by the local church which hosts recurrent collective activities (choir practice, sport events, Bingo) as well as elaborate fund raising events and exchange visits with youth organizations from other congregations in the US and in the Samoan archipelago. This means that children are continually exposed not only to Samoan cultural practices but also to the Samoan language both within and outside of the home.

## **3. Linguistic repertoire**

For Samoans living in the US, bilingualism itself is not a new practice. In both Samoa and American Samoa there are many adults who can speak English quite fluently due to a variety of factors including the use of English in the schools (secondary education is done in English) and in the media, and to the not uncommon experience of having gone to work in an English-speaking country (New Zealand, Australia, the US) to augment family income. What changes in the US is the contexts in which English is used and the range of fluent speakers. On the islands, English is largely restricted to institutional settings like schools and certain work places. Samoan is the preferred code of most (and for many people all) interactions. In the US, English enters more intimate settings especially through the US-born second generation, whose members are English-dominant.

In the four families we studied, both Samoan and English were spoken in the home, but whereas members of the older generations (grandparents, parents) were more likely to speak Samoan, the children preferred English. This difference was accompanied by considerable language loss from generation 1 (parents or grandparents) to generation 2 (the children in our study). Members of generation 1.5 (young adults who came to the US as teenagers) were among the most balanced bilinguals. We found that even a few years apart within the same generation make a difference. It is not unusual that within the same family the oldest teenagers and the people in their twenties are often able to speak Samoan rather fluently, whereas the younger children are more likely to have a restricted linguistic repertoire which allows them to understand a number of Samoan recurrent commands and frequently used words but does not allow them to express themselves in a continuous flow of Samoan discourse. This intragenerational difference might be interpreted in a variety of ways. As the number of siblings increases, there is more English spoken in the house and in this sense the younger ones are at a disadvantage in terms of exposure to Samoan. On the other hand, it is also possible that children improve their competence in Samoan as they get older. This might be due to the fact that as they grow, they end up spending more time with older and more fluent Samoan speakers, including adult visitors from the Samoan islands. Furthermore, if they stay within the Samoan community and participate in its religious and cultural activities, there is more pressure on them to know Samoan. We met several people who told us that they (re)learned Samoan as adults, sometimes by going to spend some time in either American Samoa or Western Samoa.

The older fluent speakers of Samoan (generation 1) see the loss of the language by the younger generation as a negative consequence of the migration process. They see themselves and their families as “Samoan” –we never heard anyone refer to themselves as “Samoan American”– and language is seen as an important part of the Samoan cultural heritage, especially given the many public occasions in which Samoan adults are expected to deliver or respond to formal speeches (Duranti, 1981; 1994). The Church provides a context in which, among other values, knowledge of Samoan is encouraged and rewarded, although the strategies adopted in the religious classes are not always the most effective in terms of second-language teaching (see Duranti, Ochs & Ta’ase, 1995). In the church attended by the families in our study, most of the Sunday service is in Samoan, including the hymns and the sermon. On Sunday, the children usually arrive an hour before the service and participate in Sunday School activities. Most of them do not stay for the service. Sunday School teachers speak in English to the children but dedicate a few minutes to Samoan literacy. They might ask the younger children to recite the Samoan alphabet and the older ones to read from the Samoan Bible or explain the meaning of a few Samoan words. Children of all ages are often asked to memorize a few words or verses from the Samoan Bible. These verses often contain words that are too difficult for the children to fully understand or feel comfortable using in other contexts.

We have observed that most of the time children are free to choose the code they speak. For example, when talked to in Samoan by an adult or a sibling, a child can reply in English without fearing negative sanctions. However, there are a few speech activities in which they might be expected to speak in Samoan. These activities include prayers (in the home and in the church) and public performances in the church. For example, during a Christian festivity called “White Sunday” (*Aso Sâ Pa`epa`e*) –an “inversion ritual” in which the adults are expected to honor and even serve the children– the youngest children of each family are expected to memorize and recite verses from the Samoan Bible in front of the entire congregation. These events often cause apprehension and frustration before and during

the performance, given the potential for embarrassment if the child is unable to remember the verses or mispronounces some words. More generally, whereas young children spontaneously use Samoan with their older relatives (see below), they are manifestly resentful of being forced to do it. When one of the children in our study was asked by her grandmother to use Samoan to greet on camera one of the researchers who was not present, she first refused and then, when pressured, bursted out crying. In our experience, Samoan adults accept limited knowledge of Samoan in everyday interaction but display little tolerance for it during certain public, dramatic performances.

