
ROTIS ON THE RARA: LEXICAL NATIVISATION IN FIJI ENGLISH

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Abstract

In outer circle Englishes, the boundaries between nativised loanwords and code-switched lexical items are often blurred. This article attempts to gauge the degree of nativisation of a set of common Fijian and Hindi loans by surveying expatriates' use and knowledge of these words. Results indicate that loans forming part of expatriates' active vocabularies also occur most often in the media and in conversation. These words also are pragmatically essential for effective day-to-day communication in Fiji. Differences in the types of words used and known by women, men and teenagers also reflect the immediate pragmatic value they have for each of these groups. The number of loans expatriates acquire increases steadily over the first seven years of residence. After this few new Fijian or Hindi words are learned.

1. Introduction

Fiji belongs to Kachru's 'outer circle' of English speaking nations. Although English is one of the three major languages spoken in Fiji (the other two being Fijian and Fiji Hindi¹), it is the first language of only a tiny portion of the population (1-2%). Nevertheless, it plays a pivotal role in the day-to-day lives of most, if not all, Fiji Islanders. English is the principal language of government, administration, the judicial system, and commerce; the major, and sometimes the only, medium of instruction in the education system; and an important, though by no means the *only*, lingua franca among people with different first languages. English is also the dominant language of the media.

The structure, development and nativisation of the Fiji English lexis is much the same as that of any other variety of post-colonial English. What sets it apart from all other varieties of English is the rich and colourful amalgam of Fijian and Hindi expressions. Hindi words found their way into Fiji English (as well as Fijian) after the introduction of large numbers of Indian indentured labourers between 1879 and 1916.

During my seven year residence in Fiji I compiled a corpus of Fiji English lexemes and expressions. The corpus is based on numerous written and oral sources. These include: stories, articles, letters, and advertisements in the local English print media; university students' essays, assignments and examination scripts; hand-written and printed notices and signs; locally published plays and novels; excerpts from conversations I either overheard or personally participated in; recorded interviews and conversations; as well as television and radio news broadcasts, commentaries, advertisements, and community announcements.

The lexis of Fiji English embodies much of the same type of lexical material of other post-colonial Englishes. It comprises: 'indigenous' loans (i.e. Fijian, Hindi, and Polynesian); loans from other varieties of English (e.g. Indian, Australian, American and British English); calques (mainly from Fijian); reborrowings²; hybrids (i.e. English + Fijian or Hindi lexical collocations and compounds); standard English lexemes that have undergone locally motivated semantic shifts; grammatical conversions; novel compounds of existing standard English lexemes; English archaisms; neologisms; and locally coined exclamations, interjections and directives.

The majority of Fiji English speakers are at least bilingual, generally having as their first language either Fijian or Fiji Hindi.³ The greater part of indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians are also quite conversant in each other's languages. The result is widespread code-switching accompanied by the systematic and routine insertion of Fijian and Hindi words into English. Since interlocutors are often so familiar with each others' languages, the boundaries between nativised loanwords and code-switched Fijian/Hindi lexical material becomes blurred. Naturally, this is not an issue for any bi- or multilingual speaker. It is only an issue for the linguist or lexicographer who feels obliged to delineate the lexical parameters of language varieties.

A continuum of relationships exists between borrowings and all code-switched forms so that the two are not, I believe, clearly distinct phenomena as some (e.g. Poplack 1980; Sankoff, Poplack & Vanniarajan 1990) have suggested. Moreover, the process of lexical nativisation also forms a

continuum, and the point at which an item can or cannot be said to be fully integrated into the recipient language is, therefore, arbitrary.

2. The Survey

When two expatriate Australians invited me to join them at lunchtime for ‘rotis on the rara’⁴, I came upon the idea of devising a method of determining which Fijian and Hindi words had filtered through into the English of expatriates living in Fiji. This might provide some clue or indication as to which Fijian and Hindi words had become fully nativised loans.

Generally, expatriates have little incentive to learn Fijian or Hindi, especially in urban Suva, where English is used more than almost anywhere else in the country. Furthermore, expatriates are usually under contract and most leave Fiji after completing one or two three-year contracts. Fiji Islanders will invariably address expatriates in English because (a) the chance that an expatriate can speak any Fijian or Hindi is negligible, and (b) Fiji Islanders know expatriates have little or no interest in learning Fijian or Hindi.

