

# Post-colonial (American?) English Presence on the North- Western Pacific Island of Kosrae

A cross-linguistic analysis of the overlaps and divergences of  
Kosraean English compared to standard American English

Sara Lynch  
University of Bern, Switzerland

# Aims of this talk:

To discuss the case of an emerging variety of English on Kosrae, Federated States of Micronesia.

To demonstrate its relationship with the US and American English in terms of mobility (Cresswell, 2006), language attitudes and language change.

# The structure

1. Kosrae: history, culture and emigration
2. Concept of Cresswell's mobility and movement
3. Written and oral representations of sociological factors which I pose are constructing:
4. The variety of English which is currently developing in use on the island

# Methodology of data collecting

- 96 speakers
- 45 minute interviews

Age	Sex	Occupation	Education	Time spent off-island
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• &lt;20</li><li>• 21-35</li><li>• 36-50</li><li>• &gt;50</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Men</li><li>• Women</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Publically employed</li><li>• Privately employed</li><li>• Self employed</li><li>• Unemployed</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• High School</li><li>• College Of Micronesia, FSM</li><li>• Micronesian College</li><li>• US University/ College</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Within FSM</li><li>• Within Micronesia</li><li>• Hawaii</li><li>• US Mainland</li> <li>• Military</li><li>• Work</li><li>• Education</li></ul>

