

**Alofa ki te tamā manu**

***Language, culture, identity, and wellbeing - Caring  
for gagana Tokelau and lea faka-Tonga in secondary  
education in Aotearoa New Zealand***

JULIET KENNEDY

A thesis  
submitted to Victoria University of Wellington  
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Te Herenga Waka  
Victoria University of Wellington  
2021

Juliet Kennedy  
Alofa ki te tamā manu  
*Language, culture, identity, and wellbeing - Caring for gagana Tokelau and lea faka-Tonga  
in secondary education in Aotearoa New Zealand, 2021*  
Supervisors:  
Dr Corinne Seals and Associate Professor David Crabbe

*For my parents*

Helene and Jim Mann

## Abstract

This applied thesis explores why continued access to Pacific language education is of importance in mainstream secondary education in Aotearoa. With a specific focus on gagana Tokelau and lea faka-Tonga, this research examines how mainstream secondary schools can provide continued access to language education in schools where immersion or bilingual education is not currently available. The impetus driving this research comes from my professional experience as a secondary school language teacher. Students I teach want to learn and/or maintain their heritage Pacific languages as part of their education but are often not able to within the curriculum. This is despite several current policies which explicitly promote the use of Pacific languages and cultures within the education system (Ministry of Education, 2019; 2020a). Furthermore, current interdisciplinary research informing educational policy and practice indicates that students thrive in their education, and experience a positive sense of wellbeing when they are strong in their own cultural identities (Franken et al, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2017; Paris & Alim, 2017). In contrast, negotiation of strong cultural identities is challenging in the face of increasing language shift, such as is present in Tokelauan and Tongan communities in Aotearoa (Hunkin, 2012; McCaffery & McFall, 2010; Parsons, 2020).

To address these issues, I locate my study by drawing on cross-disciplinary, international, and local literature, exploring the fields of critical education, Indigenous education, and applied critical sociolinguistics. My research questions are underpinned by three theoretical frameworks: (1) social justice (Freire, 1973; Phipps, 2019); (2) sociolinguistic (Norton, 2013) and Pacific (Anae, 2016; Mila-Schaaf, 2011; Tupuola, 2004; Vaai & Nabobo-Baba, 2017) theories of identity; and (3) edgewalking (Krebs, 1999). These theories support the investigation of the research questions, which explore (1) connections between language, culture, identity, and wellbeing; (2) how secondary school experiences of Pacific language education connect with future imagined identities; and (3) reported experiences and beliefs about challenges related to school-based continued access to Pacific language education. The research questions apply a critical strengths-based approach which allows for a positive focus on current efforts and initiatives in communities as a platform for further development, whilst not ignoring struggle (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Heller et al, 2018; Mila, 2014).

The theoretically driven methodological approach looks to relational vā-inspired and critical ethnographic methodologies to support and place the caring and nurturing of relationships and community driven outcomes at the centre of the project (Airini et al, 2010; Anae, 2016; Ponton, 2018). Working together with communities, I am guided by two Tokelauan values: tautua (to serve) and alofa ki te tamā manu (nurturing those in need). In this way, the thesis is

about the critical act of partnering ‘doing’ or ‘praxis’ (Freire, 1973; Phipps, 2019) with research. Multiple participant perspectives (community members, students, teachers, and school leaders) and a bricolage of methods (talanoa-inspired interviews and focus group discussions, participant observations, fieldnotes, ongoing service in communities) capture the voices of different stakeholders to contribute a community-centred, complex data set.

Findings illustrate how Tokelauan and Tongan community members, and secondary students connect language and culture with (1) confidence and self-esteem, (2) Indigenous understandings of identity and wellbeing, and (3) authentic cultural identity with wellbeing. In addition, data show how multilingualism is the norm in Pacific identities and how the (de)valuing of multilingualism in education can enhance or hinder identity and wellbeing. Exploration of future imagined identities indicates how access to Pacific language education in secondary school supports increased cultural, social, and material capital; language maintenance; and valuing of language. Furthermore, access to language education provides a safe space to critically explore issues of language, culture, and identities and enables community and school partnerships to support sustainable speech communities. Analysing challenges experienced in relation to provision of Pacific language education, specifically gagana Tokelau and lea faka-Tonga highlight the many local and systemic-level issues within communities, the education system, and wider society that need to be addressed if equity and social justice in language education is to prevail.

Theoretical insights, and analysis of affordances and challenges from the findings provide suggestions for potential ways forward in both educational practice and policy. Moreover, the research process documents my own journey in attempting to decolonise approaches to language education in my practice as a teacher. Working together with communities, and guided by two Tokelauan values: *tautua* (to serve) and *alofa ki te tamā manu* (nurturing those in need), I hope this project can further support community efforts by adding to the growing body of research (Bland, forthcoming; May, 2020; Milne, 2017; Si‘ilata et al, 2019) calling for a systemic approach to nurturing Pacific languages in Aotearoa through education.

## Acknowledgements

The saying *it takes a village to raise a child* also feels appropriate for the completion of this PhD thesis. There are many people to thank from my village who have supported this project.

I would like to acknowledge and thank with all my heart, communities, teachers, and students who have contributed their own stories and opinions to the thesis part of this ongoing project caring for Pacific languages in secondary education. In particular, fakafetai tele lava, mālō ‘aupito with much alofa and ‘ofa to friends and colleagues in Tokelau and Tongan communities who have walked alongside me guiding this journey. I continue to learn so much from our friendship and conversations and I look forward to our future mahi together.

