

Language skills of New Zealanders

One dimension of cultural competence and maintenance

Robert Didham

Stats NZ and Waikato University

Elsie Ho

University of Auckland

Vivian Cheung

Plunket

Data

- Primary source is Census of Population and Dwellings
- Asked since 1996
- Collected up to six languages per person
- Question defines as “in which language(s) could you have a conversation about a lot of everyday things?”
- Tickboxes for English, Māori, Samoan, NZ Sign and None
- Write in spaces with examples
- People aged under 1 year generally deemed to be “too young to talk”
- Does not ask about where, how or with what fluency a language is used
- Generally classical languages are not separately coded (e.g. Latin, Sanskrit - but Classical Greek, Tibetan, Chinese likely to be included in Greek, Tibetan, Chinese respectively)
- Only 181 language categories have speakers recorded in NZ – but n.e.c. categories aggregate several hundred others.
- Note: other resources include surveys such as Te Kupenga and Māori Language Surveys, but only in relation to te Reo, other surveys limited by sample size and coverage

Language is a taonga

- Core element of cultural identity and transmission
 - Fundamental to community well-being
 - NZ has an obligation in special cases (te Reo, Niuean)
- Multidimensional
 - Heritage languages
 - Adopted languages
 - Lost languages
 - Endangered languages
 - Multilingualism
 - Learned languages
 - Speaking versus reading
 - Home versus school versus peers groups

Linguistic diversity: number of languages spoken

2013 Census categories

	Under 15	15-29	30 plus	Total
New Zealand	169	175	186	188
Auckland	153	170	178	181
Wellington	124	147	170	172
Canterbury	118	147	160	168

Languages – New Zealand’s future strength

بَرَاجُ اللُّغَاتِ الْعَرَبِيَّةِ
 كَلِمَةُ كَلِيمُونَ مَكِينًا

假若無界不不
 若彼倒得乃淨異自
 度羅夢以至不色在
 薩密想無無增色若
 密多究所意不即薩
 多是竟得識滅是行
 尼大涅故界是空深
 耶神離苦無故空般
 脫光三揭無空即若
 尼是世薩明中是彼
 目大諸域亦無色羅
 賜明佛依無色受蜜

놀리니다
 흐뤘다
 깨닫으니
 징어
 꺾아 방
 가지어서

Top languages in terms of numbers:

- English,
- Maori,
- Northern Chinese
- Samoan,
- Hindi
- French,
- Cantonese,
- German,
- Tongan,
- Tagalog

ལྷོ་བཟི་འགས་རྒྱུད་ཡོངས་ལ་སྐྱེས་ཚམ་ཉིད་ནས་ཆེ་མཐོངས་དང་། ཐོབ་ཐང་གི་རང་
 དབང་ལྟ་མཉམ་དུ་ཡོད་ལ། ཁོང་ཚོར་རང་བྱུང་གི་སློབ་ལ་དང་བསམ་ཚུལ་བཟང་པོ་འདོན་
 པའི་འོས་བབས་ཀྱང་ཡོད། དེ་བཞིན་ཕན་ཚུན་གཅིག་གིས་གཅིག་ལ་བྱ་སྤྱོད་གྱི་འདུ་ཤེས་
 འཛིན་པའི་བྱ་སྤྱོད་ཀྱང་ལག་ལེན་བསྟར་དགོས་པ་ཡིན།།

၁၉၄၈ ခုနှစ်၊ ဒီဇင်ဘာလ ၁၀ ရက်နေ့တွင် ကမ္ဘာ့ကုလသမဂ္ဂအဖွဲ့ညီ
 ကြေညာစာတမ်းကြီးကို အတည်ပြု၍ ကြေညာလိုက်ရာထိုကြေညာ
 အပြည့်အစုံပါရှိသည်။ ဤကဲ့သို့ရာဇဝင်တင်မည့် ကြေညာချက်ကို [

কোন দেশ বা ভূখণ্ডের রাজনৈতিক, সীমানাগত বা ও
 কোনরূপ বৈষম্য করা হবেনা; সে দেশ বা ভূখণ্ড স্বা
 সার্বভৌমত্বের অন্য কোন সীমাবদ্ধতায় বিরাজমান।