As shown for other immigrant communities in the US (see Zentella, 1997 for Puerto Ricans in New York), Samoans in Los Angeles also alternate –sometimes within the same interaction– among a number of speech varieties in English and in Samoan. English varieties include Standard English (the variety spoken for example by Samoan teachers and community workers in their professional settings), Samoan English (a variety of English with Samoan morpho-phonological features, spoken by most first generation speakers and common in the homes), Non-Standard English, which includes features of African American English (especially for second generation speakers), and two phonological varieties of Samoan: “good speech” (*tautala lelei*) and “bad speech” (*tautala leaga*). Since the alternation between these two varieties will be relevant to our discussion of borrowing practices in Southern California, a brief description of the distinction is here provided.

#### 4. “Good speech” and “bad speech”

From a phonological point of view, the distinction between “good speech” and “bad speech” can be described as the alternation between the dental-alveolar non-stridents /t/ and /n/ (in “good speech”) and their velar counterparts /k/ and /ŋ/ (written ‘g’) (in “bad speech”). In terms of features, this alternation can be defined as the neutralization of the opposition between [+ back] and [-back] (or between Coronal and Dorsal) segments. This neutralization of the opposition results in only a few homonyms (see Figure 1 for some examples).

“good speech”		“bad speech”
ana ‘cave’	}	aga ([aŋa]) ‘cave’ or ‘conduct, spirit’
aga ([aŋa]) ‘conduct, spirit’		
toto ‘blood’	}	koko ‘blood’ or ‘cocoa’
koko ‘cocoa’ (from English)		

Figure 1. Examples of ‘good speech’ and ‘bad speech’ pronunciation

The labels “good speech” and “bad speech” are local categories, that is, they are used by Samoans to refer to what are perceived as two distinct ways of speaking, each of which is practiced in and associated with distinct activities (although a considerable amount of shifting occurs within one continuous interaction). “Good speech” is modeled on written Samoan and is strongly associated with literacy activity and Christianity. For example, Samoans always pray in “good speech”. Teachers also speak in “good speech” during a lesson and expect their students to do the same. “Bad speech” is for most speakers the default variety and is used in the majority of daily interactions, including such traditional activities

as speechmaking (Duranti, 1981, 1994). In this sense, the labels are misleading to outsiders because despite their literal translation, they do not easily translate into the classic diglossic situation of a “high” (or formal) and a “low” (or “informal”) variety. The identification of “bad speech” with “colloquial speech” (e.g. Milner, 1966) is hence unfortunate because both “good speech” and “bad speech” exhibit colloquial varieties where we find such features as assimilation, syllable reduction, idiomatic expressions, and tense/aspect markers which are not recorded in dictionaries and grammars (see Ochs, 1985).

An ethnographic understanding of this dichotomy suggests that it is one manifestation of a complex relationship Samoans entertain with imported Christian practices, which are “good” by definition, as opposed to traditional ways of being, which may be “bad” from a Christian point of view and yet necessary or perhaps unavoidable from the point of view of (traditional?) Samoan ethos.

In the US, children of Samoan heritage are exposed to “good speech” much less than Samoan children on the islands given that in two of the most important contexts for socialization to “good speech,” namely, the school and the media (radio in particular), the language used is English. Even in the Samoan church activities we observed, English is favored when speaking to children and hence the amount of “good speech” they hear in church is reduced. It is not surprisingly then that the variety routinely used when code-switching from English to Samoan is “bad speech”. As we will see, the only consistent violation of this trend is constituted by proper names.

### 5. Samoan and English morphosyntax in contact

As shown in (1)-(4), differently from English which is predominantly Subject-initial, Samoan is predominantly Verb-initial. Furthermore, as shown in (3), case marking is also different. In Samoan, when the subject of transitive clauses (Agent NP) appears after the verb, it is marked by the marker *e* (*e kagata* in [3] and *e le ali'i* in [4]). It is this feature that makes Samoan an ergative language (see Duranti, 1994)<sup>1</sup>.

- |     |  |                       |
|-----|--|-----------------------|
| (1) | <u>`o lea `ua ômai mâlô</u><br>Pred this Perf come(PI) guests<br>'now the guests have come'  | Verb + Subject        |
| (2) | <u>kigâ lo`u lima</u><br>hurt my hand<br>'my hand hurt(s)'   | Verb + Subject        |
| (3) | <u>`â iloa e kagaka le `au o le kîpoki lea</u><br>if notice Erg people Art handle of Art teapot this<br>'if people notice the handle of this teapot' | Verb + Agent + Object |

<sup>1</sup> All the Samoan examples in this section and in Table I later in the article are taken from the same transcript of a video tape of a family dinner recorded by A. Duranti and E. Ochs in (then ‘Western’) Samoa in the summer of 1988.