# 1. Kosrae: History, culture and migration

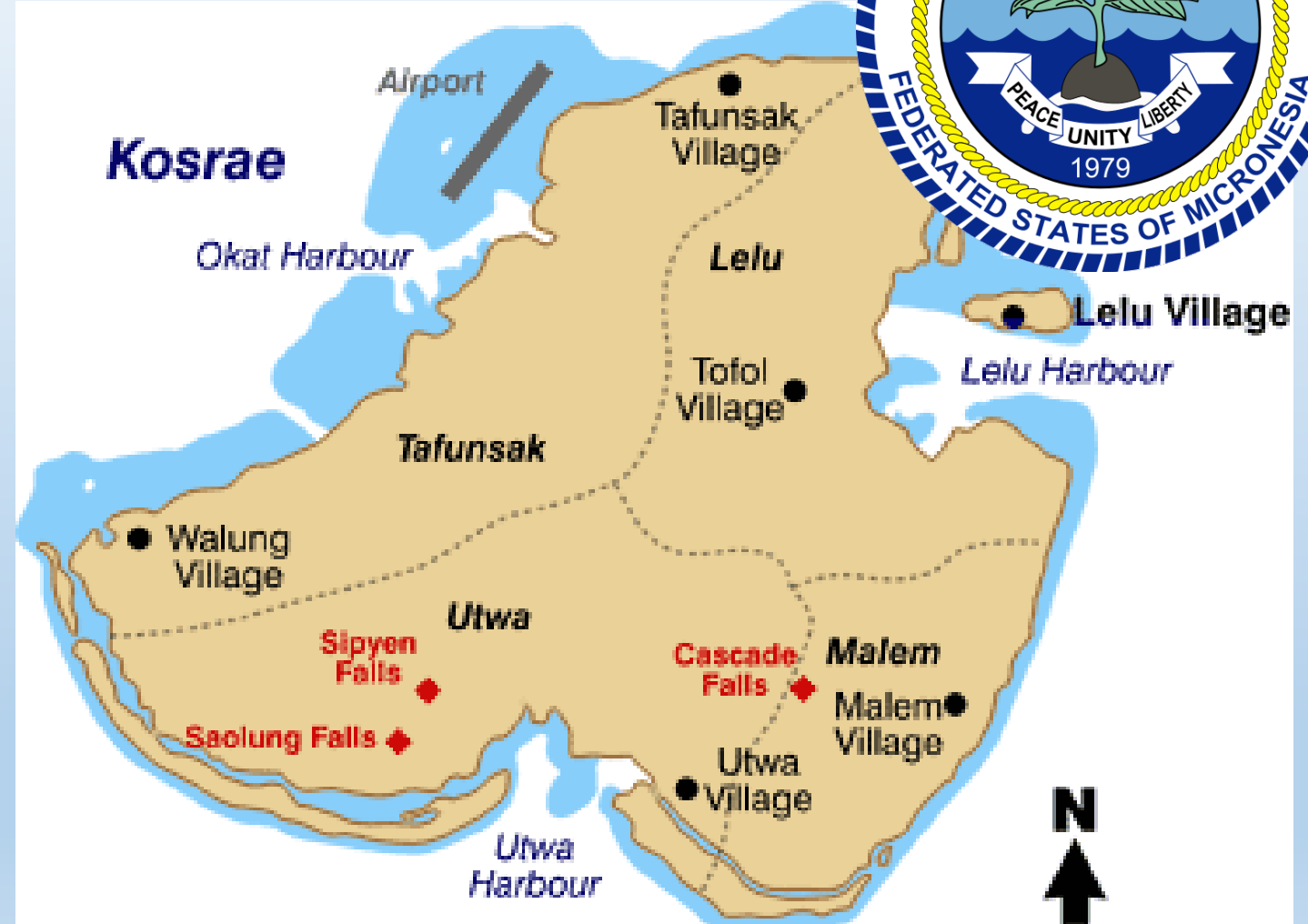


# Putting Kosrae on the map

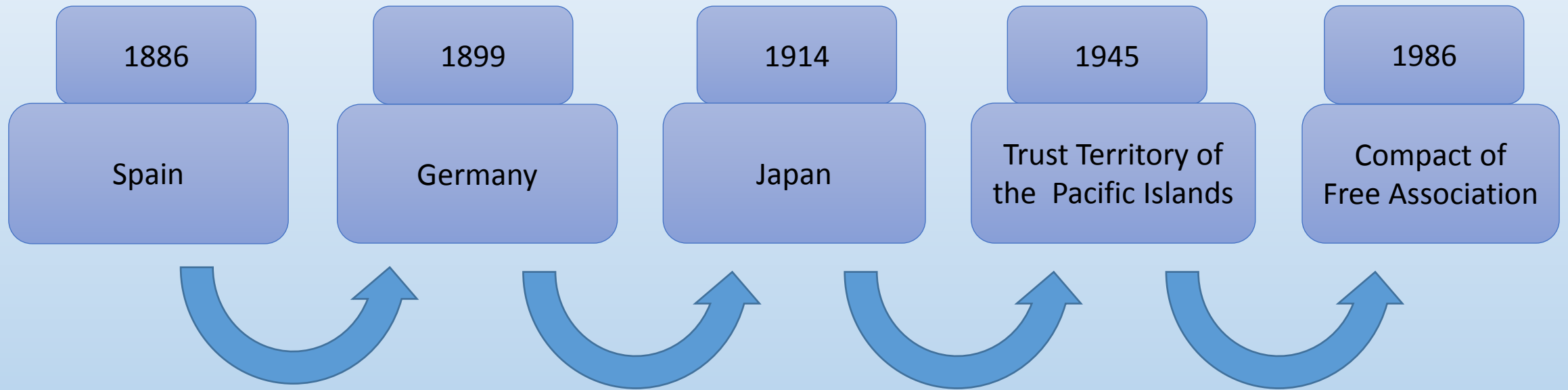


# Kosrae overview

- Population: approx. 6,616 (6% of FSM)
- Size: 111.3 km<sup>2</sup> (Dublin City, Saipan)
- Religion: Christian