To my very supportive and encouraging friends and colleagues at former and current schools, ILEP-FLS, and from NZALT. Thank you for asking me how things are going, being empathetic when things were hard, and taking a genuine interest and belief in the point of this thesis. Your kindness has kept me going many times through this process. Thank you: Julie, Annabelle, Janet, and Rebecca; Jairo, Kereru, Sarah, and Christelle; Morgan, Belinda, Stephanie, and Siliva; Nigel; Brittany, Vola, and Judy; Angela and Juliet; Adele and Anne; Jeni, Martin, Fane, Judith, and Irja; Ragne, John, Ngarangi, Chris, Marlene, Jen, Don, Michelle, Katherine, Karen, Rupe, Karl, and Eline, and to Jo, Lupe, Povalu, Tarps, Joy, Matekino, Helen, Refiti, Tevaka, and Lydia for the laughter and support.

To close friends Lynda Knight, Tufaina Faraimo, Kate Schick, Heidi Brook, Philippa Watson, Anneke Healey, Karen Atkinson, Angel Lin, Madlen Kunath, and Georgina Preston - I really appreciate your support, friendship, encouragement, and help throughout these five years of managing family, work, and study.

To the various Pacific Scholars who advised me at the beginning of this journey - your words have stayed with me throughout the project. Thank you for taking this time to talk with me.

I would like to say a special thanks to friend and colleague Dr Martyn Reynolds who supported me with direction and proof reading and introduced me to the amazing OCIES community. I really appreciate the care, thought, and experience you shared with me.

To my supervisors Dr Corinne Seals and Associate Professor David Crabbe, thank you very much for your support throughout this journey. Corinne thank you for sharing your wisdom and extensive knowledge of fascinating and exciting areas such as language ideologies and translanguaging. David thank you for your wisdom and expertise throughout and being there as a true ‘Doktorvater’ when things got tough!

Last, but definitely not least, to my whānau, Jon, Clara, Nicholas, Jim, Win, Philippa, brothers and sisters-in-law, nieces and nephews, thank you for always being there supporting and loving me no matter what.

Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini.

## Illustrations

Figure 1. <i>A visual representation of theoretical congruence</i> .....	p.71
Figure 2. <i>Research design</i> .....	p.80
Figure 3. <i>Connections between participating communities</i> .....	p.81
Figure 4. <i>Summary of data collection</i> .....	p.98
Figure 5. <i>A visual representation of the data analysis process</i> .....	p.99
Figure 6. <i>Visual presentation of challenges to providing continued access to Pacific language education in mainstream secondary schools</i> .....	p.225
Figure 7. <i>A visual representation of solutions</i> .....	p.238

<b>Abstract</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>Illustrations</b>	<b>vii</b>
 <b>CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION</b>	 <b>6</b>
<b>1.1 - Impetus for research</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1.2 - My learning journey and the research context</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.3 - Adopting a critical, strengths-based approach stance</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.4 - Important connections and relationships to the research</b>	<b>10</b>
1.4.1 Connections with a Tokelau community group	10
<b>1.5 - Introducing the study, its focus and context</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>1.6 - Defining key concepts</b>	<b>13</b>
1.6.1 Pacific	13
1.6.2 Indigeneity	15
1.6.3 Language	16
1.6.4 Heritage language	17
1.6.5 Culture	18
1.6.6 Identity	19
1.6.7 Wellbeing	20
<b>1.7 - Thesis map</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>1.8 - Chapter summary</b>	<b>23</b>
 <b>CHAPTER 2 - REVIEW OF LITERATURE</b>	 <b>24</b>
<b>2.1 - Introduction</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>2.2 - Contextual background</b>	<b>24</b>
2.2.1 Tokelau	25
2.2.2 Tonga	27
<b>2.3 - Critical perspectives on education</b>	<b>30</b>
2.3.1 Culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy	30
<b>2.4 - Indigenous education and language revitalisation</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>2.5 - Research conversations in critical applied sociolinguistics</b>	<b>34</b>
2.5.1 Language shift	34
2.5.2 Critical, strengths-based approaches to language shift	36
2.5.3 Language ideologies	37
2.5.4 Language Policy	42
2.5.5 Heritage language education (HLE)	43
2.5.6 Translanguaging	45
<b>2.6 - Aotearoa-based experience</b>	<b>48</b>
2.6.1 New Zealand Educational Policy	48



2.6.2 Pacific education	49
2.6.3 Studies focused on Pacific languages in education	51
2.6.4 Tongan and Tokelauan language education	54
2.6.5 Pacific languages in secondary education	56
<b>2.7 - The research questions</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>2.8 - Chapter Summary</b>	<b>59</b>
 <b>CHAPTER 3 - THEORETICAL METHODOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS</b>	 <b>60</b>
<b>3.1 - Social Justice</b>	<b>60</b>
3.1.1 Social justice theory in language education	61
<b>3.2 - Identity</b>	<b>63</b>
3.2.1 Sociolinguistic post-structural theories of identity	63
3.2.2 Pacific theories of identity - Relational identity and vā	65
3.2.3 Theoretical overlaps	66
<b>3.3 - Edgewalking</b>	<b>68</b>
3.3.1 Edgewalking as theory	68
3.3.2 Edgewalking as practice	69
3.3.3 Edgewalking as a practice and a position	70
<b>3.4 - Relational, vā-centred methodological approaches</b>	<b>72</b>
3.4.1 Vā-centred methodological approaches	72
3.4.2 A critical ethnographic sociolinguistic approach	75
<b>3.5 - Statement of Positionality</b>	<b>76</b>
3.5.1 Ethical considerations	77
3.5.2 Actions and management of power relations	78
<b>3.6 - Chapter summary</b>	<b>79</b>
 <b>CHAPTER 4 - METHODS</b>	 <b>81</b>
<b>4.1 - Research design and participating communities</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>4.2 - Participating communities</b>	<b>81</b>
4.2.1 Tokelau community participants - Peta, Kaimakoi, Pulēleti	82
4.2.2 Tongan Church Community Participant - Maia	83
4.2.3 Teachers and students from the Tongan language cluster - Longo (Teacher), David, Vai, Langi, Mele, Toniseni, and Tevita (students)	84
4.2.4 Palagi teachers who facilitate Pacific language programmes - Maria, Anita, and Julia	86
4.2.5 Pasifika Studies students at Riverview High - Samisoni, Leilani, Kate, Viola	87
4.2.6 Roberti - Student from Mountain View High	88
4.2.7 Students from Fox High - Euan, Melanie, and Lina	89
4.2.8 School principals	89
<b>4.3 - Data collection methods</b>	<b>90</b>
4.3.1 Talanoa-informed research methods	91
4.3.2 Ethnographic Interviews and focus group discussions - structured conversations	93
4.3.3 Semi-structured Interviews	94
4.3.4 Ethnographic participant observations	95
4.3.5 Fieldnotes and other relevant data	97
4.3.6 Transcription of audio recordings	97

