

# Anutan (Te Taranga paka-Anuta)

Anutan is the language spoken on **Anuta Island** in the remote Temotu Province of the Solomon Islands. In English Anuta was previously also called Cherry Island. Its area is less than half a square kilometre and the resident population is nearly two hundred and fifty. The only guaranteed contact the island has with the outside world is an infrequent cargo ship from Honiara.

The **linguistic lineage** for Anutan is: Austronesian, Malayo-Polynesian (or Extra-Formosan), Central-Eastern Malayo-Polynesian, Eastern Malayo-Polynesian, Oceanic, Central-Eastern Oceanic, Remote Oceanic, Central Pacific, Eastern Fiji-Polynesian, Polynesian, Nuclear Polynesian, Samoic-Outlier, Futunic. The term "outlier language" refers to the Polynesian languages spoken outside the so-called Polynesian triangle Hawaii-New Zealand-Easter Island. Anutan, therefore, is closely related to Tikopian and other Futunic languages, and more distantly to other Samoic-Outlier languages such as Tuvaluan and East Uvean. However, although basically Nuclear Polynesian, Anutan also exhibits a substantial Tongic element that is possibly due to settlement from or early contacts with Tonga.

An interesting feature of Anutan is its **small consonant inventory**: with eight phonemes it is one of the smallest among the world's living natural languages. Hawaiian and a few other Polynesian languages also have eight but only Pirahã (Amazonas, Brazil), Rurutu (Austral Islands, French Polynesia) and Rotokas (Bougainville, Papua New Guinea) seem to have fewer consonants. The Anutan **vowel system**, on the other hand, is of the normal Polynesian size, consisting of the five cardinal vowels plus their corresponding long counterparts.

The small number of consonants in Anutan is apparently the result of **phonemic reductions** (i.e. mergers and losses) that have eliminated all the three voiceless fricatives, as well as the lateral and the glottal stop of Proto-Polynesian (which is conventionally written with <q>). More specifically, in Anutan /p, f/ have become /p/, and /t, s/ have become /t/, while /r, l/ have become /r/. The glottal stop and /h/ have become zero. Also /s/ has in some instances become zero. In addition, Proto-Polynesian /w/ has changed into Anutan /v/ (the language's only fricative).

The following Tuvaluan words and their Anutan cognates illustrate this (the third example is taken from the northern Tuvaluan dialect of Nanumanga): *fafine* - *papine* (woman, female), *vasa* - *vata* (open sea, ocean), *lahi* - *rai* (big). An example for the loss of the glottal stop would be Proto-Polynesian \**leqo* vs. Anutan *reo* (voice). Proto-Polynesian \**waka* is Anutan *vaka* (canoe).

The stops /p, t, k/ are slightly voiced at times and /p, t/ also have the fricative allophones /f, s/. Following /o, u/ the voiced labiodental fricative /v/ is realised as /w/, while /r/ sometimes surfaces as /l/. Some of this **allophonic variation** is due to the contact with Tikopian, a language with growing phonological and lexical influence on Anutan. As in other Polynesian languages, unstressed vowels are optionally devoiced or even deleted between identical consonants and word-finally.

**Stress** in Anutan most often falls on the first syllable. Disregarding vowel deletion and related processes, the Anutan **syllable structure** can be summarized as (C)V(:).

In its **morphology**, Anutan exhibits considerable similarity with some other Futunic languages, especially neighboring Tikopia, but also with a number of more distantly related Polynesian languages. Nominal particles, verbal particles and prepositions, for example, are often identical with their corresponding Tuvaluan forms. The causative prefix is *paka*-.

The **word order** in Anutan can be rather flexible but SVO (subject-verb-object) seems to prevail. Ergative constructions of the type PVA (patient-verb-agent) are also quite common.

The Anutan **lexicon**, previously more distinct, has recently come under Tikopian as well as Pijin and English influence, so that *mana* (father as a term of address), for example, is often replaced by *taati* 'daddy'.

## Anutan alphabet and pronunciation

A a	E e	I i	O o	U u	P p	T t
[a]	[ɛ]	[i]	[ɔ]	[u]	[p~f]	[t~s]
K k	M m	N n	Ng ng	V v	R r	
[k]	[m]	[n]	[ŋ]	[v~w]	[r~l]	

Note: The geminated vowels are normally, but not consistently, written with double letters, and the velar nasal in some sources appears as <g> or <ŋ>.

## Anutan sample phrases

*Ko te penua e tokorai.*

The island is populous.

*Te tangata e rerei.*

The man is good.

*Te vaka ne ngoto.*

The canoe sank.

*Ku oti ne kau oru ki ei.*

I have gone there.

*Ko ia e poto i te ta o te vaka.*

He is an expert canoe builder.

*Kairo na iroa te kakau.*

He doesn't know how to swim.

*E pia te ra?*

What is the time?

*Te ra e pitu.*

It is seven o'clock.

*Karanga maarie!*

Speak softly/slowly!

*Aumai poi rau paka ma aku!*

Bring hither a tobacco leaf for me!

*Ko te tangata makeke e aro i te vaka rai o te ariki.*

The strong man is paddling in the chief's large canoe.

*Ko ia ne ariki i te vatia koi tamaaroa.*

He became chief while still a bachelor.

*Ko te mako ka pete e au.*

The dance song will be sung by me.

*Ko te toa ne taia e natou.*

The warrior was slain by them.

*Kau piipia ki te kaiapi rakau ke momori mai ki a te au.*

I want a wooden pipe to be sent hither to me.

*E tapa aku mea mai.*

I have more than you.

*Ko ai te mea e ke karanga ki ei?*

About whom are you speaking?

*Mana ne karanga atu pakapepeeki?*

What did father say?

*Te tangata e tai.*

One man.

*Te ika e pua te rau e pitu mo te mata rua maa varu.*

Seven hundred twenty-eight fish.

(Information mainly based on: Richard Feinberg, 1977, *The Anutan Language Reconsidered: Lexicon and Grammar of a Polynesian Outlier*. New Haven, Connecticut: Human Relations Area Files Books, 272 pp., and on personal communication with the author)

## **Anutan sample text**

Na tamana ne karanga atu ko ia ke aru o kake i te niu. Te niu nei, maatea nga manumanu i ei. Nga roo ata mo nga morokau. Na tamana ne piipia ki nga manumanu ke naatou taa matea ko Motikitiki. Ko ia ne kake i te niu. Ne oko atu ki te poi niu. Nga manumanu ne o mai o uuti te tino o Motikitiki. Nga manumanu ne taa matea e Motikitiki. Nga roo ata mo nga morokau. Ko ia ne tori ipo te poi niu. Ko ia ne ipo ki raro. Ne au mo nga niu ki na tamana.

### **Translation**

His father told him to go and climb a coconut tree. This coconut tree had many animals in it. Carpenter ants and centipedes. His father wanted the animals to kill Motikitiki. He climbed in the coconut tree. He reached the coconut. The animals approached to bite Motikitiki's body. Motikitiki killed the animals. The carpenter ants and the centipedes. He picked a coconut. He descended to the bottom. He came with the coconuts to his father.

(Adapted from: Richard Feinberg, 1998, *Oral Traditions of Anuta*. New York, New York: Oxford University Press, p. 26.)