

MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY CELEBRATION: REPORT

25/02/16 – 04/03/16

Themes:

Why am I proud of my mother tongue?

And

Is linguistic diversity in the Pacific region something to celebrate?

**Compiled by the English Department: USP RMI Campus & RMI-USP
Project**

Copyright: The Cover Picture is a water- color sketch by Franny Leon with artistic effects added. The title of this piece is "Proud to be Marshallese" and it was an entry for the poster competition.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report aims to capture the activities that were prepared and celebrated by the students of the RMI-USP Project in observance of UNESCO's International Mother Language Day. February 21 is the official Mother Language Day where, around the world, linguistic diversity is celebrated. At RMI-USP, the week-long celebration was observed from 25/02/16 to 04/03/16.

On May 4, 2016, a half-day program was organized where the school converged to listen to the finalists as they delivered, argued, acted and presented their masterpieces. Winners for each category were awarded attractive prizes generously donated by USP RMI Campus. The appendix section contains a few samples of students' production.

2.0 ACTIVITIES/ PROGRAM

2.1 DEBATE

The significance of the International Mother Language Day was discussed during the English classes (LLP13, LLP14, LLF11, LLF14, and UU114). After researching and deliberating on the themes, in-class debate was organized and this culminated in the final competition, between LLP13 and LLP14 students. Both teams presented and rebutted effectively.

Supported by relevant research, team affirmative claimed that a strong foundation of the mother tongue enables an individual to learn a second language more efficiently. Likewise, the team contended that one's mother tongue is vital in determining one's identity. In response, the negative team argued that speaking in the mother tongue alone will make one "linguistically and socially handicapped" in the world outside of RMI.



Team LLP13 (2), negating the debate topic. (L-R: Tida Ishoda, Bryant Zebedy, Hideo Tokeak)

2.2 SPOKEN WORD

There were 4 entries in this category and whilst they were entertaining, they drove home the point that one's mother tongue shapes one's unique identity, thus, it should be celebrated especially in a world that is becoming universal and uniformed.

One of the presenters highlighted that there are negative attitudes towards the use of mother tongue in certain settings which placed more value on the use of English. She shared her early school days experiences where she was laughed at and considered “being from the outback” when she spoke in her dialect in school to her peers.

2.3 POETRY

A number of creative and powerful pieces were submitted for this category. Poets expressed grief at the loss of their mother tongue and their dismay at how the American words are now invading the Marshallese language.

2.4 DRAMA

There were 2 groups which participated in this category. Group LLP13, which won the competition, acted out a story about how a group of young Marshallese girls, upon their return from USA for high school studies, had developed a sense of contempt for their family members and peers who could not speak in English. In the drama, they were seen as being unable to fit back into the Marshallese way of life. Likewise, their family members grew to be ashamed of their children’s “new” ways. The drama ended with one of the elderly mothers contemplating whether her daughter will come to terms with the fact that she will always be a Marshallese despite speaking American-English fluently.

2.5 POSTER

Students showcased their creativity in the way they interpreted their attitude, ideas, and feelings about the importance of mother tongue. One of the posters is featured on the cover page of this report; a few other samples are in the Appendix section.

2.6 ESSAY (ENGLISH AND MARSHALESE)

A few essays were received from the students who wrote either in English or in their native language. Although this category was the least popular, the arguments that were highlighted were relevant and drew from personal experiences and observations. The essays were judged on structure, style, content and relevance.

2.7 ORATORY

The orators selected their topics from the themes and they delivered impressively. There were presentations in the English and Marshallese languages.

3.0 CONCLUSION

The celebration of Mother Tongue at RMI-USP Project not only raised awareness about and appreciation of the importance of Mother Tongue and language diversity but also provided a platform for the students to express their views in a creative and engaging way. A lot of raw talents were identified which would be developed further by the teachers of the institution.

4.0 ACKNOWLEDGMENT

4.1 To the Campus Director (USP RMI Campus), Dr Irene Taafaki, for the support, encouragement, and for the provision of prizes.

4.2 To the Administration Officer (USP RMI Campus), Ms Yolanda McCaig, for organizing and providing prizes.

4.3 To the English Instructors (RMI-USP Project), Ms Pat Kuridua and Ms Tulia Tuiqilai, for inspiring and guiding the students.

4.4 To all the students who participated in the program for showcasing their talents and for making the event a success.

4.5 To the USP Campus Life Officer, Mr MaKerusa, for the design of the poster and for promoting the event on the RMI Campus Life Page on FB.

Yours faithfully

GMaitokana

PKuridua

TTuiqilai

Gade Maitokana

Patrici Kuridua

Tulia Tuiqilai

English Instructors: USP RMI Campus & RMI-USP Project

APPENDIX

1) Winner – Poetry Competition

Title: lakwe and Manit

By Hideo Ishoda

lakwe, what does it mean?
It's just a simple greeting!
No, it's more than that, coz
Behind the word
There is a deeper meaning

You are the rainbow
Beautiful and rare
This is the message
Expressed with care
As you greet anybody anywhere

Manit, I've heard this often
It means manners
and code of behavior
Our elders say "embrace your manit tight"
Coz once you let go, say bye bye

Manit defines our speech,
Our love for our parents and siblings
Respect for our elders and ancestors
Not preserved in ink
But in our speech