4.3.7 A ‘bricolage’ approach to methods	98
<b>4.4 - Data analysis</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>4.5 - Chapter Summary</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5 - FINDINGS: CONNECTIONS BETWEEN LANGUAGE, CULTURE, IDENTITY AND WELLBEING</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>5.1 - Introduction</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>5.2 - Theme 1: Confidence and self-esteem</b>	<b>102</b>
5.2.1 Kaimakoi	103
5.2.2 Longo	109
5.2.3 Peta	113
<b>5.3 - Theme 2: Language and Indigenous understandings of identity and wellbeing</b>	<b>117</b>
5.3.1 Maia - Language, culture, and family structure	117
5.3.2 Pulēleti and Peta - Formality, register, and appreciation	119
5.3.3 Samisoni and Tevita - Language learning, and Indigenous negotiation of identity	123
<b>5.4 - Theme 3: Authentic cultural identity</b>	<b>127</b>
5.4.1 Samisoni - They won’t believe you until you speak the language	128
5.4.2 Leilani and Kate - Knowing your roots	129
5.4.3 David, Vai, Langi, Toniseni, and Mele - Being ‘plastic’	131
<b>5.5 - Theme 4: Transgenerational language acquisition</b>	<b>134</b>
5.5.1 Immersion and language input	134
5.5.2 Language output	135
5.5.3 Language acquisition challenges	136
<b>5.6 - Theme 5: Multilingualism as the norm in Pacific communities</b>	<b>140</b>
5.6.1 Translanguaging theory in practice	140
5.6.2 Full linguistic repertoire	143
<b>5.7 - Reflection: Working towards community wellbeing</b>	<b>144</b>
<b>5.8 - Chapter summary</b>	<b>146</b>
<b>CHAPTER 6 - PACIFIC LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND IMAGINED FUTURE IDENTITIES</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>6.1 Introduction</b>	<b>148</b>
6.1.1 Education and language maintenance	148
6.1.2 Research question	149
<i>How do (secondary school) experiences of Pacific language education connect with students and communities? Specifically, how do these connect with current and future imagined identities and investment in language learning?</i>	149
6.1.3 Conceptualising analytical tools	149
6.1.4 Educational settings: The Tongan Language and Pasifika Studies	152
6.1.5 Data sources and findings	152
<b>6.2 - Theme 1: Increased cultural, social and material capital</b>	<b>153</b>
<b>6.3 - Theme 2: Explicit language learning supports language maintenance</b>	<b>158</b>

6.3.1 Anita	161
6.3.2 Roberti	165
<b>6.4 - Theme 3: Valuing of language and culture and academic success</b>	<b>166</b>
6.4.1 Anita	167
<b>6.5 - Theme 4: A Safe space for critically exploring issues of language, culture, and identity</b>	<b>169</b>
6.5.1 A place where it is okay to make mistakes	170
6.5.2 A place to tackle critical issues of race and power	173
<b>6.6 - Theme 5: Community and school partnerships for sustainable speech communities</b>	<b>174</b>
<b>6.7 - Chapter summary</b>	<b>176</b>
 <b>CHAPTER 7 - SCHOOL-BASED EXPERIENCES OF CHALLENGES FOR PACIFIC LANGUAGE EDUCATION</b>	 <b>177</b>
<b>7.1 - Introduction</b>	<b>177</b>
7.1.2 Summary of data collection and relevant themes in this chapter	177
<b>7.2 - Tokelau perspectives</b>	<b>178</b>
7.2.1 Kaimakoi	179
7.2.2 Pulēleti	180
<b>7.3 - Teacher perspectives</b>	<b>184</b>
7.3.1 Maria - Pacific language education is “at the margins” of the school system	186
7.3.2 Julia	189
7.3.3 Anita (Pasifika Studies)	190
<b>7.4 - Student perspectives - Polyfest, curriculum, and multilingualism</b>	<b>192</b>
7.4.1 Roberti (Mountainview High)	193
7.4.2 Euan and Melanie (Fox High)	194
7.4.3 Lina (Fox High)	196
<b>7.5 - School leader perspectives</b>	<b>200</b>
7.5.1 Principal 1 (High School 4)	200
7.5.2 Principal 2 (High School 5)	201
7.5.3 Principal 3 (High School 6)	203
7.5.4 Principal 4 (High School 7)	204
7.5.5 Curriculum hierarchy and perceived educational value of Pacific languages	205
7.5.6 Assumptions and the ‘Pacific’ umbrella	209
<b>7.6 - Chapter summary</b>	<b>214</b>
 <b>CHAPTER 8 - DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION</b>	 <b>215</b>
<b>8.1 - Introduction</b>	<b>215</b>
<b>8.2 - Defining the problem</b>	<b>215</b>
8.2.1 How does this research inform the problem?	217
8.2.2 Issues of Language, culture, identity and wellbeing in Tokelauan-Tongan context	217
8.2.3 Complexities of multilingualism in Tokelauan-Tongan and school contexts	219
8.2.4 Tokelau specific issues surrounding language and education in Aotearoa	223
8.2.5 Tongan-specific issues surrounding language and education in Aotearoa	224
8.2.6 Visual presentation of challenges	225