- (4) gâ la`a fa`aali kou elegi e le ali`i<sup>2</sup>                      Verb + Object + Agent  
 DX Fut show your herring Erg Art man  
 “the (gentle)man is going to show your herrings”

Verbal morphology also differs in the two languages. Whereas in English verbs inflect adding suffixes –for example, in the third person singular form of the present tense (s) and in the past tense and past participle (-ed)–, in Samoan, instead, tense/aspect is encoded with separated particles that precede the verb –for example, ua in [1] and la`a in [4]– and person is not marked with inflection, but pre-verbal subject clitic pronouns are possible, as shown in (5) below.

- (5) ou ke sau gâ`i le fe`au  
 I Pres come there on Art errand  
 ‘I come (t)here on an errand’

Ellipsis (zero anaphora) in sentences with finite verbs is not possible in English but common in Samoan, especially with third person referents –see examples (8), (14), (16).

In Samoan, only number is marked on some verbs, usually by reduplication of the penultimate syllable: for example, the verb ai ‘eat’ (CV-V) becomes aai (CV-CV-V) in the plural (see Mosel and Hovdhaugen, 1992). In (1) above, the verb omai ‘come’ is the plural of sau (by suppletion from alu ‘go’ plus the deictic particle mai). The distinction between verbs and adjectives is difficult to make in Samoan and in general words from almost any class can become a verb, including temporal and local adverbs.

Differently from English, most Samoan nouns do not inflect for number, which is instead marked by the article (or its absence). For example, in (1) malô ‘guest’ is understood as plural due to the absence of the article (and the plural form of the verb omai instead of sau). The same is true for kagaka in (3). In Samoan, possessives (or genitives) are marked by a preposition (either o or a) as opposed to the English more common ’s suffix.

Finally, Samoan has a looser connection than English between lexical items and syntactic categories. Not only many words can function as both a noun or a verb (which is common in English as well), but words for numbers and temporal or spatial specification can easily become predicates with the addition of a tense/aspect marker.

As we shall see, when the grammars of English and Samoan come into contact, single word codeswitches and loanwords are typically assimilated to the morphosyntax of the recipient language. This is true of English words inserted in Samoan utterances and of Samoan words inserted in English utterances.

## 6. Phonology

At the phonemic level, Samoan has five distinct vowels: /i, e, a, o, u/ and thirteen consonants: /p, t, k, ʔ, m, n, ŋ, f, s, h, v, r, l/. In the variety called “good speech” (see above), the consonants /k/, /h/, and /r/ appear only in borrowings. As we mentioned earlier, in “bad

<sup>2</sup> The word ali`i is one of the most difficult words to translate in English. It can refer to a ‘chief’ (as opposed to an orator or talking chief) but it is also used for a commoner of any age. In this example, it conveys a certain degree of respect for the referent. However, bilingual speakers who worked on our project often translated ali`i with ‘guy,’ suggesting that there is also informality associated with its use. Finally, ali`i can be used as an address term followed by the name of the addressee or a kinship term, regardless of gender.

speech”, /t/ and /n/ are replaced by /k/ and /ŋ/ (written ‘g’ in Samoan orthography) respectively.

Differently from English which allows various kinds of consonant clusters (CCV, VCC), Samoan syllable structure must be (C)V, that is, with no more than one consonant preceding the vowel.

At the phonetic level, only two consonants seem to at times violate the CV rule: /s/ and /n/. For example, the English plenty becomes Samoan [pelenti], and English engineer is usually pronounced [ˈensinia] (or [ˈinsinia]) and not ˈenisinia (pace: Milner, 1966: 42), showing a consonant cluster NCV (nasal-consonant-vowel). Another common consonant cluster is the form [ska] from si+ka ‘positive affect marker (si) + first person singular affective pronoun (ka)’ (see Ochs, 1986).

English initial voiceless stops (/p/, /t/, /k/) are always pronounced aspirated when they are at the beginning of a syllable. Aspiration is found in Samoan but not in a consistent manner and it often seems due to emphasis.

The (C)V syllable structure constraint and the lack of certain English phonemes like the voiced stops /b/, /d/, and /g/ affect all the earlier (and established) borrowings in at least two ways. First, foreign words that have consonant clusters were adapted to Samoan syllable structure by either the introduction of extra vowels or by the deletion of some of the consonants of the borrowed term. For example, Australia became Ausitalia, with the introduction of the vowel /i/ to break the /st/ consonant cluster and the reduction of the /tr/ sequence to /t/. All the words that ended in consonants received a final vowel. For example, spoon became sipuni and teapot became tīpoti.

Second, phonemes that are not found in Samoan were transformed to conform with the Samoan phonological inventory. For example, voiced stops become voiceless: the English guitar became kitala and baby became pepe; vowels were also adapted to the Samoan system but in less predictable ways especially in nonstressed position. In the communities we observed in Samoa, loanwords also undergo phonological transformation in “bad speech”. Thus, Table I displays the phonological variation of a number of established lexical borrowings.