Apart from some discourse particles (e.g. *bula* ‘hello’, *moce* ‘good-bye’ and *acha* ‘okay, fine, good’) and exclamations (e.g. *oilei* ‘an expression of surprise’ and *uro* ‘an exclamatory approbation’)⁵, the most common direct exposure expatriates have to most Fijian and Hindi words is through the print media. Indeed, Deverson (1984: 5) maintains that the principal ways in which Māori has impacted upon New Zealand English is through the print media and literature. In the Fiji context, however, literature cannot be counted as a significant vector for the introduction of Fijian or Hindi loans into Fiji English, as there is an extreme paucity of local literature.

Table 1 shows the typical categories (and their proportions) of Fijian and Hindi loans in Fiji English. The data are based on an analysis of a corpus of more than 680 attested lexical items.

2.1 Method

I devised a simple self-reporting survey similar to that used by Bellett (1995) in her study of Māori lexical influence on New Zealand English. Respondents were presented with a list of 98 Fijian and 45 Hindi words arranged in random order in three columns. The words chosen represented those that have been regularly cited as belonging to Fiji English (see for instance: Siegel 1987, 1989; Monsell-Davis 1984; Arms 1975; Kelly 1975; Moag & Moag 1977;

CATEGORY OF LOAN	%	%
	FIJIAN	HINDI
A. Inedible flora (trees and medicinal herbs)	10	—
B. Edible flora (vegetables, fruits, herbs and spices)	10	12
C. Inedible fauna (birds)	1	—
D. Edible fauna (mainly seafood)	7	1
E. Prepared foods and beverages	3	30
F. General/miscellaneous nouns, adjectives and verbs	27	32
G. Culture and religion (customs, concepts, events and practices)	20	21
H. Socio-political terms	12	—
I. Discourse particles and formulae (greetings etc.)	4	1
J. Exclamations and interjections	6	3

Table 1: Fijian and Hindi loans in Fiji English

Geraghty 1977; Thomson 1999), which regularly appear in the daily tabloids without a gloss, or are used in radio and television English language news broadcasts.

For each word respondents were required to indicate whether they: (a) definitely knew the meaning of the word but actually never used it, and (b) had used (or still used) the word in everyday English conversations with Fijians, Indo-Fijians or other expatriates. Words which respondents marked under category (a) were seen as part of the respondents' passive vocabulary, whilst words marked under (b) were seen as constituting part of their active vocabulary.

2.2 Participants

Responses were obtained from 140 expatriates (73 males, 67 females) from 20 different countries, three quarters of whom (75.6%) came from English speaking countries.⁶ Respondents were found on a networking basis (Holmes, Bell & Boyce 1991: 23-25), and ranged in age from 12 to 68, with a mean age of 33 (see Table 2). Length of residence in Fiji ranged from six months to 23 years, with a mean length of residency of four years, nine months (see Table 3).

Education levels of respondents were as follows: secondary educated 35% (49/140), tertiary educated 65% (91/140). One third of respondents (33.6%) were engaged in full-time study either at secondary school (23.6%) or university (10%), the rest were either engaged in domestic duties (12.9%) or in some professional occupation (53.5%).

AGE GROUP	NUMBER & PERCENTAGE OF SAMPLE
10 - 20 years	34 (24.3%)
21 - 30 years	21 (15.0%)
31 - 40 years	39 (27.9%)
41 - 50 years	23 (16.4%)
51 - 60 years	20 (14.3%)
61 - 70 years	3 (2.1%)

Table 2: Age distribution of sample

LENGTH OF RESIDENCE	NUMBER & PERCENTAGE OF SAMPLE
< 1 year	15 (10.7%)
1 - 3 years	60 (42.9%)
4 - 6 years	36 (25.7%)
7 - 10 years	12 (8.6%)
> 10 years	17 (12.1%)

Table 3: Distribution of length of residence

3. Results

Table 4 shows the mean number of Fijian and Hindi words known and used with their standard deviations. The large standard deviations reflect the heterogeneous population sample, as it consisted of a wide variety of ages, length of residence, occupations, and countries of origin.