<b>8.3 - Research-based Solutions</b>	<b>226</b>
8.3.1 What are the goals?	227
8.3.2 What can be achieved?	228
8.3.3 Tokelau-related actions/ suggestions	228
8.3.4 Raising awareness of multilingualism and wellbeing	231
8.3.5 ‘Ethnic enhancement’ to bolster current programmes and initiatives	235
8.3.6 An overarching language policy in Aotearoa	237
8.3.7 Visual presentation of solutions	238
<b>8.4 - Contributions to research</b>	<b>239</b>
<b>8.5 - Future directions for research</b>	<b>240</b>
<b>8.6 - Limitations</b>	<b>241</b>
<b>8.7 - Conclusion</b>	<b>244</b>
<b>8.8 - Final reflections</b>	<b>245</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>249</b>
<b>APPENDIX A - SAMPLE INFORMATION SHEET</b>	<b>271</b>
<b>APPENDIX B - SAMPLE CONSENT FORM</b>	<b>273</b>
<b>APPENDIX C - TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS</b>	<b>274</b>

# Chapter 1 - Introduction

## 1.1 - Impetus for research

The impetus driving this doctoral research comes from my professional experiences as a language teacher in Aotearoa New Zealand<sup>1</sup>. In my work, I continue to observe inequities linked to continued access to learning and maintaining language, culture, and identity, encountered by students of Pacific heritage. These inequities can be summarised in a comment made to me by a 13-year-old student of Samoan and Tongan descent nearly ten years ago. She said: “I really enjoy learning Chinese in your class, but it is funny I can’t actually speak my own languages.” Her experience is typical of many secondary school students of Pacific and other ethnic backgrounds in Aotearoa who, ten years on, are still inconsistently able or unable to see their languages, cultures, and identities reflected in day-to-day school life, curriculum, and overall educational experiences (Major, 2018; Milne, 2017; Salesa, 2017; Smith & Webber, 2019).

The student’s comment illustrates gaps between current educational policy and practice (Major, 2018; May, 2020; Smith & Webber, 2019). New Zealand educational policies explicitly value diversity and equity (Education Council, 2017; Major, 2018; May, 2020; MoE, 2007, 2013, 2019, 2020a, 2020b). In Aotearoa, the language of educational policies is replete with references to the inclusion of Pacific languages, identities, and cultures and culturally responsive practice as part of teaching and learning programmes (Education Council, 2017; Major, 2018; MoE, 2007, 2019, 2020a, 2020b). These policies have been informed by local and international cross-disciplinary literature which indicates that when students are strong in their own cultural identities they thrive in their education and experience a positive sense of wellbeing (Franken et al, 2008; Hunkin, 1987, 2012; Ladson Billings, 1994, 2017; May, 2014, 2020; Manuela & Anae, 2017; Mila-Schaaf & Robinson, 2010; Milne, 2017; Paris & Alim, 2017). The problematising of such mismatches between ongoing efforts in research, policy, and practice are matters to be discussed throughout this thesis.

---

<sup>1</sup> Aotearoa is used from now on as the preferable proper noun throughout this thesis. However, New Zealand is used in specific contexts, e.g with common formulaic phrases such as the New Zealand Education System, titles (the Realm of New Zealand), and when referring to colonial contexts.

In addition to gaps between educational policy and lived experience, census data increasingly paint a grim picture of language shift amongst Pacific Peoples in Aotearoa (Bell et al, 2005; McCaffery & McFall, 2010, May, 2020; Peddie, 2005; Statistics New Zealand, 2018), with several Pacific languages, gagana Tokelau, vagahau Niue, and Cook Islands Maori, being classed by UNESCO as severely or critically endangered (The Guardian, 2011). Language shift has implications for the overall wellbeing of Pacific peoples, a major concern for many Pacific community leaders. Continued access to heritage language learning in schools is one way to address language shift and its flow on effects for wellbeing (Durie, 2006; Hunkin, 2012; Parsons, 2020).

## 1.2 - My learning journey and the research context

I am Palagi<sup>2</sup> of Welsh, German Jewish, and English ancestry. My family immigrated to Aotearoa from Oxford, England when I was a child in the 1980s. Aotearoa is the country where my husband and children were born and where I have undertaken most of my education. I am connected with Pacific Peoples through my personal and professional relationships and shared cultural values and experiences of family and spirituality.

Committed in my professional and private life to the process of decolonisation, I heed the words of Māori scholar Joanna Kidman (2018), actively choosing to own and recognise transgressions of the colonial past and name the “white spaces” (Milne, 2017) which still exist in all spheres of life today. I recognise that I am a product of a post-colonial education system in Aotearoa. My school and undergraduate university education provided me with a hegemonic, Euro-centric worldview, with limited understanding of Te Ao Māori, the Indigenous worldview of Māori in Aotearoa and other Indigenous worldviews and experiences further afield. Over the past ten years my learning journey has led me to learn and use te reo Māori to the best of my ability and develop deeper understanding and appreciation of Te Ao Māori, as well as perspectives Indigenous to Tokelau and Tonga. Studying te reo Māori at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, professional development opportunities, and dialogue with Māori, Tokelau, Tongan, Samoan, and Kiribati friends and colleagues support these processes. There are many gaps in my knowledge and understanding of indigeneity and I thank those people who are willing to share and teach me along the way. I am also grateful

---

<sup>2</sup> Pākeha/ Palagi/Palangi are Māori/ Tokelauan/Tongan terms for ‘European(s).’ I use Palagi generically as it is Tokelauan and Samoan, Pākeha in Māori contexts, and Palangi in Tongan contexts.

that in learning more about Te Ao Māori, Tokelauan, and Tongan worldviews, I have come to connect deeply with my ancestors, my linguistic and cultural heritage and identity, and experience rich ways of being which I otherwise would not have been exposed to in a Pākehā world. Kia ora, fakafetai, malo ‘aupito.

