

The ASAO GRIKPIC grant for 2012 was awarded for printing and distributing 100 copies of a 281 page English-to-vernacular dictionary of six of Tanna's major languages. Numerous villages participated in "dictionary workshops" to compile the data. Kenneth Nehrbass, assistant professor of International Studies at Belhaven University, facilitated the project during his nine years of fieldwork with Summer Institute of Linguistics in Vanuatu.

The multi-language dictionary has been popular on Tanna since many people are interested in maintaining their vernacular. Also, there is a movement in Vanuatu to promote vernacular education through at least second grade. This monograph can be used in elementary schools to stimulate vernacular education in the following ways: 1) It helps familiarize students with the "Tanna alphabet;" 2) it can help students (or educators) learn about their neighboring vernaculars; and 3) it can facilitate the integration of English with students knowledge of their vernaculars.

By June 2012, 100 copies were distributed. One copy went to the National Archives, and another to the University of the South Pacific, Emalus campus library (see story below).

Six language Tanna Dictionary Published

"We're ALWAYS MIXING 'lanwis' with Bislama; it'd be terrible if we lost our language altogether."

Dr Kenneth Nehrbass, an anthropology and translation consultant with Summer Institute of Linguistics, said he found this mix of languages often on Tanna Island.

"People often told me that they wanted their language documented, to immortalize it. In case the next generation shifted to Bislama," he said.

Nehrbass' work with SIL involved learning a language on Tanna, developing an alphabet, teaching vernacular literacy, and training local leaders to translate important materials such as Vanua Booklets, health books, and the New Testament.

Nehrbass explained that some important linguistic works on some of Tanna's languages have been published, but other languages on the island have barely been documented.

He began collecting words in SW Tanna and Vaha, and became so intrigued with the project, that he extended the study to encompass all the major languages on Tanna: Whitesands, North Tanna, Kumeu, Lenakel, SW Tanna, and Vaha.

"I held 'missionary work shops' throughout Tanna island to compile the data. Church workers, chiefs, men, women and children contributed their knowledge of their own ver-



Chief Jost Wang presents the book to Jere Norman, head librarian



Sylvie Tapaoui-Garret, Chief Jost Wang, Prof. Eric Colvin and Dr. Kenneth Nehrbass

nacular. Other linguists and missionaries on Tanna also helped with the study."

In the end the dictionary surpassed 1700 entries. Dr Nehrbass said it took 8 years to complete the project. The monograph was published by SIL International.

In May, Dr Nehrbass will distribute 90 copies of the multi-language dictionary to the schools of Tanna - one

copy for each school on the island.

He explained, "Teachers can use this material to help students become familiar with the Tanna-wide alphabet, to learn neighboring vernaculars, and to integrate their learning of English with their knowledge of 'lanwis'."

"Hopefully the project will inspire other language communities to compile dictionary

as well," he said.

The printing of the Tanna-wide dictionary was made possible by a grant from the Association of Social Anthropology in Oceania (ASAO). One grant is given annually by the ASAO to return indigenous knowledge to communities in the Pacific.

Dr Nehrbass said, "I feel honored that the ASAO

decided to fund the printing of this dictionary. I am confident that teachers and students on Tanna will be very interested in seeing their own language in print, and comparing it to the other languages on Tanna."

Dr Nehrbass and the chief of Yanuslen Village (Tanna), Jemri Nasel, presented one copy to June Norman, the head librarian of the National

Library, and two copies to the library at USP Emalus Campus. Professor Eric Colvin, Campus Director of USP and head of the school of Law, and Sylvie Tapaoui-Garret, library assistant, received the copies for USP.

Mrs Tapaoui-Garret said that the dictionary will be held in the special Vanuatu collection, and added that books on Vanuatu's languages are especially popular at the library.

Story about the ASAO grant for Tanna's multi-language dictionary in the Daily Post



Administrators of the Tafea Education Office receive copies of the monograph



Distributing copies to each of the 90 schools in Tanna