# History



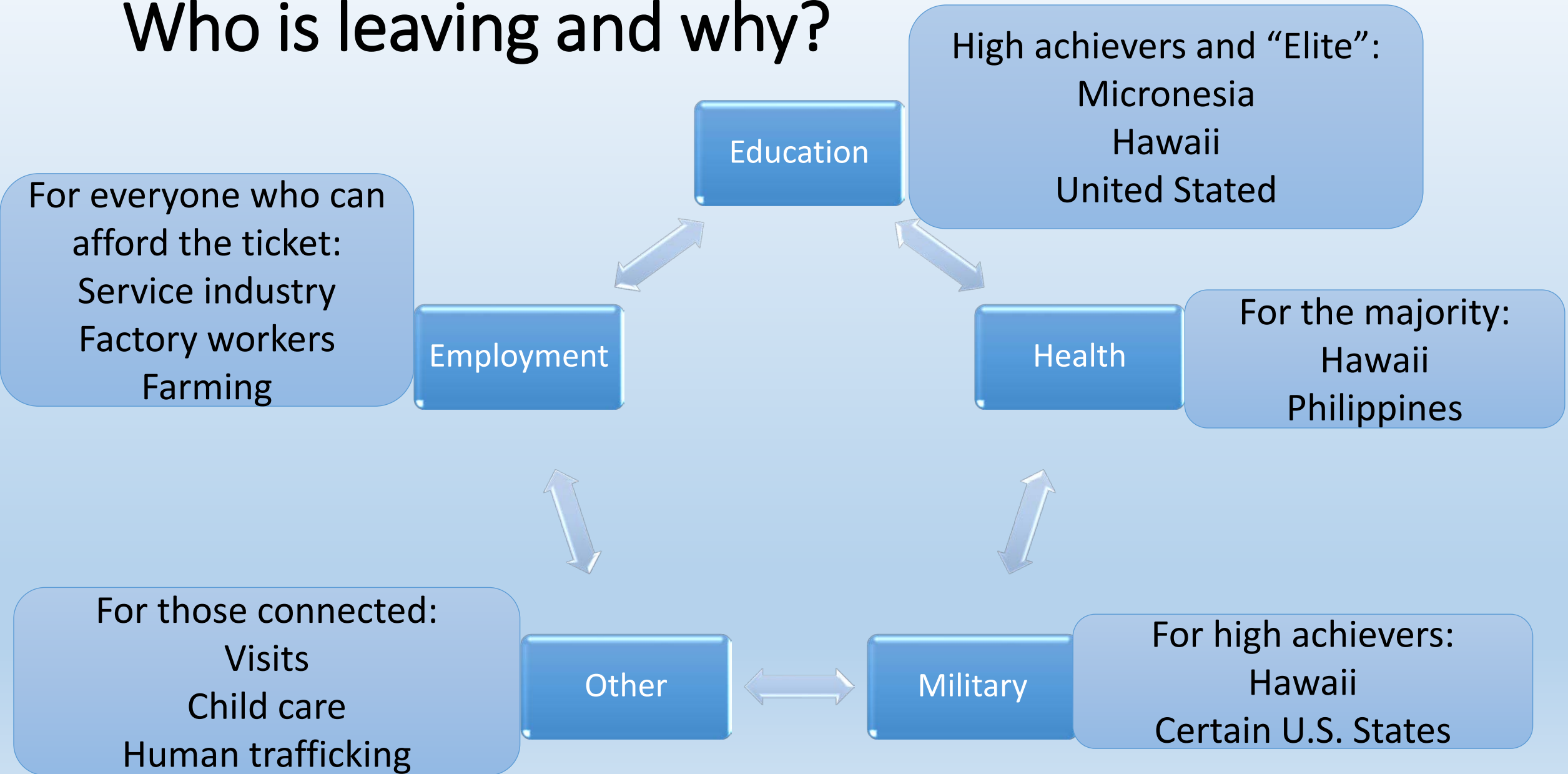


# Movement of The Sea People

- Began in 1500BC-1000BC
- 1937 Japanese requested volunteer labourers
- 1973 Introduction of the Pell Grant
- 1986 Compact of Free Association