In reflecting on decolonisation and White privilege, I am acutely aware that as Palagi I am part of the “unspoken privilege” that because of our colonial past inherently comes with being “white” (Milne, 2017). This reflection and recognition of my own White privilege also enables me to identify how my own family experience of colonisation and individual commitment to social justice connect me with the research context. My Welsh ancestors lost the ability to speak their Indigenous language through colonisation. However, my late mother reclaimed her Welsh language through immersion study in her 50s. Her experience of language revitalisation greatly added to her wellbeing and sense of fulfilment which she shared with our family. On my father’s side, our German Jewish ancestors immigrated to South Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. My paternal Grandfather was committed to social justice and refused to practise apartheid in his privileged role as the town’s general practitioner in George, South Africa from the 1930’s until his retirement in the 1970’s.

Language, culture, and social justice as values held strong by my ancestors influence who I am and how I act today. Being multilingual is essential to my personal and professional identity and I have experienced myself and observed in others its many benefits. However, as indicated in the opening story of this thesis, the rich multilingual potential in Aotearoa (specifically in this case for Pacific languages) is not widely valued, supported, and developed in English-medium education<sup>3</sup> (Major, 2018). Undertaking this research project as a female, Palagi teacher, part of the dominant demographic in the teacher workforce (Milne, 2018), I am guided by two Tokelauan values, tautua and alofa ki te tamā manu. The value of tautua (to serve) underpins the aim and praxis of this applied research project to serve as an additional support to language maintenance work going on in the communities where I work (past and present). According to Kupa (personal communication, 25<sup>th</sup> February 2021), Alofa ki te tamā manu is a Tokelauan value depicting the practice of Tokelauan children in Fakaofu, Tokelau, who check for orphaned chicks after a cyclone. Children bring home chicks who

---

<sup>3</sup> English-medium education is the term used by the New Zealand Ministry of Education and refers to schools where teaching is in English. It can be aligned with the notion of ‘mainstream’ education in which there is assumed power of the dominant language.

have lost parents in the storm, nurturing, feeding and caring for them until they are grown and able to care for themselves. This practice symbolises the importance of having compassion and looking after the vulnerable inherent in Tokelauan community values and practices (Kupa, personal communication, 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2021; Tokelau community, personal communication, April 2021). In the context of caring for gagana Tokelau, alofa ki te tamā manu encapsulates three key ideas; the shared duty of care and collective responsibility to ensure that nobody goes without (Tokelau community, personal communication, June 2021). Being guided by the value alofa ki te tamā manu, I hope this project further can support community efforts by adding to the growing body of research (Bland, forthcoming; May, 2020; Milne, 2017; Si'ilata et al, 2019) demanding a systemic approach to nurturing Pacific languages in Aotearoa through education.

### 1.3 - Adopting a critical, strengths-based approach stance

Numerous worldwide studies have identified that Aotearoa has a “high quality, low equity” education system (May, 2020, p. 9). Unjust provision of opportunities for and attitudes toward language and power present in our education system are considered part of this inequity, especially in relation to Pacific peoples. If education in Aotearoa is committed to providing equal opportunities to fulfil human potential for all students as implied in policy (May 2020), Pacific language learning opportunities need to increase, and attitudes need to change. At a systems level, transformational change is required so that Pacific knowledge systems, languages, and literacies are privileged (Smith & Smith, 2019). In supporting this process, this research seeks to grasp how issues of language and power present themselves in language education to understand what must be changed to bring about social justice.

Therefore, undertaking this project, I adopt a critical stance (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Heller et al, 2018; Norton & Toohey, 2004).

In addition, I draw on the work of Mila (2014), Olsen-Reeder (2018), Pattoni (2012), and Reynolds (2017) who, without ignoring struggle, use a strengths-based approach to focus on existing strengths and knowledge in communities in order to progress a cause. Mila (2014, p. 47) argues that a strengths-based approach to Pacific educational research focuses on “what is right about Pacific young people” rather than how they can catch up on their European counterparts. A strengths-based approach therefore shows how different experiences can be achieved when stereotypes of contemporary people are resisted (Mila, 2014, p. 33). Within a



strengths-based approach for Pacific language maintenance, current efforts and initiatives in communities can be valued and used as a platform for further enhancement and development. The strengths-based approach is particularly relevant to the focus and context of this study which I discuss after introducing important connections and relationships to the research in the following two sections.

#### 1.4 - Important connections and relationships to the research

Sharing my professional experience and rationale for undertaking this research has taken me on a rich and transformational journey leading me to meet, form friendships with, and collaborate with members of a Tokelau community, two Tongan communities, and other Palagi teachers like myself who are working toward equity in language education. In the following section I describe the key connections and relationships with Tokelauan, Tongan and teaching communities which underpin this research project and ongoing work in communities and schools.

##### 1.4.1 Connections with a Tokelau community group

I came into contact with an Aotearoa-based Tokelauan community group through a close friend who worked with one of the Tokelauan community leaders, Peta<sup>4</sup>, in early 2018. This community was established by some of the first Tokelauan migrants to Aotearoa (see Chapter 2, section 2.2.1). My friend mentioned to Peta that I was undertaking doctoral research looking at how Pacific languages could be further integrated into the secondary school curriculum and that I was interested in meeting and talking with people from the Tokelauan community. Peta invited us to a Tokelauan community meeting to informally meet other members of this community. From then, Peta and I met and communicated regularly to share ideas about gagana Tokelau<sup>5</sup> and how it might be integrated more into the curriculum. I attended several events at the Tokelauan community that year and was invited to speak at community meetings to discuss with the community about how maintenance of gagana Tokelau might be integrated into school programmes. Key to this connection was the fact that this community had already begun a journey of strategic planning for the sustainable

---

<sup>4</sup> All participant and community names are pseudonyms.

