

Exploring Sustainability through Chinese Study and Interest in the Sāmoan Language: A Situational Analysis Informed by Fa'afaletui

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Abstract

Sāmoa and the Pacific region has become an area of intense geostrategic importance of late. With a rising China expressing interest in the Pacific and a reposturing US, Australia and New Zealand, the success of all sustainability efforts in the region will be mediated through the lens of geopolitics. This paper intervenes in this conversation by focusing on the commitment to culture and cultural diversity articulated as part of the framework that guides the New Urban Agenda through the question of language. We explore potentiality in the recent rise of Chinese interest in Sāmoan language learning and studies as part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) for the preservation of Indigenous Pacific languages like Sāmoan. To answer this question, we use a blended research methodology (Sāmoan fa'afaletui framework with Situational Analysis) to map the factors that have led to the rise of Chinese interest in the Sāmoan language. In doing so, we critique the present geostrategic explanation for the BRI through presenting a nuanced model of factors and explore what space there is for Sāmoan to be promoted in places like China. This is important, the Sāmoan language, like all Pacific languages, is intrinsic to the understanding and embodiment of cultural knowledge systems that bear major significance on the sustainability and diversity of Pacific world views and ways of knowing.

Introduction

An important part of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) for the Pacific and Pacific nations like Sāmoa, speaks to the centrality of culture and cultural diversity to sustainability efforts (Soini & Dessein, 2016). Culture plays an essential role in the dynamic construction of individual and collective identities, and it promotes social cohesion, inclusion and equity (Hosagrahar, Soule, Girard, & Potts, 2016). The cultural dimension of development has often been undervalued, or seen as an optional extra in comprehensive urban development (Duxbury, Hosagrahar, & Pascual, 2016). Thus its relationship with sustainability is not thoroughly understood. Recently, culture has been regarded as a critical component of sustainable urban development and innovated the definition of the NUA (Duxbury, Hosagrahar, & Pascual, 2016; Hosagrahar, Soule, Girard, & Potts, 2016). More specifically, there is growing acknowledgement that indigenous knowledge, cultures, and traditional practices can contribute greatly to the diversity and richness of civilizations, which collectively constitute the common heritage of humankind (Duxbury, Hosagrahar, & Pascual, 2016).

Language is a central component of culture, as cultural knowledge is inextricably tied to, and expressed through language (Taumoevalau, 2013) of which Sāmoa/Sāmoan is no different. Ensuring Pacific languages continue to thrive is thus an essential way in which the NUA speaks to a more holistic understanding of sustainability in the Moana-Oceania region. As a region, the Pacific has always been subjected to the whims of the geopolitical ambitions of outside forces through colonisation, falling victim to the race for colonies at the turn of the

20th century (Moses, Pugsley & Conference, 2000). More recently, the Pacific has become the focus of renewed geo-political posturing as a rising China has asserted itself more prominently in the region (Atkinson, 2010; Hansen & Fifita 2011; Thomsen & Jun 2018; Zhang 2007). Considering the complexity in this space, this paper enters the conversation from the position of language sustainability by exploring the potentiality for the promotion, and subsequent spread of the Sāmoan language in China through the mapping of nuanced factors and actors via an interpretive situated fa'afaletui analysis.

Sāmoan Language and the Impact of Colonialism

Sāmoan is the Indigenous language of the Independent State of Sāmoa (referred to as Sāmoa) and the US territory of American Sāmoa. In both countries, English is also an official language as the most commonly used medium of business, administration, media and education (Biewer, 2015). Sāmoa and American Sāmoa experienced colonisation in different ways. As its name suggests, American Sāmoa was and continues to be under American influence, whilst Sāmoa passed from being briefly in German hands to New Zealand hands before becoming the first Pacific Island nation to gain independence in 1962 (Meleisea & Meleisea, 1987). In both locations, the countries' connections to their colonial masters have led to an uptake of English that influences local language patterns. In American Sāmoa, research suggests that there has been a shift toward English, leading to increased attrition rates of native Sāmoan competencies (Huebner, 1989). Biewer (2015) also explains that there is now the existence of South Pacific English, where Sāmoans have modified English in everyday usage.