# Who is leaving and why?



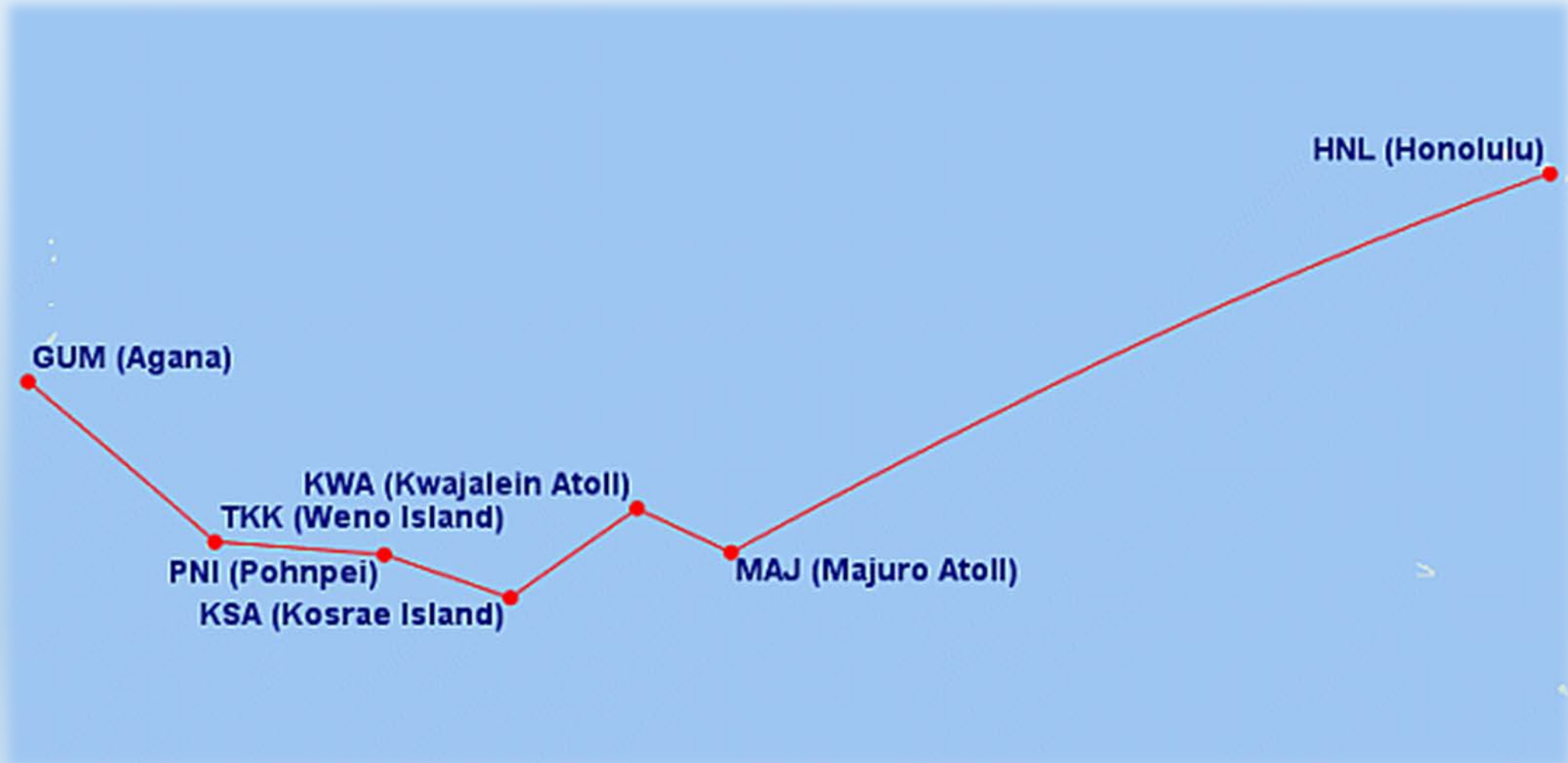
## 2. Movement and mobility



“Culture we are told no longer sits in place, but is hybrid, dynamic, more about routes than roots.”

Cresswell, 2006, p.1

# Flight paths shaping and reflecting mobility





# Pacific Islander Student Center, Hilo



## Micronesians?

### Why are we in the US?

- 1986 – 3 Compact of Free Association (COFA) Treaties - RMI, FSM, ROP
- Today, 15,000 + COFA in Hawaii
- Open migration provision
- American Dream
- Health issues re. Atomic Bomb Testing (Bikini / Eniweitok)
- Unlimited Opportunities / Security
- Escape global warming (rising tides)
- Employment, Education, Healthcare