ကျွန်ုပ်တို့

	Broad age groups			Auckland Region	Wellington Region	Canterbury Region	Total	Global Rank 2009
	Under 15	15-29 Years	30 Years Plus					
1	English	English	English	English	English	English	English	Chinese
2	Chinese	Māori	Māori	Chinese	Māori	Māori	Māori	Spanish
3	Māori	Chinese	Chinese	Samoan	Samoan	Chinese	Chinese	English
4	Samoan	Samoan	Samoan	Hindi	French	French	Samoan	Arabic
5	Tongan	Hindi	Hindi	Māori	Chinese	German	Hindi	Hindi
6	Hindi	Yue	French	Yue	German	Samoan	French	Bengali
7	Yue	French	Yue	Tongan	Hindi	Japanese	Yue	Portuguese
8	Tagalog	Spanish	German	Korean	Yue	Dutch	German	Russian
9	Korean	Tongan	Dutch	French	Spanish	Tagalog	Tongan	Japanese
10	Japanese	Korean	Afrikaans	Tagalog	Tagalog	Spanish	Tagalog	German
11	NZ Sign	Panjabi	Tagalog	Afrikaans	NZ Sign	Yue	Afrikaans	Javanese
12	Panjabi	German	Spanish	Panjabi	Gujarati	Korean	Spanish	Lahnda
13	Spanish	Tagalog	Tongan	German	Dutch	NZ Sign	Korean	Yue
14	French	Japanese	Korean	Gujarati	Afrikaans	Hindi	Dutch	Telegu
15	German	NZ Sign	NZ Sign	Spanish	Japanese	Afrikaans	NZ Sign	Vietnamese
16	Afrikaans	Panjabi	Gujarati	Japanese	Italian	Russian	Japanese	Marathi

Maintenance and acquisition

Why?

- Intergenerational communication
- International communication
- Cultural factors
- Economic value

Diversity, mobility and competing agendas

- Different mixes of languages in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch
- Diverse age structures and roles in (workplaces for example)
- Perception of the value of language(s) is context-sensitive (e.g. Hindi versus Niuean)

Vectors

- Family – especially grandparents
- Peers
- Religion
- Social media
- Education
- Transnational family connections

Cultural competence, Asian languages and ECE

Under 5 is ideal time to gain full fluency without an accent

- Generally one or two principal languages used in the home and often has a gendered component
- In some cases different languages are used in different contexts (intergenerational, religious, community etc)
- Opportunities to use the languages of peers – value of ECE environment

Core values matter

- Respect for family
- Respect for education and learning
- Respect for linguistic protocols

Languages of children under 5 by parental ethnicities

Language	Mother Asian		Mother Asian		Mother non-Asian		Total		
	Father Asian		Father non-Asian		Father Asian				
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
English	6,222	6,141	2,862	2,910	1,002	1,020	10,086	10,071	20,151
Nthn Chinese	1,311	1,278	300	324	30	33	1,641	1,635	3,276
Hindi	879	861	78	84	39	30	996	975	1,971
Cantonese	435	441	78	72	15	9	528	522	1,050
Japanese	150	156	228	234	18	12	396	402	798
Panjabi	393	324	21	21	18	18	432	363	795
Korean	273	309	69	93	9	3	351	405	756
Tagalog	279	309	36	39	6	6	321	354	675
Gujarati	210	231	15	12	0	3	225	246	471
Urdu	120	129	3	9	6	3	129	141	270
Khmer	87	90	33	30	12	6	132	126	258
Tamil	102	117	6	6	0	0	108	123	231
Malayalam	108	114	0	0	0	0	108	114	222
Vietnamese	60	54	36	33	9	9	105	90	195
Thai	27	27	57	63	6	0	90	90	180

Effect of inter-ethnic partnering

Asian under-fives in two-parent families by Asian ethnicity of parents, and other under fives with an Asian parent, 2013 Census

Ethnicity of father	Ethnicity of child	Mother: Asian	Mother: not Asian	Total children
Asian	Asian	24,255	2,058	26,313
	not Asian	450	453	903
Not Asian	Asian	4,621	282	4,903
	not Asian	1,411		1,411
	Total children	30,737	2,793	33,530

Summing up

- Conceptual context – language as taonga – identity along with ethnicity and religion
- Endangered languages
- Language data
- Language retention, acquisition, maintenance – role of religion, peers etc
- Te Reo and Nuiean (think about NZ sign)
- Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch – diversity and mobility
- Transfers within families
- Role in ECE for cultural transmission
- Very much more to be done: e.g. effect of migration histories and especially maintenance of skills across the life course, role of literacy and literature
- Key strategic question: do agendas matter Asian versus Pacific and European languages?

Contact: robert.didham@stats.govt.nz