Sāmoa's colonial history begins with Dutch explorer Joseph Roggeveen being the first European to land in Sāmoa in 1721. By the 1820s, a significant number of Beachcombers lived in Sāmoa with some locals taken on-board by sailors (Meleisea et al., 1987). Significantly, when the missionaries arrived (1835), they subsequently translated the Bible into Sāmoan (Thomas, 1984), reflecting a preference to convert Indigenous populations in the Pacific using local languages (Biewer, 2015). As there was never any wide scale European settlement that took place in Sāmoa, significantly, the rise of English in the Sāmoan islands as means of communication came through colonial administrators that instigated British/American style bureaucracies and eventually an English-centric education system (Biewer, 2015).

In Sāmoa, the New Zealand administration (1914-1962) setup state schools whose medium of instruction was English-only, whilst all other schools retained Sāmoan as the medium of instruction. Up until 1945, the New Zealand administrators did not allow Sāmoans to receive secondary school education. When this ban was lifted, secondary schools in Sāmoa were taught with New Zealand teachers using a New Zealand curriculum. Biewers (2015) asserts that this combined with the increasing usefulness of English in business and outside trade, coupled with the demand for the United Nations to prepare Sāmoans to be part of a global community of nations, increased the attractiveness of English in Sāmoa. In American Sāmoa, a similar story unfolded, with the US administration setting up schools using English and American curriculums, directly enhancing the importance of English in the colony by instituting English-only classrooms (Huebner, 1986, 1989) and promoting work and education opportunities in America for local residents including through professional sports like American Football (Uperesa, 2014).

However, the prevalence of English language use in Sāmoa has been criticised as a quirky hangover of colonialism (Huebner, 1989), which undermines the importance of the local language. This is a significant point, as Sāmoan, like all Indigenous Pacific languages, reveals specific and unique worldviews (Taumoevalau, 2016) that are important to preserve the cultural diversity that exists in the region. This point becomes even more pronounced as Sāmoans are a mobile people (Liomaiva-Doktor, 2009; Vaa, 1992). Due to Western Sāmoa's historical colonial connection to New Zealand, many Sāmoans have moved to and established generational families there, and Sāmoan is the third most widely spoken language in New Zealand today (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). This is important as competency in one's heritage language has shown to be an important factor in one's cultural identity that impacts wellbeing for Pacific Peoples in New Zealand (Manuela & Sibley, 2015). Thus, considering the prevalence of English in the region and the dispersal of the Sāmoan population abroad, the Sāmoan language is at risk of being undermined further by global trends in English usage. As the NUA emphasises the need for cities and communities to protect both tangible and intangible cultural assets (Duxbury, Hosagrahar, & Pascual, 2016; Hosagrahar, Soule, Girard, & Potts, 2016), the issue of language sustainability in Sāmoa is an area of worthy consideration.

Little research has looked at the sudden rise of Sāmoan language studies in China. Recently, the Beijing Foreign Studies University began offering Sāmoan as a language option (BFSU, 2020). In the first semester, twelve students enrolled in the Sāmoan language course. Some scholars infer that China's current interest in Pacific languages is part of an attempt to expand its sphere of influence in the Pacific region (Blanchard & Flint, 2017; Blanchard, 2018; Rolland, 2017). And it is often discussed as part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which can be characterised as an economic and geopolitical strategy that seeks to solve domestic and international challenges (Wang, 2016; Rolland, 2017). As such, in recent years, heightened scrutiny on its purposes, motivations, and implications have been discussed among scholars worldwide (Blanchard & Flint, 2017; Chan, 2017; Feng & Ma, 2019; Huang, 2016; Kolosov et al., 2017; Rolland, 2017; Wang, 2016; Zeng, 2016; Zhou & Esteban, 2018).