America dream

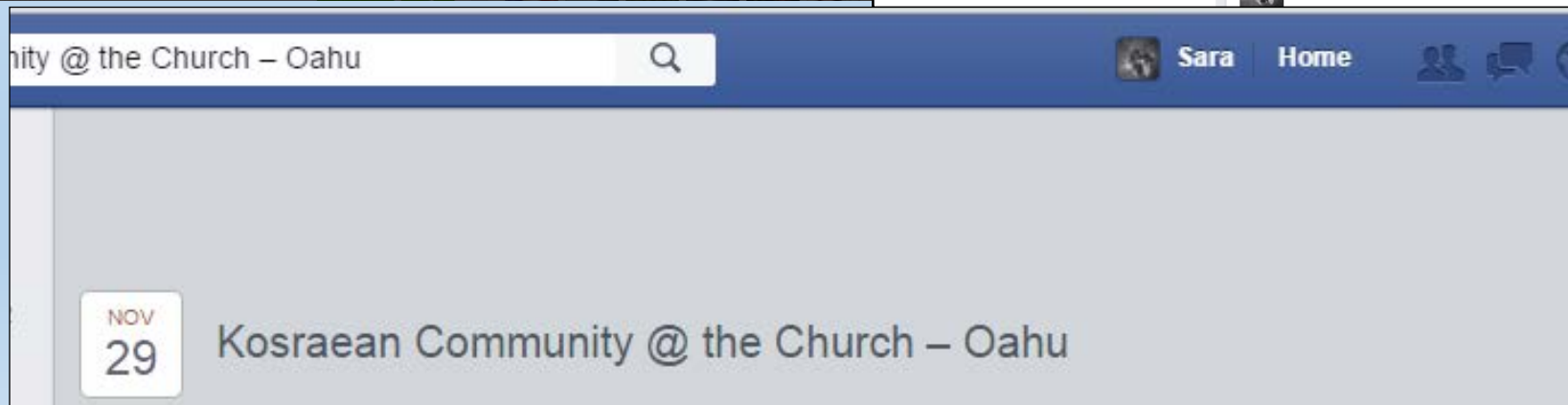
Bomb testing

Global warming

# Mobility changing local culture



# Mobility through media





### 3. Language attitudes and relationships with the U.S. and U.S territories



Mobility as progress, as freedom, as opportunity, and as modernity is side by side with mobility as shiftlessness, as deviance and as resistance.

Cresswell, 2006, p.1



# Mobility: Internal and external attitudes

- Cresswell points out using the metaphor of the railway, how mobility can be “progressive” and encourage “economic and social betterment” and “freedom from old restrictions”.
- Also threatens “the destabilization and corruption of social order, vulgarization of culture”.



(Cresswell, 2006, p.20)

# Education in the U.S. and COFA



## Shimzu study 1995

- 1991/1992 (99 students)
- 34 were still at college, 35 left college and 30 had returned
- “In a sense, because of unsuccessful student emigration, the notion of unemployment was introduced into Kosraean society.” (Shimzu, 1995)

# PIBBA – Kosrae State Governor

34<sup>th</sup> Pacific Islands Bi-Lingual Bi-Cultural Association  
Welcoming Remarks

The Honorable Lyndon H. Jackson  
Governor, State of Kosrae



Message from the Governor of Kosrae

**Greetings:**

It is a true pleasure for me to WELCOME you all to the 34<sup>th</sup> PIBBA International Conference. I am grateful to you all for taking time off from your busy schedule to attend this important conference. I must say that I am extremely pleased to see so many new and familiar faces here today or this week.

We truly believe that Kosrae is the Jewel of Micronesia, and while we don't ever think that you would give up your allegiances to your own islands and culture, maybe just for a few days the warmth of our welcome and the spirit of our people could make you feel at least a little bit Kosraean at heart. We hope