Although Bellett's data cannot realistically be compared with this data, it is nonetheless, at least worth comparing both studies' results for the mean number of words known and used. The mean number of Māori words Bellett's respondents knew and used were 41 and 26 respectively. This shows her respondents had a larger passive than active Māori vocabulary. The reverse is true for respondents in my survey, where Fijian and Hindi active vocabularies were larger than passive vocabularies. This is likely to be due to the pragmatically different linguistic environments and circumstances each group of respondents find themselves in. Given the limited time expatriates normally stay in Fiji, not to mention the general lack of incentive to learn more than a minimum of Fijian or Hindi words, it is unlikely they will learn many of them

LOANWORDS	MEANS	STANDARD DEVIATIONS
Fijian words known (out of a total of 98)	13.5	10.8
Fijian words used	29.4	15.4
Fijian words known & used combined	41.6	18.4
Hindi words known (out of a total of 45)	3.6	3.3
Hindi words used	5.3	3.3
Hindi words known & used combined	7.6	5.9
Fijian & Hindi words known combined (out of a total of 143)	16.1	12.8
Fijian & Hindi words used combined	34.2	18.8
Fijian & Hindi words known & used combined	49.7	22.3

Table 4: Mean number of words known and use

unless they are pragmatically useful or are required in every-day conversations.⁷ On the other hand, New Zealand Pākehā now seem to be under growing pressure to learn, or at least be familiar with a wide range of Māori terms. This is a consequence of New Zealand's attempts to move closer to being a bicultural society. In this context, the Māori language and culture have enjoyed an increase in both status and esteem over the last decade or two. The increase in educational initiatives to promote both Pākehā and Māori knowledge of the Māori language may also be a corollary of this.

Table 5 shows the combined percentage rates (in descending order) for declared knowledge of meanings for Fijian words and their use.⁸ The category of loan (as enumerated in Table 1) is also indicated for each word .

The mean number of Fijian words used or known was 41.6 (42.4% of the 98 Fijian words). The vast majority of Fijian words that have less than a 30% combined use/knowledge rate have a higher rate of knowledge than use and may, therefore, be considered as part of respondents' passive vocabulary. Almost all words that have *more* than a 30% combined use/knowledge rate have a higher rate of use than mere knowledge of the meaning of the word, and may, therefore, be considered as forming part of expatriates' active Fijian vocabulary. The number of Fijian words used and known for individual respondents ranges from four (4.1%) to 88 (89.8%) words.

With the exception of the exclamatory approbation *uro* (which is rarely seen in print), all Fijian words with more than a 90% combined use and

Table 5: Combined response rates in descending order for Fijian loans

LEXICAL ITEM & CATEGORY OF LOAN		KNOW/USE %
<i>bula</i> ‘hello’	I	100
<i>sulu</i> ‘sarong’	F	100
<i>dalo</i> ‘taro’	B	99
<i>vinaka</i> ‘thank you’	I	98
<i>lovo</i> ‘earth oven’	F	98
<i>yaqona</i> ‘kava’	E	97
<i>moce</i> ‘good-bye; good night’	I	97
<i>bure</i> ‘house, hut’	F	96
<i>meke</i> ‘k.o. dance’	G	96
<i>uro</i> ‘exclamatory approbation’	J	93
<i>yadra</i> ‘good morning’	I	84
<i>walu</i> ‘kingfish’	D	83
<i>tabua</i> ‘whale’s tooth’	G	81
<i>kokoda</i> ‘marinated raw fish’	E	81
<i>tanoa</i> ‘carved wooden kava bowl’	F	80
<i>lali</i> ‘hollowed out log drum’	F	76
<i>sevusevu</i> ‘gifts presented at arrival’	G	75
<i>isa!</i> ‘exclamation of surprise, sadness’	J	73
<i>lolo</i> ‘coconut cream’	B	72
<i>io</i> ‘yes’	I	71
<i>sega</i> ‘no’	I	70
<i>turaga</i> ‘chief’	H	69
<i>masi</i> ‘bark cloth’	F	68
<i>bilo</i> ‘cup made from _ coconut shell’	F	68
<i>vanua</i> ‘land; region; community’	H	67
<i>kumala</i> ‘sweet potato’	B	67
<i>bilibili</i> ‘bamboo raft’	F	64
<i>sa!</i> ‘expression of surprise’	J	64
<i>kai</i> ‘freshwater mussel’	D	62
<i>mataqali</i> ‘a kin group’	H	61
<i>sasa</i> ‘k.o. hand-held broom’	F	61
<i>bele</i> ‘leafy green vegetable’	B	61