Since 2012, China's economy has entered the so-called "new normal" state with three major problems to solve, namely the overcapacity in labour-intensive industries, imbalanced development in different provinces, and excessive foreign exchange reserves (Wang, 2016). Therefore, the priority of the BRI is to create more economic opportunities for China domestically and internationally (Feng & Ma, 2019; Wang, 2016). This is especially true for the western provinces who are able to better access resources, energy, and infrastructure cooperation with neighbouring countries in Central Asia and South Asia (Feng & Ma, 2019; Rolland, 2017; The State Council, 2019). And in cooperating with other developing countries through the BRI, China has also sustained and continued its economic growth and changed its development paradigm from relying on imports and investment to domestic consumption and exports (Huang, 2016).

Meanwhile, China is also concerned by regional developments considering the geostrategic move by the United States (US), who are actively seeking to consolidate their influence in Asia and the Pacific through its Pivot to Asia (Feng & Ma, 2019; Haenle, 2019; Wang, 2016). In other words, the BRI has not only pursued economic fruition and cooperation with its neighboring countries, at the same time, it strives to achieve China's geopolitical and strategic expectations on a wider stage in order to ensure its status at an international level (Rolland, 2017). Blanchard and Flint (2017) argue that even though the main focus of the BRI is centred on economic projects and investment, China has intended to deliver its development narrative to BRI member countries as well. Specifically, instead of targeting and challenging the influence of the US, the BRI promotes mutual benefits, interests, and respect, which symbolises a new pattern of cooperation between countries in the globalisation era (Feng & Ma, 2019; The State Council, 2019; Wang, 2016). Meanwhile, one of the most significant narratives that China attempts to deliver through the BRI is the concept of "establishing a regional community of common destiny", which points out the same interests, concerns, and responsibility shared by all human beings (Zeng, 2016). Therefore, it can be seen that China is cultivating students with the capacity to tell a better China story to a broad audience (Feng & Ma, 2019; Wang, 2016). Those who are capable of proficiently speaking Indigenous

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languages will contribute to the further implementation of BRI. Thus the recently launched Pacific language learning projects in China's universities have attracted more and more Chinese students and teachers devoted to learning and teaching a third language besides Mandarin and English in China.

Considering the active pursuance of BRI by the Chinese government and the implied connection between the BRI and the rising interest regarding Sāmoan language in China, mapping the factors that connect the two must be undertaken as the BRI includes people-to-people exchanges driven by individuals who must then be resourced by institutions backed by state policies. Thus, the next section of the paper will focus on mapping the factors and their connections using Situational Analysis and Fa'afaletui. This is important, in order to explore the opportunities in the promotion of Sāmoan in China - which impacts the sustainability of Sāmoan language abroad - having a nuanced understanding of the interconnections between different actors should also be presented.

Situated Fa'afaletui Analysis (Methodology)

The methodology for this paper combines Adele Clarke's (2005) Situational Analysis (SA) with insights from Sāmoan methodological framework fa'afaletui (Tamasese, Peteru, Waldegrave, & Bush, 2005). We term this approach a Situated Fa'afaletui Analysis (SFA). SA in particular grounds qualitative analysis in the broader situation of inquiry, paying special attention to a wider range of differences in the data, and taking nonhuman elements into analytic account (Clarke, 2005). In SA, the situation of inquiry is empirically constructed by making three kinds of maps, namely the situational map, social worlds/arenas map, and a positional map. (Clarke, 2005; Clarke, 2015a, 2015b). In fa'afaletui, social arenas and differentiated perspectives encourage an analysis of social phenomena that map out the complexity of social relations, constructed using Sāmoan social hierarchy and metaphors from a Sāmoan worldview (Tamasese, Peteru, Waldegrave, & Bush, 2005).