<sup>5</sup> Gagana Tokelau means Tokelau language and is used interchangeably with the English term Tokelauan throughout the thesis. This is the practice of communities involved in this research project. Agānuku Tokelau means Tokelau culture.

wellbeing of the whole community in 2017. This included looking at sustainable housing, education, maintenance of gagana Tokelau, Agānuku Tokelau, and health outcomes for Tokelauan people. I was invited and honoured to jump on board the vaka that had already begun its journey, a journey that I am committed to beyond a research project. Our evolving journey together has become part of the underpinning narrative of this thesis.

My current professional context and geographical location is closest to the Tokelau community, therefore there is a largely Tokelauan focus to the research. However, as mentioned earlier, this journey also led me to form ongoing relationships with two Tongan teaching and learning communities (the Tongan Church Community and the Tongan language cluster) and three Palagi teachers (Maria, Anita, and Julia) who facilitate Tongan language learning in secondary schools. Further details describing our connections and these communities will be provided in Chapter 4 and discussed throughout the thesis.

The significance of these connections and relationships to this research project is the evolving, ongoing contact and work we are doing together. We work together encouraging and teaching students in community and school language projects as well as advocating for recognition, resourcing, and development of gagana Tokelau and lea faka-Tonga within the education system in Aotearoa. In this work we aim to support and equip students with skills to critically apply Indigenous Pacific knowledges and experiences to “to navigate their contemporary realities” (Manuela & Anae, 2017, p. 141).

### 1.5 - Introducing the study, its focus and context

For reasons explained above, the focus languages of the study are gagana Tokelau and lea faka-Tonga<sup>6</sup>, exploring how mainstream secondary education can support the maintenance of these two Pacific languages. Linguists and educators argue that immersion or bilingual education is the most educational effective model to sustain and develop bi/multilingualism and bi/multiliteracy. In addition, immersion/bilingual education<sup>7</sup> is best placed to support the development of academic and emotional benefits that come from being bi/multilingual (Baker, 2006; Cummins, 2000; Franken et al, 2008; Gibbons 2002; McCaffery & McFall, 2010; May, 2014, 2020; Si‘ilata et al, 2019). As a language teacher and emerging researcher,

---

<sup>6</sup> lea faka-Tonga means Tongan language and is used interchangeably with its English translation, Tongan, as is the practice by communities involved in this research project.

<sup>7</sup> Schools in which students receive a minimum of 50% (up to 100%) of instruction in the target language.

informed by this local and international scholarship, I too am convinced that the best possible option for sustaining Pacific (and other heritage languages) in Aotearoa is immersion/bilingual education.

However, the context of this study, situated outside of Auckland, is important to the research focus. Auckland is the city with the largest Polynesian population in the world and home to 50 percent of students who identify as being of Pacific heritage (Salesa, 2017) in Aotearoa. Therefore, most opportunities for Pacific language immersion or bilingual education<sup>8</sup> currently exist in Auckland. For this reason, to date most research surrounding Pacific bilingual education and Pacific languages in education has been undertaken in the greater Auckland area (Bell et al, 2005; Chu et al, 2013; May, 2020; Milne, 2017; Salesa, 2017; Si'ilata et al, 2019).

This study takes place in two major cities and a regional town outside of the greater Auckland region where the opportunities for bilingual education are generally limited to early childhood education (ECE). There are currently no Tokelauan and Tongan bilingual or immersion programmes beyond ECE in these places. This is largely due to there not being enough students and teachers to set up such programmes sustainably under existing circumstances. Applying a strengths-based approach focusing on existing strengths in communities, the thesis therefore investigates the potential role of mainstream secondary education as part of collective efforts in the home, community, ECE and primary schools, and wider society to support language maintenance, negotiation of positive cultural identities, and the benefits they bring to young people. The overarching aims for this research are to explore:

- why continued access to Pacific languages (specifically gagana Tokelau and lea faka-Tonga) matters for all stakeholders in mainstream education
- how mainstream secondary schools can provide continued access to language education in schools where immersion or bilingual education are not currently available

The three research questions that respond to these aims and guide this inquiry will be introduced in Chapter 2 in relation to the literature.

---

<sup>8</sup> Though not the research focus here, even in Auckland there are many challenges to implementing bilingual Pacific programmes (Davis et al, 2001; McCaffery & McFall, 2010; May, 2020; Salesa, 2017).

## 1.6 - Defining key concepts

Seven key terms used throughout this thesis demand discussion: Pacific, Indigeneity, language, heritage language, culture, identity, and wellbeing. These terms are historically, culturally, and politically loaded and therefore require definition.

### 1.6.1 Pacific

Hau‘ofa (1993, 1994) called for the term *Pacific* to reassert its cultural and historical lived experiences as a great ‘Sea of Islands’ interconnected and without boundaries. From Hau‘ofa’s (1993,1994) perspective, the notion of the great Sea of Islands purposefully opposes the colonised conceptualisation of the Pacific as a series of tiny, isolated islands dependent on larger wealthier nations (Mackley-Crump, 2013, p. 29). Drawing on Hau‘ofa and other Pacific scholars, Vaai and Nabobo-Baba (2017, pp. 7-8) discuss the need for a decolonised reconstruction of the term *Pacific* as it is widely used in a variety of settings in the world, including by Pacific peoples themselves. From a decolonised view, Pacific peoples are part of a large diverse extended family or “aiga potopoto” (Vaai & Nabobo-Baba, 2017, p. 8; Hereniko, 2018). Geographically and culturally, this interconnected Pacific family does not belong to the Asia-Pacific region and does not adhere to the colonial notion of the “romantic South Pacific” (ibid, p. 8). The decolonised understanding of Pacific peoples includes the diaspora of Pacific peoples around the world, acknowledging the cultural and spiritual interconnection of the extended Pacific family.