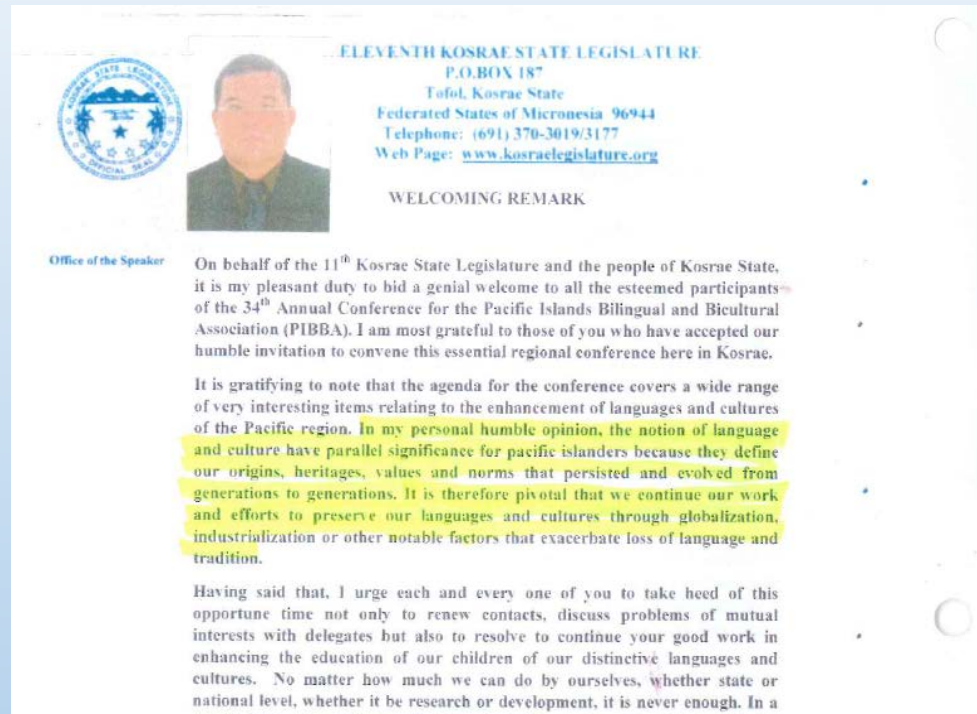
**“bombarded by Facebook and MTV.”**

**“another culture”**

**“they could lose touch with their own cultures”**

**“their own language and their own true sense of self identity”**

# PIBBA - Kosrae State Legislator



**“language and culture...define our origins, heritages, values and norms”**

**“globalization, industrialization or other notable factors that exacerbate loss of language and tradition.”**

# PIBBA- Kosrae State Director of Education

Dr. Tulensru E. Waguk, Ph.D.  
Kosrae State Director of Education



## Message from the Director

To all who are attending this important conference, I welcome. I hope that we are able to work together so that we can explore and learn new ways to promote our languages and cultures in our work in schools. To visitors from other islands, I extend a most warm welcome to our beautiful island of Kosrae. While you are here, I sincerely hope you are able to experience the majesty of our oceans and lush mountains and enjoy the hospitality of our people.

We who live in the Pacific need no reminding of how important bilingualism and biculturalism are. To be literate and conversant in two languages affords us the opportunities, security and identity of our island life and the world beyond. Having strong skills in our local language means we have firm and enduring links to our past, our families and communities. Having strong skills in a foreign language, for most of us this means English, enables us to converse and engage with the world beyond our islands. It offers us further education and, in some cases, employment. Importantly, bilingualism and biculturalism, a good and deep understanding of our own language and culture and English and Western culture, means we can examine what the West offers and choose for ourselves what is important for island lives. We can choose what is beneficial to our island life, what can develop it.

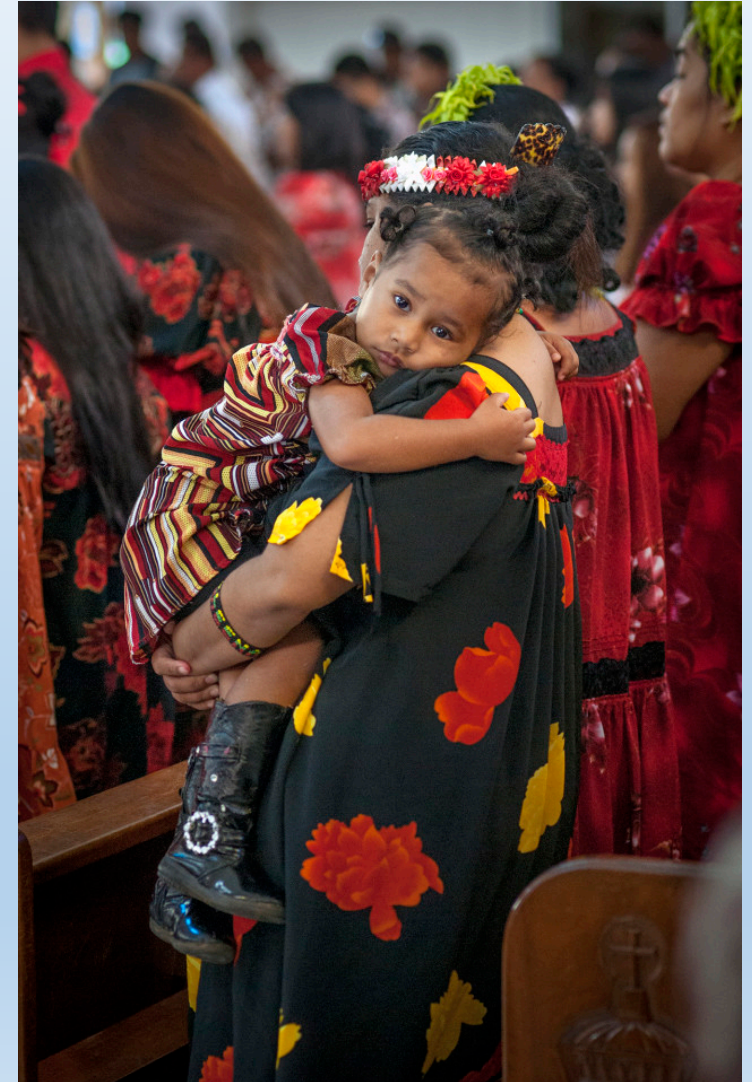
Our students of today will be the leaders of our islands soon enough. The world they will need to negotiate will, without a doubt, be more complicated and difficult than the world we have known. A changing economy and a changing environment and climate are some of the uncertainties they will face. Strong local and English language skills will help tomorrow's leaders communicate with their countrymen and foreigners. These strong language skills will enable them to seek the best possible solutions to problems that our islands and people face. These strong language and cultural skill will enable tomorrow's leaders to convince their families and communities of what needs to be preserved and what needs to be adapted so that our culture and way of life can remain strong for many generations.