A situational map aims to help the researcher to lay out all the elements which are needed to understand the social phenomenon (Kalenda, 2016). Social worlds/arenas maps emphasise the importance of actors at the social meso-level, providing an understanding of how individuals relate to various social groups, and how a situation is influenced and negotiated by the discourses constructed by society or social institutions. Lastly, positional maps cover the main relations of those involved elements in a given situation based on the semantic axes which can be found around central themes or problems identified within the situation being researched (Clarke, 2005; Clarke, 2015a; Clarke, 2015b). First articulated by Tamasese, Peteru, Waldegrave, and Bush (2005), fa'afaletui as a research method weaves together knowledge and experiences from different levels of people within Sāmoan communities for the "purpose of substantially enhancing and adding to the Sāmoan worldview" (Suaali-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014, p.334). Sāmoan society is hierarchical in nature; therefore, people are consciously aware of their social status, which also provokes different positions to view any issue from (McCarthy, Shaban, & Stone, 2011). The research method fa'afaletui

differentiates three positions deploying Sāmoan metaphors to analyse the social phenomenon. Researchers gather opinions from three levels, namely "people at the top of the mountain", "people at the top of the tree" and "people in the canoe" (Tamasese, Peteru, Waldegrave, & Bush, 2005). These three perspectives not only represent Sāmoan social hierarchy, but also allow differences and connections to be drawn out between those with higher status like community leaders and matai (chiefs), to individual households and the community, and lastly, relevant individuals (McCarthy, Shaban, & Stone, 2011).

In this project, we use three situational maps that combine insights from fa'afaletui and SA to illustrate the complex nature of factors that impact the development of Sāmoan language studies in China. The three maps collect primary and secondary sources to build their content. We conceptualise these as a map from the top of the mountain (the government), from the top of the tree (social institutions), and in the canoe (individuals). The individuals in the canoe are two Chinese lecturers/students who studied Sāmoan in Hawai'i and New Zealand (author perspective) that responded to questions that probed the reason for their interests in taking up Sāmoan language studies. Their views will help us to connect the different layered elements to the rise of Chinese interest in Sāmoan language. Overall, the perspectives from these three levels will provide the potentiality to scrutinise the situation from different positions (Tamasese, Peteru, Waldegrave, & Bush, 2005) and more importantly allow us to examine what the implications are for Sāmoan language learning sustainability through the Chinese interest in the language.

The Map of the View from the Top of the Mountain

By the end of 2019, the Chinese government had signed 195 Belt and Road cooperation documents with 136 countries and 30 international organisations (The State Council, 2019). Through the BRI, those at the top of the mountain intend to foster a new approach to state-to-state relations, one that features dialogue rather than confrontation and seeks partnerships rather than alliances (The State Council, 2019; Belt and Road Portal, 2017; Global Times, 2015). China has presented itself as a promoter of a global, open, and dynamic international market for all countries to expand business opportunities. One way the BRI tries to achieve this is through the investment for infrastructure connectivity projects to developing countries where high-quality infrastructure is needed. By the end of June 2019, a total of 16,760 China-Europe freight trains had carried almost 1.5 million TEUs of goods, reaching 16 countries and 53 cities abroad (The State Council, 2019).

Economic globalisation has dramatically facilitated trade, investment, flows of people, and technological advances. Meanwhile, these market integration activities have been deployed by people from China and other countries. Hence, people-to-people interactions have been developing alongside these infrastructure activities as cooperation is extended to more areas.

Perhaps of greatest relevance to our research focus is the development of relationships as vital in promoting more

substantial exchanges and mutual learning through closer people-to-people ties (The State Council, 2019). In 2019, among the 136 countries that had signed BRI cooperation documents with China, China had concluded mutual visa exemption agreements with 113 countries covering different types of passports, which to a large extent is designed to facilitate the personal contact and communication between China and other countries (The State Council, 2019). In the coming future, frequent contacts and communication with people from China and other countries will be deepened with the extension of the BRI into a broader range of countries and regions.