English word	Borrowing in ‘good speech’	Borrowing in ‘bad speech’
Australia	Ausitalia	Ausikalia
spoon	sipuni	sipugi [sipuŋi]
knife	naifi	gaifi [ŋaifi]
New Zealand	Niu Sila	Giu Sila [ŋiu sila]
radio	letiô	lekiô
sugar	suka	suka
cement	simâ	simâ
time	taimi	kaimi
tea	tî	kî
teapot	tīpoti	kīpoki

Table I. Examples of established English borrowings in Samoan ‘good speech’ and ‘bad speech’ pronunciation

The same kind of phonological variation affects foreign names. Thus, Duranti’s first name in Samoa was Alesana in “good speech” and Alesaga in “bad speech”; his wife’s name

Elinor was Elenoa in “good speech” and Elegoa in “bad speech.” Elinor’s son’s name, David, was Tāvita in “good speech” and Kāvika in “bad speech.”

As we shall see below, in the data collected in Southern California, most of the single word English code switches and new borrowings do not conform to these rules.

### 7. Types of code-switching

We found that code switching (CS) is common in conversational interactions among family members both intersententially –see examples (6)-(8)– and intrasententially –see examples (9)-(11):

• *Intersentential CS, across turns, different speakers* (known as “non-reciprocal CS” [Gal, 1979]):

(6) (Family #3; 5/31/93; Father is holding infant and talking to 12 yr old daughter Fa`a.)

Father; `o ai lâ ga faia le kou babakyu<sup>3</sup>? (SAMOAN)  
 “who made your barbeque?”

Fa`a; our team, (ENGLISH)

(7) (Family #1; 5/93; A. sees camera and asks G. about it)

A; `o le â lale mea lale ola? (SAMOAN)  
 “what is that thing that is on?”

G; where? (ENGLISH)

A; lale. (SAMOAN)  
 “that.” (or “there.”)

• *Intersentential CS, across turns, same speaker:*

(8) (Family # 1; older brother G. talks to 12 yr old T.)

G; are you gonna- do you wanna eat? (ENGLISH)  
 (pause)

G; fia`ai? (SAMOAN)  
 “(are you) hungry?” (lit. ‘want-eat’)

T; ((eyebrow flash<sup>4</sup>)) yeah yes! (ENGLISH)

• *Intrasentential CS:*

(9) (Family #1; Mother comments on a basketball player)

Mother; I don’t think `o le sefulu afe e lava  
 Pred Art ten thousand Pres enough  
 “I don’t think the ten thousand is enough [as a fine]”  
e kakau oga suspend kama gâ for a whole season.  
 Pres necessary Comp boy that  
 “(they) should suspend that boy for a whole season.”

(10) (Family # 2; 6/8/93; Grandmother (Gm) is counting points in a card game)

Gm; e seven Siké`ae nine a`u.  
 “(it) is” “but” “I/me”  
 “Sikê has seven (points) and/but I (have) nine.”

<sup>3</sup> We found both [babakyu] and [papakyu] in our data.

<sup>4</sup> On the use of the eye brow flash to convey agreement, see Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1974).

- (11) (Family #4; 10/28/94)  
 Gm; ma Atasau<sup>5</sup> go kâ`ele.  
 “and Atasau go (take a) shower.”

Since the older speakers tend to be Samoan-dominant and the younger ones English-dominant, the role of Samoan vs. English in establishing the syntactic frame for CS (what Myers-Scotton [1993] refers to as the “matrix language”) often changes from one turn to the next and only the speakers who are equally (or almost equally) fluent in Samoan and English –a subset of generation 1 and generation 1.5 speakers– engage in the complex intrasentential CS shown in (9)-(11) above<sup>6</sup>. The rest of the speakers tend to limit their CS to single lexemes (usually nouns or verbs). In our data, probably in part because we tended to follow around young children interacting with adults, most of the intrasentential CSs are single words (we will refer to them as “single-lexeme CSs”). In fact, in many cases, it is not clear whether we should be treating them as CSs or new borrowings; many of them could qualify as “nonce borrowings” (Poplack, Sankoff & Miller, 1988).

### 8. Morphological assimilation

In single-lexeme CSs, there is a considerable amount of morphological assimilation and convergence in both directions. For example, Samoan nouns that appear in the midst of an English utterance may get the English plural marker, as shown in (12) and (13), which show the non-standard (but colloquially common) English there’s with a plural subject:

- (12) (Family #2; 6/8/93)  
 P; but there’s ipus in there  
 “dish”
- (13) (Family #1; 4/14/93)  
 G; there’s more boxes  
 and there’s more kogas coming  
 “fine mat”

On the other hand, English words in the midst of Samoan utterances usually lose their inflection as they become incorporated into Samoan morphosyntax, as shown in (14), where the verb memorize appears without the past participle suffix -d, and in (15), where the locative at McDonald’s loses the ’s.

