

554 W. 113th St.,
New York 25, N. Y.,
May 1, 1957.

TO: TRIPP Committee.

Report on Linguistic Project.

This report deals with the work done under my recently expired grant from TRIPP, which work is continuing at present.

In the work which I had completed before this year one result assumed far more significance than anything else. This was that concerning the position of the Polynesian languages within the Malayo-Polynesian family. This matter, therefore, demanded special attention.

In fact, two problems were involved. First, an attempt should be made to determine whether or not a finer classification was possible, that is, whether or not the position of Polynesian could be defined with more precision. Secondly, a careful and thorough study and presentation of the evidence should be made. This was essential because I had previously published only conclusions with no supporting evidence.

The results so far achieved are as follows: a more precise classification has been arrived at. Polynesian, Fijian, and Rotuman form a sub-grouping. Thus, Fijian and Rotuman are the languages with the most recent historical connection with the Polynesian languages. And, although the evidence for this has not been fully assembled, it can be stated as virtually certain that the Fijian - Rotuman - Polynesian grouping belongs in turn to a larger grouping including the languages of the islands of Efate, Epi, and the intervening smaller islands. This, it will be noted, constitutes a portion of my original Central New Hebrides grouping.

I am at present engaged in writing the detailed treatment of the Polynesian - Fijian - Rotuman grouping. As I am writing it as my doctoral dissertation, I of course intend to continue working on it until it is finished. The prospects are that I will have completed a draft by the early part of the summer.

As was noted above the importance of this grouping makes it imperative that it be presented with careful documentation. However, this particular case also possesses certain characteristics which make it a favorable background for a discussion of the methodology involved in sub-grouping problems.

The Malayo-Polynesian family is similar to most of the language families encountered by anthropological linguistics in that there are a large number of languages, usually of very minor political importance, mostly unwritten and with no recorded history, and very few of them are at all well described. On the other hand there is relatively good descriptive data for the particular languages in the sub-group under consideration. This permits a study embracing evidence of all sorts - phonological,

grammatical, and lexical. Furthermore, there already exists a small but sound body of comparative Malayo-Polynesian studies to which this evidence can be related. The range of methodological considerations which can be treated give an added interest to a detailed study of this particular grouping.

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