The Map of the View from the Top of the Tree

The first social institution that plays a significant role in Sāmoan language development is a Chinese university which plans to establish professional language learning centres for Pacific languages. This university enjoys high prestige nationwide and abroad for its specialisation in language studies (Ministry of Education, 2016). As most Chinese universities are guided by the government, this university follows the guidance from the top of the mountain to implement teaching goals and establish language majors that are attuned with the BRI. One of its objectives was to establish language learning centres covering all BRI participating countries to cultivate language talents in response to China's future development (Ministry of Education, 2016). These language talents will facilitate communication with local people in BRI member countries. Meanwhile, they will

also take the responsibility of helping to tell the China story in a better way to a broad audience. In doing so, the frequent contacts and communications with local people are aimed at fostering deepened friendships and transmitting China's soft power influence to a wider range of countries and regions.

Another social institution that represents a view from the top of the tree is the China Scholarship Council (CSC). This non-profit organisation is affiliated with China's Ministry of Education that supports international academic exchange with China (Yan, 2018). CSC provides both funding for Chinese people to study abroad and for international students and scholars to study in China. Potential candidates can join various projects according to their educational background and research areas. In sponsoring a great number of students and scholars to study overseas every year, CSC requires the sponsored students and scholars to come back and work in China after finishing their studies. The rationale for this policy is that it will be conducive to the future development of Chinese academia and research quality. Also, as a non-profit organisation which receives most of its funding from the government, CSC has designed a series of programs to cultivate talents based on China's development needs. In this regard, it has connected the people from the top of the mountain with the people in the canoe as most of their programs reflect the government's development need for high-level talent.