- (14) (Family #2; 5/3/93)  
 A; ‘cause e le’i uma- (.) ga memorize  
 Pres Neg finish Comp  
 “because (it) has not been fully memorized”

<sup>5</sup> In changing the names of the children, we have tried to keep features of their phonological structure that might be relevant to our discussion. Unfortunately, in so doing, we have lost the cultural and semantic connotations of the original name and have often created names that do not exist in Samoan.

<sup>6</sup> The mother in family #1, who worked as a school teacher in the local elementary school and had moved to the US as an adult, consistently produced the most complex types of CSs in our entire corpus.

- (15) (Family #4)  
 Mo; mâkou ui aku fo`i i McDonald e pick up mai se-  
 we-excl go-by Dx also to to Dx some-  
 “we also went by McDonald’s to pick up (for us) some-”

Convergence is shown also by the change of syntactic categories undergone by certain English words. For example, a noun like football is used as a verb in (16) and the verb kî ‘turn on’ (from English key) is made into a noun meaning ‘remote control’ in (17).

- (16) (Family #1; 12/91)  
 Mo; ioe`ae kau ga alu e football ma gâ-  
 yes but should Comp go Comp with those  
 “yes but he should go to (play) football with those-”

- (17) (Family #2; 5/30/93) (kî = ‘remote control’, from kî ‘turn on’ < Engl. key)  
 P; give me the other kî  
 “remote”

It is to these single-lexeme CSs that we turn our attention in the rest of the article.

### 9. Single-lexeme code switches

Single-lexeme code switches are either single or compound nouns and verbs (in the X-bar notation, they would belong to categories like N’ and V’). As shown above, in our data, single-lexeme forms can be Samoan words in the midst of English stretches of discourse or English words in the midst of Samoan discourse. Sometimes these forms are terms that do not have corresponding terms in the receiving language. For example, the English vacuum in (18) below has no corresponding Samoan translation.

- (18) (Family #2; 6/8/93 Camera 2: uncle A. is talking to 12 year old P.)  
 A; fai sau loa, (.) fia vacuum le poku  
 say come then want the room  
 “tell (her) to hurry up, (.) (I) want (to) vacuum the room”

But other times, the word substitutes an existing Samoan term (Myers-Scotton, 1993, calls these borrowings “core” borrowings because they substitute the “core” vocabulary of the “matrix language”) or even an earlier borrowing. We have already seen several examples of this type. For example, in (10) above, the grandmother uses English numbers instead of Samoan numbers. In (19) below, the mother uses the English noun friends instead of the Samoan native term uô.

- (19) (Family #1; 12/91)  
 Mo; laga`o lâ e fia // eva`oe i au friends?  
 “because you wanted then to go out with your friends?”



maintains a segment, the glottal stop, which is not part of the English phonological inventory (see example [11] above).

These findings are in some respects consistent with previous studies that have shown how in their early stages, borrowings are often unassimilated to the phonology of the receiving language (Haugen, 1950; Myers-Scotton, 1993; Romaine, 1989). Thomason and Kaufman (1988: 33) also suggested that a distinction must be made between “earlier borrowings” and “later borrowings”, with the former being characteristic of a first stage contact and limited or nonexistent bilingualism and the latter as characteristic of more advanced stages of contact and a higher level of bilingualism. In our case, as speakers of Samoan descent increase their contact with English speakers in the U.S., the English words they insert in their Samoan remain closer to the pronunciation by native speakers of English. However, this hypothesis does not completely square with the fate of the Samoan words used in the midst of English discourse by second generation speakers. Young children who are not fluent bilingual still preserve the Samoan pronunciation of Samoan words. It is almost as if bilingualism brings about a certain respect for the original pronunciation as well as an appreciation of differences, as represented by the specific pronunciation characteristic of each code. As the adults seem to accept an increase in the amount of English spoken in the home, children, in turn, recognize the importance of Samoan by freely importing Samoan words and expressions in the midst of their English discourse. In so doing, they may be trying to preserve the pronunciation of Samoan words as a partial tribute to their heritage and as a form of ethnic pride. It is common, for example, even for young teenagers who are not fluent in Samoan, to pronounce the words Samoa and Samoan with a long vowel in the first syllable and distinct vocalic segments in the rest of the word ([sa:moa], [sa:moan]) even when they are speaking English.