(Table 5 continued)

LEXICAL ITEM & CATEGORY OF LOAN		KNOW/USE %
<i>duruka</i> 'wild sugar cane'	B	60
<i>tilou/tulou</i> 'pardon me'	I	58
<i>tui</i> 'king; chief'	H	57
<i>talanoa</i> 'a chat, informal talk'	F	52
<i>vakalolo</i> 'k.o. pudding'	F	49
<i>kaiviti</i> 'an indigenous Fijian'	F	48
<i>waka</i> 'most prized part of kava root'	B	47
<i>rourou</i> 'taro leaves cooked in lolo'	B	46
<i>koro</i> 'village'	F	45
<i>vudi</i> 'plantain banana'	B	43
<i>drua</i> 'twin-hulled canoe'	F	41
<i>magimagi</i> 'sinnet'	F	40
<i>loloma</i> 'love; gift'	G/I	39
<i>turaga-ni-koro</i> 'village chief'	H	39
<i>dakua</i> 'k.o. tree; timber'	A	39
<i>mana</i> 'mud crab'	F	37
<i>taukei</i> 'land owner'	H	36
<i>bu</i> 'green coconut'	B	36
<i>ota</i> 'fern eaten as a vegetable'	B	35
<i>tikina</i> 'district'	H	35
<i>barewa</i> 'exclamatory approbation'	J	34
<i>yaka</i> 'k.o. tree; timber'	A	34
<i>taralala</i> 'k.o. dance'	F	33
<i>vesi</i> 'k.o. tree; timber'	A	32
<i>kavika</i> 'Malay apple'	A	32
<i>kerekere</i> 'to cadge'	G	31
<i>miti</i> 'coconut cream with lemon juice'	E	31
<i>kutu</i> 'louse'	F	31
<i>Bose Levu Vakaturaga</i> 'Great Council of Chiefs'	H	31
<i>ivi</i> 'Tahitian chestnut'	B	30
<i>salusalu</i> 'a garland'	F	30
<i>sobo</i> 'expression of disapproval'	J	28
<i>kula</i> 'collared lory; fringe around a mat'	C	28

(Table 5 continued)

LEXICAL ITEM & CATEGORY OF LOAN		KNOW/USE %
<i>reguregu</i> ‘condolence gathering’	G	27
<i>colo</i> ‘the bush, highlands’	F	27
<i>wi</i> ‘Tahitian apple’	B	26
<i>solu</i> ‘k.o. fundraising event’	G	24
<i>lewena</i> ‘inferior part of kava root’	B	24
<i>malua</i> ‘later, bye-and-bye’	F	23
<i>yaya</i> ‘stuff, things, belongings’	F	22
<i>kana</i> ‘to eat; food, a meal’	F	21
<i>uvi</i> ‘yam’	B	21
<i>vasu</i> ‘a part-European; nephew’	H	20
<i>cibi</i> ‘pre-match war song’	G	19
<i>saqa</i> ‘trevally’	D	19
<i>kailoma</i> ‘a part-European’	F	19
<i>mokusiga</i> ‘to hang about’	F	19
<i>kanikani</i> ‘skin condition from too much kava’	F	18
<i>yavusa</i> ‘largest kinship group’	H	16
<i>kati</i> ‘k.o. card game’	F	16
<i>rara</i> ‘village green; grassed area for meetings’	F	14
<i>taura tale</i> ‘village hoe down’	F	14
<i>leqa</i> ‘trouble’	F	14
<i>uto</i> ‘breadfruit’	B	13
<i>magiti</i> ‘a feast’	F	13
<i>voivoi</i> ‘pandanus leaves’	A	12
<i>qari</i> ‘mud crab’	D	12
<i>vulagi</i> ‘a stranger’	F	11
<i>Vola ni Kawa Bula</i> ‘Fijian Register’	H	11
<i>gunu sede</i> ‘k.o. fundraising event’	G	11
<i>balolo</i> ‘k.o. annelid’	D	10
<i>kosa</i> ‘kava dregs’	F	10
<i>teitei</i> ‘vegetable garden’	F	8
<i>vakasoso</i> ‘k.o. desert’	E	8
<i>kuro</i> ‘cooking pot’	F	4
<i>gatu</i> ‘large printed bark cloth’	F	1