Without knowledge of Manit
And lakwe as we greet
Our language and identity will cease
Treasure them in your heart and soul
And be a proud RiMajol

2) Winner – Spoken Word

Title: My Language, My Identity

By Siaumau Filoitofi

My language, my identity
Hey, I know it's cheesy
But listen

A man without his language
Is like an opened wound without the bandage
Or a freeman working under bondage

My language represents my tradition
Without it
Is like a lawyer without a petition
A doctor's prescription without the medication
Or bench press set without any repetition

My language my heritage
It's a little testament
But demolishing what our ancestors
Ancestors created is just pure yielding
Nothing for our children's children
Except discouragement
And cultural displacement

My language, my nationality
Without it
Is like MEC without the electricity
A girl without her intimacy
Yeah, I know it sounds cheesy
But I am incomplete without my language

No...for real!
For who travels the world without their luggage??

3) **Category – Spoken Word** * Entertainment Piece – Not for Competition

Title: Not Funny then, Funny Now
By Gade Maitokana

Funny then...
Growing up in my village
English was such a big deal
While my mother tongue
Had the shameful tint of inferiority!
Funny... in school
The rule was to speak English
8 in the morning to 4 in the evening
breaching this would mean
scrubbing or weeding or writing an essay
on "the importance of the English language"!

Funny... with your learned friends,
If you speak using your dialect
You will be mocked and laughed at
And forever carry an indelible stamp
Of being from the outback!
Funny... if you speak Fijian, Hindi or Chinese
You will be deemed a freak
Cos those lingo are not used
by Liz the Queen
the chief of our island colony!
Funny... on the sports field
Your mates would treat you differently
Cos you could spell well, read rapidly
And mastered the parts of speech!

Not funny now...
when I visit my motherland
I hear *Tua* and *Nau* lament
Mourning the imminent death
of my God-given dialect!
Not funny now...
When I sit in a kava ceremony
Celebrating my cultural identity
I realize appallingly
That the language of my birth
Has escaped me totally!
Not funny now...
When I chat with my iTaukei colleague
Who, like me, is brown-skin
Whose mother is my father's kin
We speak in our second language!
Not funny now...
When I look at myself
Getting educated and all else
But losing the only thing that connects
Me to my unique heritage!

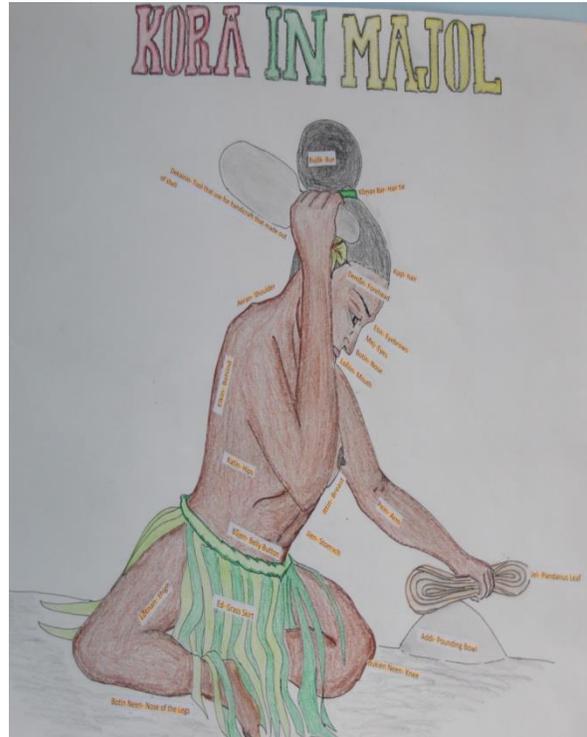
Not funny now...aye???

4) Category: Poster

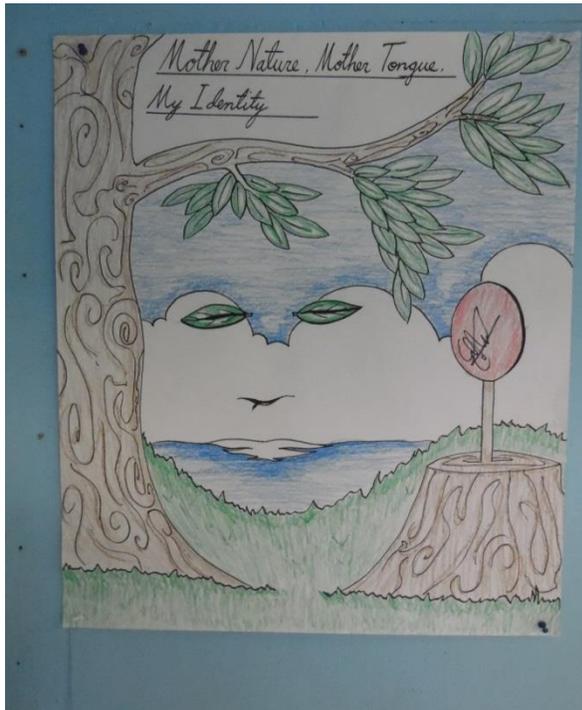
1) Mother Tongue
By Adi Osborne's Group



2) Kora in Majol (A Marshallese woman)
By Augustine Pane & Joel Bujen



2) Mother Nature, Mother Tongue-My Identity
By Edison Katol



3) Proud to be Marshallese
By Franny Leon