There are several umbrella terms, for example: *Pasifika*, *Pacific Islander*, *Oceanic*, *Moanan*, each with its own complex cultural, historical, and political contextual arguments against and for their use. According to Chu (2016), the term *Pasifika* is from vagahau Niue and its Samoan equivalent is *Pasefika*. However, some Pacific communities feel marginalised by this term as it is perceived as a Samoan word, and therefore assumes that anything *Pasifika* is Samoan. A further argument against umbrella terms such as *Pacific* and *Pasifika* is that they are derived from English words and therefore can also be seen to reflect the Western world view and colonial influences and divisions made by Western society in the Pacific region (Airini et al, 2010, p. 49; Lopesi, 2018; Reynolds, 2017). For this reason, some Pacific and non-Pacific scholars have used ‘*Oceania*’ or ‘*Oceanic*’ claiming these terms have fewer negative connotations with the “pain of colonialism” (Vaai & Nabobo-Baba, 2017, p. 7). Conversely, *l’Océanie* can be associated with ongoing French colonialism in the Pacific and

therefore *Oceania* is no more neutral. Other Indigenous scholars prefer the terms *Te Moana nui a Kiwa* for the Pacific Ocean and *Moanan* or *Moana Peoples* for Pacific Peoples, drawing on the shared Polynesian word *Moana* for ocean. A Melanesian term *Wansolwara* (one ocean) has also been used as an alternative descriptive term for *Pacific* (Vaai & Nabobo-Baba, 2017, p. 7).

The use of collective terms is widely debated and the practice does not receive universal acceptance (Samu et al, 2013). Tongan scholars Kēpa and Manu‘atu (2008, p. 53) argue that collective terms such as *Pacific* or *Pasifika* allow for the numerical dominance of Samoan people, language, and culture, as the default reference to all things Pacific, potentially leading to the further marginalisation and devaluation of status, “beliefs and practices of the numerically weaker Pasifika peoples.” In the school context, Manu‘atu and Kēpa (2002) argue further that specific student learning needs and cultural considerations may be ignored when students are grouped together under umbrella terms (Si‘ilata et al, 2019). Reynolds (2017) points out that this umbrella grouping of students by ethnicity occurs in reporting of NCEA<sup>9</sup> student achievement, therefore hiding any variation of specific or mixed ethnic identity. Furthermore, May (2020, p. 12) discusses how the term *Pasifika* not only homogenises and ignores marked differences within communities but is now associated with deficit educational usage such as *Pasifika* as priority groups of learners.

Whilst acknowledging the disadvantages, other studies highlight how a collective term can unify and empower in face of hegemony (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2010; Mackley-Crump; 2014; Reynolds, 2017). Reynolds (2017) further argues that *Pasifika* is consistently used in New Zealand educational contexts and therefore carries a shared contextual understanding within schools, universities, and policy makers. However, recently the MoE has shifted from *Pasifika* to *Pacific*.

Ann Milne (2017), Palagi researcher and educator in the field of Pacific education consulted her Pacific colleagues and friends in their preference of terminology. Milne’s (2017) colleagues had a clear preference for the term Pasifika and therefore Pasifika has been used in her writing. In my research, I followed Milne’s (2017) process, but found that my friends and colleagues currently do not share a preferred terminology. For example, some prefer Pasifika-

---

<sup>9</sup> National Certificate of Educational Achievement - the main New Zealand secondary school qualification.

Tokelau, Tokelau-Aotearoa, some prefer Pacific, and some do not mind or think much about it either way.

Therefore, in this thesis, wherever possible, I endeavour to refer to different languages, cultures, and cultural identities by using their respective specific names, for example, Tongan, or Tokelauan-Tongan. When a collective descriptor is required, I have chosen to use the decolonised understanding of the collective term *Pacific* as discussed by Vaai and Nabobo-Baba (2017). In using Vaai and Nabobo-Baba's (2017) decolonised definition of *Pacific*, I acknowledge other Indigenous terms mentioned above, as they reflect the cultural richness and diversity of this area. However, *tulou*<sup>10</sup>, *Pacific* is not a perfect term. Whenever the term *Pacific* features within the thesis, considerations of its imperfections and complexities sit behind its use.

### 1.6.2 Indigeneity<sup>11</sup>

Indigeneity as a term, references “place-based knowing, and understanding of traditional sacred relationships between peoples, their cultures and their cosmologies,” therefore “offer[ing] a holistic knowledge base” (Dei, 2011, p. 23). As indigeneity is connected to physical space, and ancestral ways of knowing holistically, for the context of this Aotearoa-based study, the Indigenous peoples are Māori, the Tangata Whenua of this country.

Holistic worldviews can potentially conceive indigeneity in an inclusive way, “whilst acknowledging that in practice the term is exclusive” (Dei, 2011; Reynolds, 2017, p. 59). From an inclusive perspective, holistic worldviews are not confined to physical spaces and include spiritual, moral, and social dimensions (Lilomaiaava-Doktor, 2009; Reynolds, 2017) and “place can expand with the traveller” (Gegeo, 2001; Reynolds, 2017, p. 59). Thus migrants may carry Indigenous worldviews with them creating an “intergenerational legacy of indigeneity” (Reynolds, 2017, p. 59).

This is relevant in the context of Pacific Peoples. For Tongan scholar, Ka'ili, “indigeneity is about deep [ancestral] roots as well as long-distance routes” (Clifford, 1997; Ka'ili, 2017,

---

<sup>10</sup> ‘tulou’ is a word used in many Polynesian languages including gagana Tokelau and lea faka-Tonga to excuse oneself.

<sup>11</sup> In choosing to capitalise the term Indigenous throughout this thesis so as to show solidarity for Indigenous rights, I acknowledge this practice is both supported and contested by many scholars within the broad field of social justice research. These discussions are beyond the scope of this thesis.

p.3). The concept of mobility is an “integral” part of indigeneity, especially in the case of “Moanan” or Pacific peoples (Clifford, 1997; Ka’ili, 2017, p. 5). Ka’ili (ibid) explains how the navigational journeys of their ancestors spiritually and physically connect all Polynesian peoples past and present. The mobility of Pacific peoples continues into the present and future as Pacific peoples of the diaspora move fluidly between islands like Tonga, Aotearoa, Australia and places further afield (Ka’ili, 2017; Lopesi, 2018; Salesa, 2017). These understandings therefore sit behind references to Indigenous Tokelauan and Tongan worldviews and practices in the thesis.