Table 6: Combined response rates in descending order for Hindi loans

LEXICAL ITEM & CATEGORY OF LOAN		KNOW/USE %
<i>oti</i> ‘unleavened bread’	E	95
<i>samosa</i> ‘deep-fried savoury pastry’	E	89
<i>puri</i> ‘small deep-fried flat bread’	E	61
<i>bhindi</i> ‘okra/ladies fingers’	B	51
<i>bhaji</i> ‘k.o. green leafy vegetable’	B	44
<i>acha</i> ‘okay, fine, good, great’	I	34
<i>girmit(iya)</i> ‘indenture period’	F	31
<i>achar</i> ‘relish made from green fruits’	E	31
<i>barfi</i> ‘k.o. sweet’	E	27
<i>bhuja</i> ‘salty snack of peas, peanuts etc’	E	25
<i>lakri</i> ‘k.o. deep-fried sweet’	E	25
<i>bara</i> ‘k.o. deep-fried savoury’	E	18
<i>dhaniya</i> ‘coriander’	B	16
<i>murgee/murga</i> ‘a chicken’	D	15
<i>jungle</i> ‘wild; uncivilised person’	F	15
<i>sirdar</i> ‘foreman, overseer’	F	15
<i>gulgula</i> ‘k.o. deep-fried sweet’	E	15
<i>baigan</i> ‘eggplant’	B	14
<i>seo</i> ‘k.o. savoury’	E	14
<i>matar</i> ‘savoury peas’	E	12
<i>choro</i> ‘to steel’	F	12
<i>jalebi</i> ‘k.o. sweet’	E	12
<i>kedgerie</i> ‘dish of rice, dhal & onions’	E	24
<i>puja</i> ‘Hindu religious rite; prayer’	G	21
<i>kisan</i> ‘farmer’	F	20
<i>halwa</i> ‘k.o. sweet’	E	19
<i>paisa</i> ‘money’	F	11
<i>ghazal</i> ‘slow, emotional love song’	G	11
<i>jira/jeera</i> ‘cumin seed’	B	9
<i>sarso</i> ‘mustard seed’	B	9
<i>bhajan</i> ‘Hindu devotional song’	B	8
<i>hardi/haldi</i> ‘tumeric’	B	8

(Table 6 continued)

LEXICAL ITEM & CATEGORY OF LOAN		KNOW/USE %
<i>piala</i> 'small enamel bowl'	F	8
<i>bhaia/bhaini</i> 'brother; male friend'	F	8
<i>brinjal</i> 'eggplant'	B	6
<i>chor</i> 'a thief'	F	5
<i>paidar</i> 'to go on foot'	F	4
<i>suji</i> 'semolina'	E	3
<i>trup</i> 'k.o. card game'	F	3
<i>chauraiya</i> 'amaranth spinach'	B	2
<i>tulsi</i> 'sweet basil'	B	1
<i>chamar</i> 'a ne'er-do-well'	F	1
<i>tawa</i> 'iron plate for cooking rotis'	F	0
<i>katha</i> 'prayer ceremony'	G	0
<i>pakora</i> 'k.o. savoury snack'	E	0

knowledge rate are seldom glossed or italicised in the English language print media. It is also worth pointing out that three of the five Fijian words to have found their way into the *OED* (*sulu* 'sarong', *yaqona* 'kava', and *bure* 'house') are among the top ten words. These three words, along with *ivi* 'Tahitian chestnut' (which is also listed in the *OED*), are indicated in bold type. Another three of the top ten words are the discourse particles *bula*, *moce*, and *vinaka* 'thank you'. Most tourists who leave Fiji after a week's holiday will be quite familiar with all of these six words.