**“we can examine what the West offers and choose for ourselves what is important for island lives. We can choose what is beneficial to our island life and develop it.”**



# Micronesian Migrant communities abroad

- Problems for Micronesians abroad
- Problems for hosting nation
- Guam is at a "breaking point"



## 4. The effect of mobility on Kosraean English



# Features correlating with American English

- **Phonology**

- Rhoticity is employed unlike other varieties of Micronesian English such as Kiribati English
- Convergence with MOUTH vowel
- Alveolar tap for intervocalic /t/
- Word-final velar nasal [ŋ] maybe produced as [n] e.g. *cruising* [kru:zən]

- **Lexical**

- *Cool, Cali, cruising*
- Quotative *be like* occurs across ages and sexes

- **Syntactic**

- Consistent use of temporal verb usage, particularly in younger generations
- Standard AmE use of preposition and adverbs

- **Discourse markers**

- Discourse marker *like*



# Features deviating from American English

- **Phonology**

- H insertion and H dropping e.g. *He put it in the hoven, I went to my 'ouse*
- Raising of TRAP vowel to DRESS vowel
- Word initial voiced TH realised as stop e.g. *this* [dis]
- Stress on final syllable e.g. *application* [apliker'fon]
- Merger of KIT and FLEECE vowel /ɪ/ → /i/ e.g. *fish* [fis]

- **Lexical**

- Nationality for nation e.g. *He is from Spanish*

- **Syntactic**

- Positive agreement for negative agreement e.g. *Your sisters aren't married either? Yes*
- Nonstandard use of determiners