#### 10. Phonological islands

In our data, there are two sets of English single-lexemes that are the most resistant to phonological assimilation to Samoan. They are both sets of commonly used words and in this sense, they are good candidates for new borrowings. The first are English kinship terms, mom and dad in particular. These two words, used as both address and reference terms are very common in all of the families we studied. Being CVC, they violate the CV syllable constraint; dad also has the voiced segment (/d/) which is not part of the Samoan phonological inventory.

(25) (Family #2)

- A;           `a`o fea Mom ma Dad?  
                   but where    and  
                   “but where are Mom and Dad?”  
 L;            they just left.

The use of these two terms in the vocabulary of the members of the families we studied is not only a lexical innovation; it is also a cultural innovation. In the interactions recorded in Samoa by Duranti, Ochs, and Platt, children did not use kinship terms in calling their parents. Although there are Samoan words for father (tamâ) and mother (tinâ), these words are used for reference and not for address and they can also be extended to other members of the family, like the grandparents and other people who take care or are considered responsible

for them<sup>7</sup>. Parents are usually called or referred to by their proper names. This has a number of important implications. First, by calling their mother and father by their names, children are calling their parents like everyone else does. The terms mom and dad, instead, imply that the user is either the person's child or is someone who is momentarily taking the point of view of the child (Hymes, 1974: 56; Levinson, 1983: 72). Furthermore, since most men over thirty have a matai title and the title becomes the name by which they are addressed, when Samoan children call their father by his name, they are calling him by his matai title. Matai titles are de facto public offices associated with a particular lineage which give holders control over one or more plots of land and the right to participate in a range of public activities. All matai titles are ranked with respect to each other. When children call their father by his matai title, they address their father not as their father, but as the person who holds a particular public office, the representative of the extended family vis-à-vis the wider community, which includes the village council (fono), the district, the island, and even the archipelago.

Given these practices on the islands, we cannot but think that in the U.S., the use of mom and dad might index a new emphasis on the nuclear family and a privileged type of relationship between children and parents. The adoption of American kinship names might signal the recognition of a new set of social and even affective relations within the family.

The second group of phonological islands is constituted by English proper names, which often violate a number of Samoan phonological constraints. Some names are left in their English phonological form even when there are established Samoan equivalents. For example, David was typically converted to Tāvita in Samoa in the 1970s and 1980s<sup>8</sup>, but is left unaltered among the Samoans we observed in the US, even within the context of a Samoan utterance, as shown in (26). Example (27) shows the same phenomenon with two other English names, Vince and Alice.

(26) (Family #2; 6/8/93 Camera #1)

PM; I don't know  
fai mai e maga`o ia- e maga`o e alaku David `ô.  
 “(he) said (he) wants- wants David to go (over) there”

(27) (Family #2; 5/30/93)

L; fai mai le mea a Vince  
 “Vince said” (lit. “Vince said the thing”)

`o ai lae ô ma Alice?  
 “who is going with Alice?”

Although the resistance to phonological assimilation of borrowings –including proper names– has been frequently noted in bilingual communities, especially before a borrowing gets established and universally adopted (Poplack, Sankoff, and Miller, 1988; Romaine, 1989), we want to stress that such a feature is a double innovation for Samoan speakers. First, because traditionally Samoans assimilated proper names in the same way in

<sup>7</sup> See Hogbin (1934) on this practice in Ontong Java, a Polynesian outlier.

<sup>8</sup> We do not have sufficient information at the moment to know whether these pronunciation practices have been recently altered nor can we access whether there are differences in this area between Samoa and American Samoa.

which they assimilated common nouns and verbs. Second, because Samoans are known to shift phonological registers with ease, adapting all words to the chosen variety. In the data collected in Samoa in the 1970s and 1980s, not only did speakers adapt proper names to Samoan phonology, they also adapted them to the current phonological variety, changing the /d/ of English David to /t/ in “good speech” and to /k/ in “bad speech”.

### 11. Samoan proper names as phonological islands

The island-like property discussed above seems to be a general property of names and not just of English proper names. Samoan proper names, especially the names of children, display a similar resistance to phonological assimilation. In our data, many of the Samoan names with a /t/ in “good speech” maintain that segment even when the rest of the utterance they appear in is in “bad speech” and hence contains no /t/ segments. In (28), for example, the first person dual pronoun tâ is pronounced in “bad speech” (kâ), but the name of the youngest boy in the family is left in the “good speech” pronunciation (Tifo).

(28) (Family #3; 5/31/93 )

Sister; kâ ô Tifo.  
we-dual go(Pl)  
“let’s go Tifo.”

(29) (Family #1; Mother teases Fitu about a player he is talking about)

Mother; kama a Fitu.  
boy of  
“Fitu’s friend.”