Table 6 shows the combined percentage rates (in descending order) for declared use and knowledge of meanings for Hindi words. The category of loan is also indicated for each word (see Table 1). Hindi items that are also listed in the *OED* are shown in bold type. The mean number of Hindi words used and known is 7.6 (15.5% of the 45 Hindi words), and ranged from zero to 28 (62.2%) words.

A similar result for 'active' vs 'passive' vocabulary seen for Fijian words was obtained for Hindi words. All Hindi words that have *more* than a 30% combined use and knowledge rate have significantly higher rates of use than mere knowledge of their meanings. These words may be considered forming part of expatriates' active vocabulary. On the other hand, the majority of words

with *less* than a 30% combined use and knowledge rate have significantly higher rates of knowledge of meaning than rates of use. According to the paradigm, these words should be seen as constituting part of expatriates' passive Hindi vocabulary.

When both the Fijian and Hindi loans are considered together, the average number of words used or whose meaning is known is 49.7 (34.3% of all Fijian and Hindi words).

Since the large standard deviations (s.d.) for the mean number of words known and used is indicative of the heterogenous nature of the population sample, it is worth examining responses in terms of gender, age, and length of residence.

3.1 Gender

Generally, there is no statistically significant difference between males and females in their use of and familiarity with the meanings of Fijian and Hindi words, ($t = -.42$, $df = 138$, 2-tailed $p = .673$).⁹ This result coincides with Bellett (1995:82) who found no significant gender difference in knowledge and use of Māori words amongst her New Zealand English speaking respondents. The mean number of Fijian and Hindi words known by males is 48 (s.d. = 25), and for females 50 (s.d. = 20).

For some individual words, however, there are statistically significant differences between males and females. Females tend to use or know the meaning of most Fijian and Hindi names for fruit, vegetables, prepared dishes, and household items much more than males (e.g. *uvi*, *bele*, *lolo*, *ivi*, *vakalolo*, *wi*, *kokoda*, *kavika*, *bu*, *duruka*, *kumala*, *sasa*, *roti*, *bhaji*, *baigan*, *halwa*, *sarso*, *lakri*, *jira*, *barfi*, *gulgula*). The men, on the other hand, clearly showed more knowledge of Fijian socio-political terms (e.g. *vanua*, *reguregu*, *Bose Levu Vakaturaga*, *matagali*, *taukei*, *tikina*) kava terminology (e.g. *waka*, *lewena*, *kosa*), the names of different types of timber (e.g. *dakua*, *vesi*), colloquialisms, exclamations and interjections (e.g. *barewa*, *uro*, *acha*). These specific gender differences are perhaps indicative of the different social roles fulfilled by many expatriate men and women in Fiji. If females who are engaged in full-time study (i.e. school students) are disregarded (21/67 = 31.3%), there are 28 (41.8%) who were employed in professional occupations and 18 (18.9%) who were engaged in domestic duties and the buying and cooking of the family's meals. Even women who were in full-time employment would have some, if not most, influence on the buying and preparation of the family's meals. Women's greater knowledge and use of Fijian and Hindi

names for foods and dishes is, therefore, not all that surprising. The 50 males (50/73 = 68.5%) who were engaged in professional employment outside the home would tend to have a broader range of business and business related social contacts, than most females in the sample. In the Fiji business world, the use of socio-political terms is quite commonplace.

3.2 Age

Age plays a significant factor in the use and knowledge both Fijian and Hindi words. A 1-Way Anova revealed that the older the respondent, the more likely he/she knew the meanings of Fijian and Hindi words and used them in day-to-day English interactions. Table 7 shows the mean number of Fijian and Hindi words (combined) used and known for each age group.

This trend is reversed with use and knowledge of colloquialisms and exclamations (e.g. *sa*, *sobo*, *barewa*, *uro*, *mokusiga*, *yaya*, *paidar*, *choro*, *paisa*), and the names of Indian sweets (e.g. *barfi*, *gulgula*, *jalebi*, *lakri*). In all these cases, teenagers (the majority of whom were secondary students at Suva's International School) know and use them much more than any other age group. Once again, this is not that surprising as expatriate children have access to and are exposed to colloquial and basilectal speech much more than people their parents' age. And above all, most young teenagers at the International School are known to relish Indian sweets which are sold by street vendors outside the school during lunch breaks.