- **Discourse markers**

- Mah
- Mmm-mmm

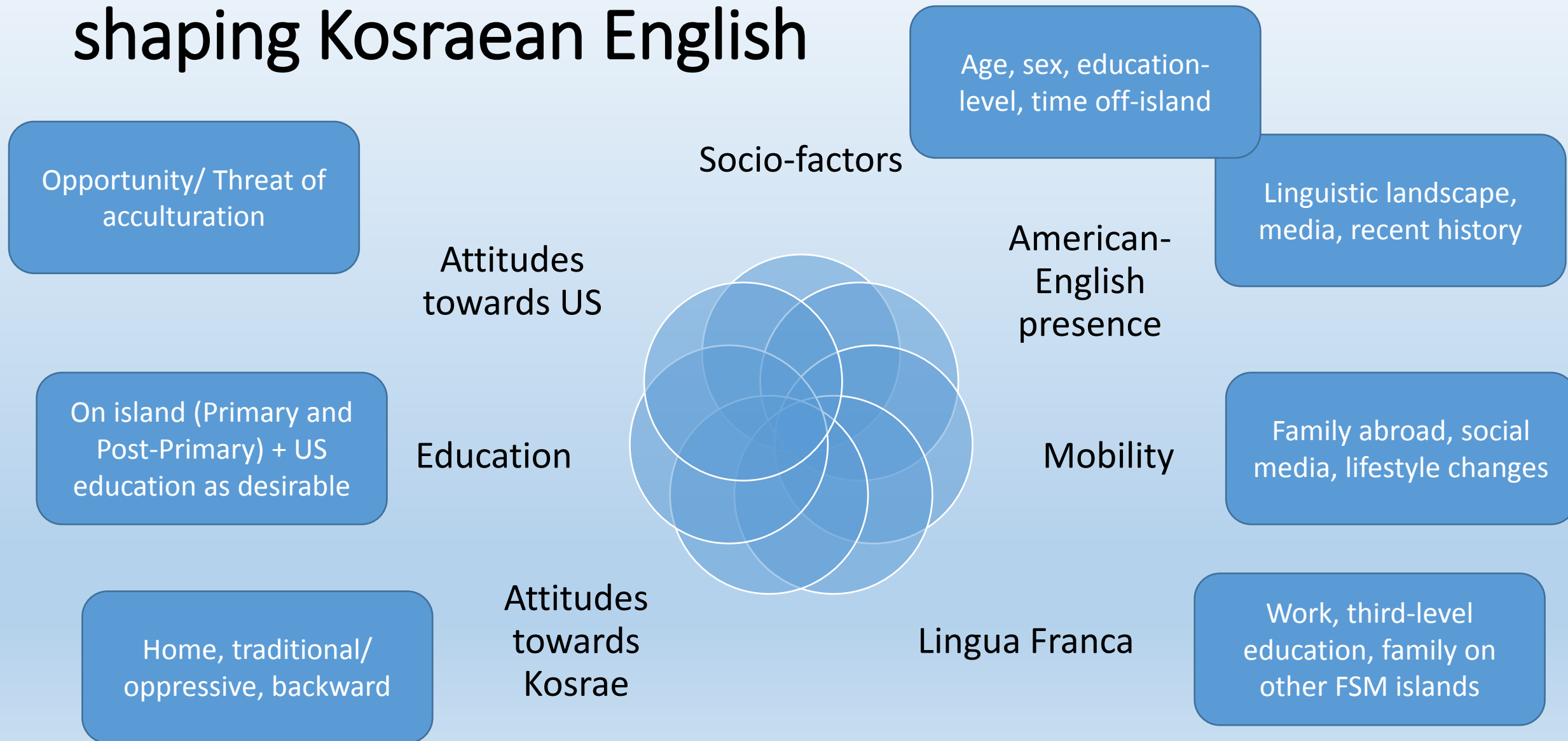
# Participants' attitudes to the US and English

- 25 years old and younger were found to be particularly pro- US
  - Cali
  - Cruisin'
  - Cool, beautiful, generous
  - Closer to standard AmE syntax and phonology
- Older participants were divided but aligned their political views and time off island with their language use
  - Phonetic features
  - discourse marker usage
  - syntax

# Results of feature production based on social factors

- Young men (20-35) consistently more basilectal than women in same category
- Teens who spoke of hopes to go to the U.S. for college used more Americanised words
- Older men and women had more typically Kosraean English features than younger generation though used less of discourse marker “mah”
- Across ages and sexes attitudes varied to tradition vs. westernization vs. modernity

# Conclusion: mobility as the main factor shaping Kosraean English



# Summary

- Mobility
- The juxtaposition between attitudes towards language and culture in Kosrae is creating an interesting duality in English being spoken on Kosrae.
- The less traditional, U.S. orientated, youth are demonstrating features associated with American English
- More conservative speakers tend to employ a more basilectal dialect with the L1 heavily affecting syntax and phonology in consistent forms
- The process of acculturation through mobility can be witnessed in language change
- “Places marked by an abundance of mobility become placeless.”

Thank you for listening!



# Further study

- Interesting diachronic study
- Intend to visit Seattle, Kansas City and New York where there are large immigrant communities
- Investigate further language ideologies

# Bibliography

- Hezel, Francis X., SJ, Levin, Michael J. (1996). New Trends in Micronesian Migration: FSM migration to Guam and the Marianas. Pacific Studies, Vol. 19. Pohnpei
- Calvo: US must 'live up to' migrant obligations. (n.d.). Retrieved November 18, 2015, from <http://www.guampdn.com/story/news/2015/06/16/calvo-us-must-live-up-to-migrant-obligations-0617/28805683/>
- Shimizu, A. (1995). Current Trends of Out-Migration from Kosrae and Pohnpei, the Federated States of Micronesia. Bulletin of the National Museum of Ethnology.