Although the Samoan data shown above could be used to support Clyne’s (1967, 1987) claim that for bilinguals proper names are the same in the two codes, there is no evidence of them having what Clyne called *triggering effect*—that is, an influence on the code or variety used right after the proper name. The use of “good speech” for Samoan proper names does not trigger “good speech” for the rest of the utterance, even when the Samoan proper name with the /t/ segment is at the beginning of the utterance. In (30), for example, the proper name contains a /t/ while the rest of the turn is in “bad speech”, as shown by the fact that the verb nofo ‘sit’ is pronounced gofo [ŋofo]<sup>9</sup>. In (31), the same proper name is used in “good speech” at the beginning followed by kua, the “bad speech” pronunciation of tua ‘back’. Similarly, in (32) the “good speech” pronunciation of the proper name “Fita” is followed by an utterance that contains lokea the “bad speech” pronunciation of the verb lote+a ‘to fiddle around with.’<sup>10</sup>

(30) (Family #3; 3/7/93)

Mo; Tia, gofo i lalo.  
“Tia, sit down.”

(31) (Family #3; 5/31/93)

Father; Tia ei, alu i kua alu i fafo o- e- e fai ou siva  
“Tia hey, go in the back outside to-to do your dance”

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of this particular expression, see Duranti (1997b).

<sup>10</sup> The addition of the suffix -a is due to the negative imperative form ʻa which requires the nominalization of the following verb.

(32) (Family #1; 12/91)

G; Fita, `aau le lokea le mea.  
 “Fita, don’t fiddle around with the thing.”

Not all Samoan proper names in our US corpus follow this pattern. We do have cases in which Samoan proper names are adapted to “bad speech” pronunciation. They are usually names of people who either live or were born on the islands. In other words, there seem to be a distinction made between names of young children (who were born in the US or were brought to the US soon after being born) and the names of everyone else. The names of older people, for example, are more likely to undergo changes in pronunciation depending on the surrounding discourse. More generally, our data suggest that the status of proper names varies within the same immigrant community and that there might be a correlation between the level of phonological assimilation and the level of identification of a particular individual with the home country vs. the host country. That there might be an inverse relation between phonological assimilation and openness to change is supported by the fact that the family where the parents use more Samoan than the parents in any of the other families in our study (family # 3) is the one in which the pronunciation of proper names is more likely to be adapted to “bad speech”. This is consistent with other features which rank the same family as the most conservative, i.e. closer to the standards followed on the Samoan islands, in terms of other features of speech and interaction (Reynolds, 1995).

Changes in phonological integration of actual or potential borrowings have already been linked to changing attitudes and types of contact situation (Bernstein, 1990, cited by Myers-Scotton, 1993: 179). One such change in attitudes could be a new way of thinking about the connection between social identity and context. The phonological impermeability of one’s name might be an index of a new emphasis on permanence of social identity. A person’s name remains the same because it is assumed that that person is also the same across situations and that sameness should be symbolically recognized. This could be an unconscious and yet pervasive effort by the parents to maintain at least one feature of a child’s identity steady across situations. It is also possible that it is a way of making it easier for the children to recognize their names. If this were indeed a factor, it would also involve an innovation given that Ochs (1982, 1988) showed that in the family interactions recorded in Samoa adults do not simplify their speech to children.

## 12. Conclusions

In this article, we have considered some of the features of English and Samoan words used by members of a Samoan American community in Southern California. We relied on previous fieldwork carried out in a (Western) Samoan community by A. Duranti and E. Ochs to highlight differences between the ways in which speakers in the two communities deal with foreign words. In particular, we have shown that, differently from earlier (and established) borrowings, new borrowings are not adapted to the phonology of the receiving language. This is a trend that has long been noted in the literature on language contact, where some researchers have speculated that lack of phonological assimilation is typical of the first stage of borrowing –i.e. before the loanwords become established in the lexicon of the receiving language– and others have posited that it is a phenomenon typical of bilingual communities. In our case, we have suggested that the introduction of certain kinship terms (mom and dad) and the tendency to preserve across contexts not only the English pronunciation of English words but also the “good speech” pronunciation of Samoan

names must be seen as having potentially important cultural implications. In particular, the adoption of kinship terms –as opposed to proper names (and matai titles)– in addressing and referring to parents implies a new emphasis on the child’s point of view (as opposed to the adults’) within the family. This is a new cultural trait in a society in which children are traditionally expected to adapt to adults (Ochs, 1982, 1988; Ochs and Schieffelin, 1984). The lack of phonological variation found in both English names in general and Samoan names of young children in particular also suggest that Samoan adults in the U.S. are adopting linguistic strategies that index persons as less contextualized, i.e. with more permanent identities.