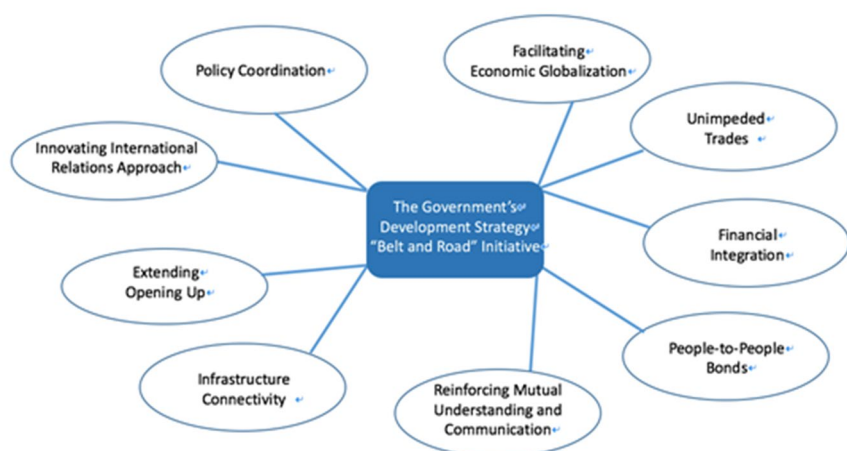


Fig. 1: The Map of the View from the Top of the Mountain

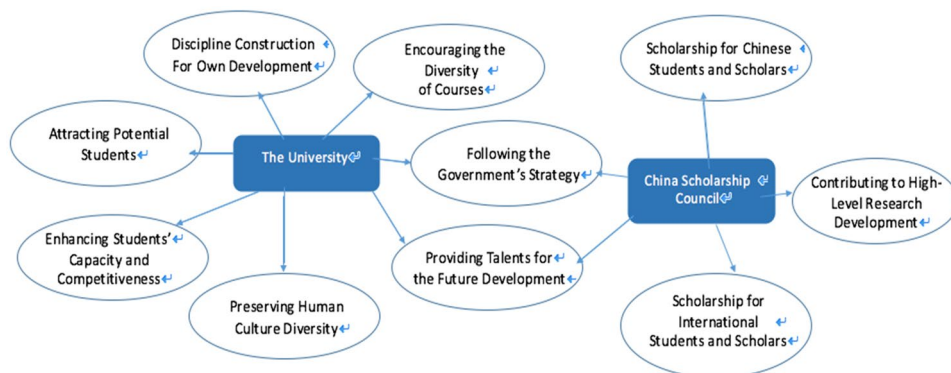


Fig. 2: The Map of the View from the Top of the Tree

The Map of Perspectives from People in the Canoe

The first perspective in the canoe comes from a Chinese lecturer who recently started teaching Sāmoan language courses at a university in China. In 2015, Zoe (pseudonym) was informed that the university she worked for would take steps to establish eight South Pacific language majors in response to the increasing need for China's communication and cooperation with the South Pacific countries after the BRI was launched. Later, Zoe was selected to participate in the discipline construction program. She was excited and interested in Sāmoan language studies when she heard about the new grand strategy, the BRI, and how it would extend its cooperation and connection to the Pacific area in the coming future. Also, she believed that this might be a significant opportunity for her career as a Chinese scholar in this newly-emerging research area in China, which requires the talents of more academics and researchers. In her words, she saw the "promising potential" and "unique position" in the Pacific studies as a research area and an inevitably important component in China's future development discourse. Hence she became determined to join and devoted to the construction of Pacific language majors.

Since then, Zoe has worked in a team to design a detailed development plan to establish the Sāmoan language major at her university. Meanwhile, Zoe and her colleagues searched for learning opportunities at foreign universities to study Pacific languages. Later, Zoe was offered the chance to study Sāmoan language at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, which she referred to as "a significant advantage" in her Sāmoan language learning experience. Meanwhile, Zoe prepared to apply for the China Scholarship Council (CSC) to sponsor her to learn the language at a foreign university. In 2017, she was successfully admitted to the scholarship project of the International and Regional Issue Studies to offer her a scholarship to study overseas, which, to a large extent, has relieved the financial burden required to take up this

opportunity. Later that year, she went to the University of Hawai'i at Manoa to study Sāmoan language for a year.

When asked about the motivations of studying Sāmoan language, Zoe talked about several aspects that have influenced her. China's new developing strategy, the BRI, allowed her to take interest in the Pacific region. Because of the BRI and its related programs, the Pacific has moved to the center of China's diplomatic discourse and is presented as a significant component in the Maritime Silk Road Construction (Blanchard & Flint, 2017; Pan, Clarke, & Loy-Wilson, 2019; Wang, 2016). Meanwhile, Zoe cites career development as a Chinese scholar and university lecturer as a personally motivating factor. As a recent area of interest in Chinese academia, Zoe believes that compared to other disciplines where numerous Chinese scholars have carved out careers in the past, this field (Sāmoan language and Pacific Studies) could provide her with space to explore her own academic development. In addition, Zoe also expressed how she wanted to utilise her Sāmoan language capacity to offer language courses to Chinese students as a teacher to contribute to the development of her university

Over the following two years, she worked on collecting study resources and contacting potential Sāmoan teachers. She went to the University of Auckland, New Zealand for two months and bought a lot of study materials for Chinese students, including textbooks, dictionaries, and storybooks. She also successfully recruited a Sāmoan teacher who has expressed a high willingness to work at her university. "It was quite a relief for me", she said, "as I have found a true companion who can face the challenge with me together". In 2020, the first Sāmoan language course was started at Zoe's university. It is offered also as an optional course open for all students to take if they are interested. In the first semester, twelve students enrolled in the elementary Sāmoan language course, including three international students. When she heard the news that she would have twelve students in the class, "I was excited to see them", Zoe said, "It's a very great start, isn't it?"

