

Oratory in Samoan and Tongan Languages

Book – *Lāuga: Samoan Oratory* by Tātufu Fa’afetai Matā’afa Tu’i (1987)

***Fakaholo Talanoa 2: Ma’a e kau tufungalea, kau punake, kau fa’u, kau malanga* by ‘Ilaisa Futa-i-Ha’angana Helu (2003)**

1. What is oratory? Speech making – very important in Samoa, Tonga and Fiji. Formal form of social communication where there is an addresser/speaker, an audience/listeners, and a message(s) to convey. Purpose of the speech – depends on the ceremony. Generally to convey a message or messages.

In Samoan culture there are occasions that arise which require speeches to be made. For example during ceremonies of wedding, welcome, opening of a building, launch of a boat, title investiture, funeral and burial services. Informal speeches can also be given during: visit to a sick person (ma’i), giving an apology (ifonga), thanking a preacher for his sermon (to’ana’i or tofi). These speeches can be delivered by anyone and non-matai, usually an older person.

Formal oratory is the exclusive prerogative of matai (chiefs – ali’i (chief) or tulāfale (orator). Both chief and orator may orate / deliver a speech, but untitled men (taule’ale’a) and women (aualuma) cannot. But only orators can deliver really great and masterful speeches, especially high-ranking orators (tulāfale ali’i).

2. Difficulties of translation – many words, expressions, place names, personal names lack an exact English translation, so notes are often used to clarify Samoan concepts. An ethnographic translation of a speech is what we will study.
3. Qualities of oratory – allusive (referring to different events or things), esoteric knowledge (special knowledge only known by orators or learned Samoans).

The literary form of speeches differs from other discourses such as the *solo* (poems). A solo is often characterised by rhyming stanzas or verses, repetition of key words, and soliloquy (talking to oneself), but a speech is full of allusions, metaphors and proverbial expressions.

4. Concepts integral to the philosophy of oratory – structure of a speech – a speech has a number of named sections, each with its own style, e.g. Taea (morning), Fa’alupega (ceremonial address), Lāuga seu (interrupted lāuga).

Fa’alupega – the ceremonial style and address of an individual, village or district. A reciting of the titles associated with a family, a village or district, or all of Samoa. There are different levels of fa’alupega. The equivalent in Tongan of the fa’alupega is the ***Fakatapu*** – the acknowledging of chiefly titles and prominent people present (or not present) in a ceremony or social gathering at the beginning of a formal speech.

But the Samoan fa’alupega is more formal and elaborate, a set of titles that are always acknowledged, whereas the fakatapu depends on the titles or high-ranking people present. Sometimes a speaker acknowledges a title or a person and then add “although they are not present”, but this is rare.

A verbal distillate (an explanation of a piece) of history and a who's who (dictionary of important people) of a community, a district, and even all Samoa in allegorical language. Examples:

- Greetings to you Tūmua (reference to Lufilufi and Leulumoega – villages in Upolu) Tūmua – tū (stand) mua – (front)
- Greetings to you 'Āiga i le Tai (reference to villages of Manono and Apolima islands) 'Āiga (People or Extended Family) i le Tai (from the Sea or Places in the Seas)
- Greetings to the one Wood Used for the Yokes (wooden and leather fitting placed around the neck of an ox or horse so it can pull a load) of all Samoans (reference to the Tuimanu'a, supreme ruler of Manu'a)
- Greetings to the House of Ten (the ten districts of Tutuila island)

Note the use of metaphor or metaphorical language – a figure of speech or a figurative expression which makes a thing representative or symbolic of something else, e.g. the sun has fallen or set means the monarch has passed away.

Morphological meaning of fa'alupega (fa'a- + lupe + -ga) and fakatapu (faka- + tapu).

Taeao (mornings) – the recounting of important events in Samoa's history. There are events in villages or districts and in Samoa as a whole. Some relate to battles fought and the spilling of blood. Particularly important in a Welcome Speech. E.g. taeao of the arrival of Christianity, the taeao of the first 'ava ceremony of Tagaloa and Pava, the taeao at Ma'auga (Salamāsina was installed the first Queen of Sāmoa – tafa'ifā – Tuiātua, Tuiā'ana, Gato'aitele, Vaetamasoali'i)

Lāuga Seu – a special type of oratory without any particular set structure. Interruptions by an orator are usually during speeches between visitors and hosts. Reasons may be he thinks some words are used wrongly, he wants to discredit the speaker, he has no respect for the speaker. The speaker may then ask a question to the person interrupting, and if the person interrupting cannot answer the questions he knows he has lost and his title has been disgraced. The speaker may then continue his speech to the end.

5. Anatomy of oratory – refers to the different sections of a speech
6. Characteristics of oratory – physical, literary, symbolic,

Physical features - Use of whisk and staff – usually the fly whisk (specially made and decorated) is used in speeches delivered indoors, and the staff is used in the speeches delivered in the outdoor malaefono (clearing).





Literary devices used in oratory: personification – e.g. the sky crying tears when it is raining; metaphor - eclipse of the sun or moon, breaking up of the earth, darkening of the village, flash of the sacred lightning, falling of the house or tree – all meaning the death of a chief.

Repetition of words or key ideas – emphasises particular points and helps to give a sense of unity to the speech.

Reciting of genealogies (explanation of the generations of people descending from ancestors) – redefine and remind the audience of former alliances (unity) and traditions (events that happened in the past).

Symbolic devices – where a person represents people e.g. Sina is symbolic of Samoan *taupou* (young unmarried chiefly girls). Metaphor is also symbolic - the death of a chief may be referred to as a broken sky.

7. Kinds of speeches:
8. Convocation speech – old titles and dignitaries in the fa’alupega (ceremonial styles of address) are re-lived.
9. Wedding speech – significance of alliances, status and rank
10. Welcome speech in churches – welcome of people to a church ceremony

11. Inauguration speech e.g. church opening
12. Title investiture speech with central significance to the local village and district community
13. Funeral speech and interprets some of the lagi (heaven) concepts associated with the dead