Table 8 shows the mean number of Fijian and Hindi words used and known by each age group. It shows that the older the respondent, the more Fijian and Hindi words are known and used. The only exception is for Hindi

AGE GROUP	MEAN & (S.D.)
10 - 20 years	41 (18)
21 - 30 years	44 (25)
31 - 40 years	47 (22)
41 - 50 years	52 (26)
51 - 60 years	60 (16)
61 - 70 years	65 (9)

(F = 2.41, df = 139, p = .039)

Table 7: Mean number of Fijian and Hindi words (combined) used and known by age

AGE GROUP	HINDI WORDS MEAN & (S.D.)	FIJIAN WORDS MEAN & (S.D.)
10 - 20 years	8 (7)	36 (19)
21 - 30 years	5 (5)	37 (14)
31 - 40 years	6 (5)	40 (18)
41 - 50 years	7 (5)	46 (22)
51 - 60 years	7 (6)	50 (13)
61 - 70 years	11 (4)	58 (4)

(1-Way Anova: F = 2.64, df = 5 & 135, p = .026)

(1-Way Anova: F = 2.88, df = 5 & 134, p = .017)

Table 8: Mean number of Fijian and Hindi words used and known by age

words in the 10-20 age group. This anomaly is due to that age group's familiarity with Indian sweets.

The overall steady increase in use and knowledge of Fijian and Hindi loanwords as the age of the respondent increases is intriguing. Research findings are inconclusive in regard to the influence of age related factors on the acquisition of a second language (Hatch 1983:188-197). Weighed collectively, published research findings cannot strongly support an optimal age hypothesis that says 'the younger the better', nor can they embrace the contrary hypothesis 'the older the better'. Since my simple survey was not designed to examine age related factors in the acquisition of a foreign lexis, no appropriate data was collected during the survey that could shed light on the matter. It would, therefore, be unwise to speculate upon the reasons for this finding.

The possibility that age and length of residence may be correlated in terms of use and knowledge of Fijian and Hindi words was also examined. Table 9 shows that the mean age for respondents who have lived in Fiji for more than one year does not differ significantly (1-way Anova: F = 1.215, df = 3 & 121, p = .31).

3.3 Length of Residence

As might be expected, the number of years an expatriate lives in Fiji has a profound effect upon the use and knowledge of Fijian and Hindi words. The longer an expatriate lives in Fiji, the more Fijian and Hindi words are known

PERIOD OF RESIDENCE	MEAN AGE & (S.D.)
< 1 year	25 (12)
1 - 3 years	31 (12)
4 - 6 years	37 (13)
7 - 10 years	34 (19)
> 10 years	37 (21)

($F = 2.39$, $df = 4$ & 135 , $p = .05$)

Table 9: Mean age for each period of residence

and used. This trend is clearly shown by the mean number of Fijian and Hindi words used and known for each period of residence (Table 10).

The steep learning curve for Fijian and Hindi words over the first seven years steadily levels off as length of residence increases. After seven years' residence few words seem to be added to the expatriates' lexicon. The effect is analogous to the figures of five to seven years required for attainment of the full range of second language acquisition among a heterogenous L1 population in Canada (Cummins 1984), as well as the levelling off in English proficiency among Mexican immigrants after approximately eight years' residence in California (Hakuta & D'Andrea 1992).

When Fijian and Hindi words are considered separately (Table 11), the same trends are seen as in Table 10. There is a steady increase in the number of words the expatriate acquires for the first seven years of residence, followed by a distinct levelling off of the number of words learnt.

