

Innovations and constraints in language and work: Semi-subsistence agricultural practices in Solomon Islands

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Over 80 per cent of the Solomon Islands' population is involved in gardening (e.g. growing vegetables for family consumption and for sale). Gardening practices contribute significantly to food security. Gardening practices and the language(s) used to talk about them also reflect social and linguistic change. This paper addresses the question of the potential of language sciences to contribute to the sustainability of work and social practices, through a discussion of the linguistic and social responses of one community to two gardening innovations: (a) the introduction of crop rotation, and (b) a program that encouraged families to plant small gardens close to their houses so that they would have a readily available source of food for daily consumption. The research is based on linguistic and community development research within one community.

With high levels of population growth, and limited land, the community has responded positively to the advantages of crop rotation. Rather than growing a few crops in rows in one garden, people can use one garden plot to grow a wider range of vegetables in a smaller space. The presentation discusses the linguistic resources that exist to describe the new practice of 'crop rotation', and the introduction of new crops. This includes loss of terms, changes in the meaning of terms, and inclusion of words from Solomons Pijin, the country's language of wider communication.

The second innovation, encouraging families to plant a garden close to home, is intended to increase nutritional security and reduce workload, especially for women. The physical environment, and existing social and gardening practices, explain why some villages within the community found it a more valuable idea than others. Through a conceptual analysis of the *concept* of 'food always in the home' (through paraphrase in simple and translatable language), the paper demonstrates the value of language sciences to understanding existing and changing work practices. A conceptual analysis demonstrates that adapting this idea was not a rejection of the innovation, but an appropriate way within the cultural and physical environment to maintain important social practices.

The presentation focuses on ways in which existing practices and linguistic resources are adapted to allow the community to benefit from these innovations. It highlights the role of language documentation, and conceptual analysis, in explaining and understanding the impact of innovation and change in a semi-subsistence agricultural context.

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