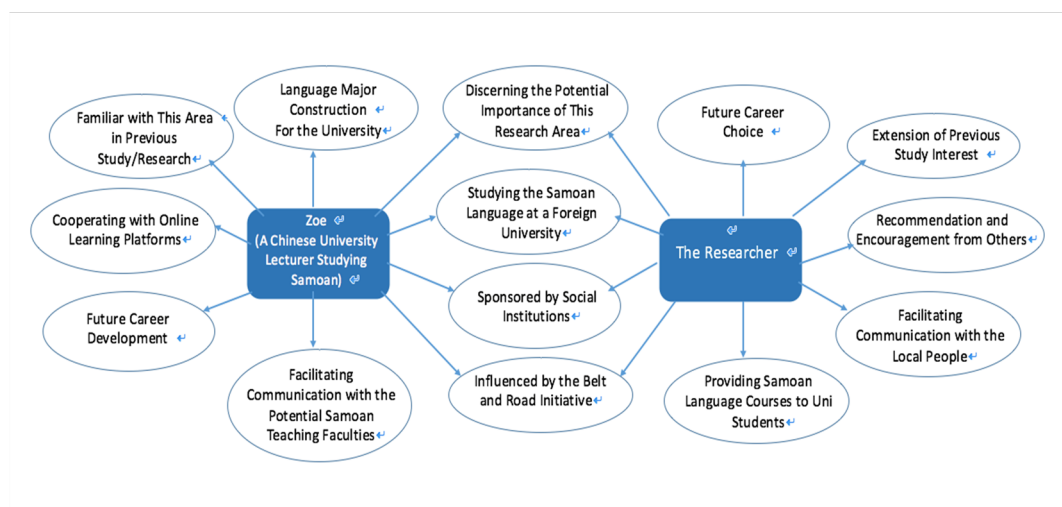


Fig. 3: The Map of Perspectives from the People in the Canoe

Zoe also indicated that her university would take steps to establish eight Pacific language majors, including Sāmoan, Tongan, Māori, Cook Island Māori, Niuean, Fijian and others. The language courses are just the first steps for the discipline's construction. With more teaching faculty on-board, they hope to not only increase teaching capacity but also enrich course content and expand their teaching and learning areas to include the cultural, social, political, and economic aspects of Sāmoa and the Pacific region. During the interview, Zoe expressed high confidence in fulfilling the goal of recruiting students to take up the Sāmoan language major at her university in the next five years.

When discussing the possible factors that may influence the future students' and teachers' motivations in learning the Sāmoan language, Zoe first addressed this issue from students' perspectives. She asserted that as long as the BRI continues, the South Pacific region would remain a relatively prioritised position in China's geopolitical, economic, and diplomatic discourse. In this regard, she expects that more students will express interest and willingness to know more about this area and learn more Pacific languages. Also, Zoe emphasised the significance of the university's contributions as the university can boost the students' study passion, specifically how the university will provide resources to help develop the Pacific language majors. She explained that students would be more interested in choosing these majors if they consider them conducive to their self-enhancement.

Secondly, from the aspect of Chinese scholars and university lecturers, Zoe suggested that they should consider their positions within the nation's and the university's future development. Most Chinese universities have actively taken on the task of cultivating specialised talents for the future development of the country. Therefore, university teachers should stay aware of the country's development goals and identify potential opportunities for their careers. In this regard, the BRI has provided a great opportunity for Chinese scholars to explore unfamiliar areas. Their knowledge, experiences, and views are of great value to China who is attempting to establish itself as a responsible stakeholder and committed to telling a better China story on the international stage.

In 2014, I was admitted to the same university as Zoe's and majored in English Language and Literature. In December 2017, I was informed that my school was recruiting participants for the faculty cultivation program in South Pacific Languages. This program intended to cultivate non-universal language teachers for the university's Pacific language majors, looking for candidates among senior undergraduate and postgraduate students. Fortunately, after a series of assessments and examinations, I was chosen as one of the five participants.