PERIOD OF RESIDENCE	MEAN & (S.D.)
< 1 year	27 (13)
1 - 3 years	42 (21)
4 - 6 years	55 (21)
7 - 10 years	66 (21)
> 10 years	67 (12)

(1-Way Anova: $F = 13.38$, $df = 4$ & 135 , $p = .00001$)

Table 10: Mean number of Fijian and Hindi words (combined) used and known by period of residence

PERIOD OF RESIDENCE	NO. HINDI WORDS MEAN & (S.D.)	NO. FIJIAN WORDS MEAN & (S.D.)
< 1 year	3 (2)	25 (12)
1 - 3 years	6 (5)	36 (17)
4 - 6 years	8 (6)	47 (17)
7 - 10 years	11 (6)	55 (16)
> 10 years	11 (5)	56 (11)
	(1-Way Anova: F = 7.803, df = 4 & 135, p = .00001)	(1-Way Anova: F = 12.51, df = 4 & 134, p = .00001)

Table 8: Mean number of Fijian and Hindi words used and known by age

4. Concluding remarks

The main outcomes of this small survey, which are ultimately not all that surprising, are:

- the Fijian and Hindi words which form part of expatriates' active vocabularies are also those that occur most often in the media and in conversation. These are the most widely known and recognised lexical items in Fiji English. Many of these words (especially discourse particles, names of edible flora and fauna, and those referring to important aspects of Fijian and Indian culture) are also pragmatically essential for effective day-to-day communication in Fiji.¹⁰
- The differences in the types of words used and known by women, men and teenagers reflect the immediate pragmatic value they have for each of these groups.
- The number of Fijian and Hindi words an expatriate acquires increases over the first seven years of residence, after which there is a distinct levelling off of the learning rate.

The process of lexical nativisation is a continuum, and therefore, the point at which an item may or may not be considered fully integrated into the recipient language is debatable and naturally arbitrary. As I mentioned above, this is not an issue for the speakers of Fiji English who are often quite conversant in each other's first languages. Applying expatriates' knowledge

and use of Fijian and Hindi words to gauge the degree of nativisation of these words is therefore not altogether appropriate. Fiji English does not ‘belong’ to English-speaking expatriates, but to the Fiji Islanders themselves. Which Fijian and Hindi words Fiji Islanders use (and how often) in their daily English interactions, is ultimately a matter for themselves to decide. Nevertheless, the use of these words by expatriates in *their* daily English interactions offer some insight into which Fijian and Hindi words have become fully nativised into Fiji English.

Notes

- 1 Fiji Hindi is a local variety of Hindi, which has evolved from a koine of various dialects of the Hindustani lingua franca of North India (Siegel 1987: 187-203).
- 2 Words borrowed from language x into language y, where they became nativised and underwent semantic shift, after which they were re-introduced into language x.
- 3 There are also quite a number of other first languages which include Rotuman, Cantonese, and Gilbertese.
- 4 That is rotis on the main front lawn of the university.
- 5 Fijian words are given in the usual Fijian orthography:

Symbol	IPA	Symbol	IPA
b	m _b	j	tʃ
d	n _d	c	ð
q	ŋ _g	v	β
g	ŋ		

- 6 North America (22.9%), Australia (18.6%), New Zealand (17.9%), United Kingdom (16.2%), Other Pacific islands (10.3%), Asia (7.8%), Africa (3.5%), Europe (2.8%).
- 7 This must also be seen in the light of the vastly differing population distributions of both countries. New Zealand is 70% Pākehā (white, European), whilst Fiji’s expatriate population is 0.76% (0.4% European, 0.36% others).
- 8 The two variables, words that are known and words that are used, were combined for ease and clarity of analysis. Moreover, the two variables are dependent upon each other. Since use is dependent upon knowledge (use is ultimately restricted by knowledge), items in the active vocabulary form a subset of the passive vocabulary.
- 9 For Fijian words ($t = -.17$, $df = 136$, 2-tailed $p = .86$), for Hindi words ($t = -1.08$, $df = 138$, 2-tailed $p = .28$).
- 10 On 6 November 1999, the *Fiji Times* published the first of its weekly Fiji Words crossword puzzles which include clues on Fiji culture, history and geography. The first seven crosswords included the following words in either the clues or

solutions: *qio* 'shark', *masi*, *sulu*, *tanoa*, *tulou*, *vinaka*, *teitei*, *tui*, *moce*, *baigani*, *sirdar* and *roti*. The ratio of Fijian to Hindi words used in the crosswords reflects that of the Fijian and Hindi loans in the lexis of Fiji English.

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