#### **Bibliographical references**

- Bauman, R. (1992). “Contextualization, tradition and the dialogue of genres: Icelandic legends of the *Kraftaskáld*”. In A. Duranti & C. Goodwin (eds.). *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 125-45.
- Clyne, M. (1967). *Transference and Triggering*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- \_\_\_ (1987). “Constraints on code switching: How universal are they?”. *Linguistics* 25, 739-64.
- Duranti, A. (1981). *The Samoan Fono: A Sociolinguistic Study*. Pacific Linguistics Monographs (Series B. Vol. 80). Canberra: Australian National University (Department of Linguistics, Research School of Pacific Studies).
- \_\_\_ (1990). “Code switching and conflict management in Samoan multiparty interaction”. *Pacific Studies* 14(1), 1-30.
- \_\_\_ (1993). “Intentions, self, and responsibility: An essay in Samoan ethnopragmatics”. In J.H. Hill & J.T. Irvine (eds.). *Responsibility and Evidence in Oral Discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 24-47.
- \_\_\_ (1994). *From Grammar to Politics: Linguistic Anthropology in a Western Samoan Village*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- \_\_\_ (1997a). *Linguistic Anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- \_\_\_ (1997b). “Indexical speech across Samoan communities”. *American Anthropologist* 99(2), 342-54.
- Duranti, A. & E. Ochs (1986). “Literacy instruction in a Samoan village”. In B.B. Schieffelin & P. Gilmore. *Acquisition of Literacy: Ethnographic Perspectives*. Norwood (NJ): Ablex, 213-32.
- \_\_\_ (1997). “Syncretic literacy in a Samoan American family”. In L. Resnick, R. Saljo, C. Pontecorvo & B. Burge (eds.). *Discourse, Tools, and Reasoning: Situated Cognition and Technologically Supported Environments*. Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag.
- Duranti, A., E. Ochs & E.K. Ta’ase (1995). “Change and tradition in literacy instruction in a Samoan American community”. *Educational Foundations* 9(4), 57-74.
- Gal, S. (1979). *Language Shift. Social Determinants of Linguistic Change in Bilingual Austria*. New York: Academic Press.
- Haugen, E. (1950). “The analysis of linguistic borrowings”. *Language* 26, 210-31.
- Hogbin, H.I. (1934). *Law and Order in Polynesia*. New York: Harcourt, Brace.

- Hymes, D. (1974). *Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Levinson, S.C. (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Milner, G.B. (1966). *Samoan Dictionary: Samoan-English English-Samoan*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Mosel, U. & E. Hovdhaugen (1992). *Samoan Reference Grammar*. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press/The Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture.
- Myers-Scotton, C. (1993). *Duelling Languages: Grammatical Structure in Codeswitching*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Ochs, E. (1982). "Talking to children in Western Samoa". *Language in Society* 11, 77-104.
- (1985). "Variation and error: A sociolinguistic study of language acquisition in Samoa". In D.I. Slobin (ed.). *The Crosslinguistic Study of Language Acquisition*. Hillsdale (NJ): Erlbaum, 783-838.
- (1986). "From feelings to grammar: A Samoan case study". In B.B. Schieffelin & E. Ochs. *Language Socialization Across Cultures*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 251-72.
- (1988). *Culture and Language Development: Language Acquisition and Language Socialization in a Samoan Village*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ochs, E. & B.B. Schieffelin (1984). "Language acquisition and socialization: Three developmental stories". In R.A. Shweder & R.A. LeVine (eds.). *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 276-320.
- Platt, M. (1982). *Social and Semantic Dimensions of Deictic Verbs and Particles in Samoan Child Language*. University of Southern California, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation.
- (1986). "Social norms and lexical acquisition: A study of deictic verbs in Samoan child language". In B.B. Schieffelin & E. Ochs (eds.). *Language Socialization across Cultures*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 127-51.
- Poplack, S., D. Sankoff & C. Miller (1988). "The social correlates and linguistic processes of lexical borrowing and assimilation". *Linguistics* 26, 47-104.
- Pouesi, D. (1994). *An Illustrated History of Samoans in California*. Carson (CA): Kin Publications.
- Reynolds, J. (1995). *Tautalaititi and Tags: A Study of Samoan American Child Language Socialization as Syncretic Practice*. Los Angeles: University of California at Los Angeles.
- Romaine, S. (1989). *Bilingualism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Shankman, P. (1993). "The Samoan exodus". In V.S. Lockwood, T.G. Harding & B.J. Wallace (eds.). *Contemporary Pacific Societies: Studies in Development and Change*. Englewood Cliffs (NJ): Prentice-Hall, 156-70.
- Shore, B. (1982). *Sala`ilua: A Samoan Mystery*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Thomason, S.G. & T. Kaufman (1988). *Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Zentella, A.C. (1997). *Growing Up Bilingual*. Oxford: Blackwell.