There are several reasons why I chose to participate in this program. Firstly, I saw it as conducive to my future career as the candidates in this program will be given a lecturer position at the university after studying the language at a foreign university. Becoming a university lecturer is a highly coveted position in China, which I also aspire toward. However, it is incredibly challenging to receive a permanent position at China's first-level universities, even with qualifications from prestigious foreign universities. This project provided a rapid pathway into academia, which heightened its attractiveness. Secondly,

as a newly developing field in China, Pacific language studies requires in-depth exploration by Chinese scholars from Chinese perspectives. The research and teaching possibilities here are rich. Further, my proficiency in the Sāmoan language, I believe, will be conducive for my future study and research career.

For me, despite my considerable personal interest in Indigenous Pacific languages and cultures, the motivations of learning Sāmoan language were more associated with pragmatic motives such as employment opportunity and career development. The opportunity to study at a foreign university on a scholarship was a massive motivator as well as the promise of a potential lectureship upon my return is a very attractive proposition for anyone. Indeed, though Zoe and I may have different standpoints and purposes when we participated in the program, we agreed that the influence of the Chinese government, the university, and other social institutions should not be overlooked in contributing to the rise of Sāmoan language studies in China. Their involvement has built up a foundation for Sāmoan language studies in China and attracted talented individuals to continue developing it further.

Concluding Discussion

Through the construction of the map of perspectives from people in the canoe, the reasons and motivations that have influenced relevant individuals' participation in Sāmoan language studies have been displayed in visual form. The views, experiences, and perspectives of the people in the canoe are very valuable as they are the main actors on the ground. At the same time, their experiences and perspectives reflect how people from the top of the mountain and top of the tree exert influence on individual choices. This suggests that there are layered complexities that impact the rise of interest in Sāmoan language learning and teaching in China and among Chinese students/teachers. In analysing the perspectives from the canoe, it is clear that their motivations implicate far more complex inter-relatedness among influencing actors including those on top of the mountain, and those who sit on top of the tree.

What this suggests then is that China's implementation of the BRI with its renewed focus on the Pacific will enhance the attention China directs toward the region. In developing further people-to-people contact, China will need to continue to develop a workforce that is competent in Pacific languages. With the establishment of language majors in Chinese universities, and as the Pacific region heightens in importance due to its geostrategic value, we can expect more Chinese nationals to take up the learning of Pacific languages like Sāmoan. In many ways, the geostrategic posturing in response to Australia, New Zealand and the United States, means that China has an opportunity to build Sāmoan language capacity that helps to challenge the centrality of English, whilst recruiting Sāmoan students to learn Chinese in exchange.

For the spread and sustainability of the Sāmoan language, this is a potential opportunity that will help to position the value of Sāmoan language beyond it being a mere accompaniment to English as the main lingua franca in the region. The fact that online learning is a major possibility for shifting Sāmoan teaching in China to wider audiences

also speaks to this potentiality. In recent years, the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) and Small Private Online Course (SPOC) have worked closely with Chinese universities to offer courses to a more extensive audience. MOOC is an online course platform that offers lectures with unlimited participation and open access via the Internet (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2016). The creation of MOOC and SPOC has enlarged the base of learners and offers them the flexibility and choice to study courses based on their needs and conditions. This flexibility and convenience that these online courses provide also provides additional opportunities for students in China to learn more languages outside of formal institutions.

Another optimistic reading of this potential can be found in the way in which the different layers and perspectives of the maps are interwoven and mutually shape each other. It is clear that those at the top of the mountain have provided a grand strategy that resources those that sit at the top of the trees to build the capacity of those that are positioned in the canoe. This means that as long as the resources and strategic direction from China continues to focus on Sāmoa and the Pacific, that the potential for the learning of Sāmoan language will perpetuate. As a key focus of the NUA is to ensure that culture (of which language forms a central component part), there is the opportunity for Sāmoan as well as other Pacific languages to leverage this geopolitical situation to their advantage.

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Keywords

Language; Sustainability; Sāmoa/Sāmoan; Belt and Road Initiative; Fa'afaletui; New Urban Agenda