### 1.6.3 Language

Scholars during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century conceptualised *language* as a separate system based around “shapes and combinations of words ... sounds or units of meaning” (Heller et al, 2018, p. 4, May, 2014). This theory of language was expounded by Sassure, who distinguished between *langue*, the “abstract rules and conventions of a signifying system independent of individual users” and *parole* “concrete instances of the use of *langue*” which subsequently led to language and meaning being thought of as separate entities (García & Li, 2014, p. 6). Chomsky focused on the commonalities of all languages, establishing the concept of Universal Grammar (UG), promoting linguistic theory to explore the commonalities shared by all languages thus showing that the “diversity of linguistic phenomena is illusory” (Chomsky, 1995, p. 54). From this perspective, language is viewed as something abstract and universal and “freely available to all” meaning it is able to be considered as if void of historical, social, political, and economic influences (García & Li, 2014; May, 2014, p. 18). These understandings of language are commonly accepted and widely adopted in the field of Second Language Acquisition in the Western world.

García and Li (2014) argue that because these theories were widely accepted in mainstream linguistics and research during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, language has often been removed from “context of use” (p. 7), treated as a “separate variable,” and communication examined in “narrow terms.” Thus, language is often missing from study of social phenomena (Heller et al, 2018, p. 4). The alternative critical sociolinguistic view of language as a dynamic social practice sees the making of meaning as embedded in the notion of language. Language and meaning cannot be removed from their historical, political, economic, social, and cultural perspectives (Bakhtin, 1992; García & Li, 2014; Heller et al, 2018). Therefore, language

includes all practices which assist in making meaning, such as “speaking ... writing ... gesturing, posturing, drawing, photographing, painting, sculpting, moving, singing, dancing ... shouting, even failing to do one or more of these” (Heller et al, 2018, p. 5). Meaning is produced through social interaction. Therefore, the making of meaning is entrenched in power relations resulting from how humans use linguistic resources in “their dealings-and-struggles-with each other” (Heller et al, 2018, p. 5). Through human interaction, meaning carries history from previous encounters whilst being transferred across a “web of encounters that stretch across time and space” (Bakhtin, 1992; Heller et al, 2018, p. 6). Within this understanding, language is a dynamic and social “practice that constructs, and is constructed by the way language learners understand themselves, their social surroundings, their histories, and their possibilities for the future” (Heller, 2007; Norton & Toohey, 2004, p. 1).

In this research, I use the critical sociolinguistic understanding of the term *language* as a dynamic social practice which cannot be treated “as separate from the social processes that it shapes and that shape it” (Heller et al, 2018, p. 4).

#### 1.6.4 Heritage language

Seals and Shah (2018, pp. 2-3) extend Hornberger and Wang’s (2008) and Fishman’s (2001) North American definition of heritage languages (from here on HLs) to include: “immigrant, Indigenous, and ancestral languages.” As such, HL speaker is a term relevant for all “who have a recent or ancestral connection to a language that is not the dominant societal language in their current region of residence” (Seals & Shah, 2018, p. 3). Within this definition, heritage language speakers (HLSs) may “still identify with (a) particular heritage language(s) based on their personal background, without having to actually have proficiency in the language(s).” Seals and Shah (2018) bring to this definition the concept of agency of speakers in deciding exactly how they identify with the heritage language(s). In incorporating the notion of agency to this definition of HLS, Seals (2017) argues that the term HLS can become an “all-encompassing term” (Seals & Shah, 2018, p. 2). In this way speakers themselves can determine how they identify their connection to the language rather than being classed as learners or proficient speakers, thus encouraging more “positive positioning” by communities (ibid, p. 2). The Seals and Shah (2018) definition of HLS and HL fit both my own experiences and those of the participants in this research of heritage languages.



Therefore, in this thesis, I draw on the work of Seals and Shah (2018) to define HLS and HL as an all-encompassing term for ancestral, community, and Indigenous languages.

This said, it is important to acknowledge that the terms HLS and HL are not yet widely used in Aotearoa, though their frequency of use is growing, especially in language education and policy (Auckland Languages Strategy Working Group, 2018; Seals, 2021; Seals & Olsen-Reeder, 2018). Other similar terms are used in Aotearoa and around the world. For example, Australian scholarship commonly uses the term *community languages* to refer to Australia's immigrant languages, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages to refer to Indigenous languages of Australia (Clyne, 1991; Liddicoat, 2018). Liddicoat (2018) explains that the preference for these terms over HLs is due to the implication of 'heritage' resonating as something lost or of the past. Other terms used in the Western scholarship to express the different types of languages which are included in the notion of HLs include: *Indigenous languages*, *immigrant languages*, *minority languages*, *Herkunftssprachen* (languages of origin), *les langues maternelles* (mother tongue languages) (Seals & Shah, 2018).

The fact that there is not one universal defined understanding illustrates the complex, contextual, and diverse language-related challenges faced by all Indigenous, and diasporic communities. Recognising these complexities, Seals and Shah (2018, p. 3) reason that their extended definitions of HLS and HL do not require a language "to be either an Indigenous language or a heritage language - it can be and often is both at once." Their work discussing heritage language policies around the world demonstrates how scholars can view Indigenous languages as HLs (ibid, 2018). In addition, the advantage of having an all-encompassing term "offers a convenient way to make connections across" the various terms (Liddicoat, 2018). Nonetheless, Seals and Shah (2018, p. 3) see that using the more "historical categorization *alongside* the term "heritage language" can also be helpful. I have found this to be the case in the writing of this process and therefore in addition to using the terms HLS and HL, when the context is appropriate, I use the terms *Indigenous*, *minority* and *community language(s)*.

#### 1.6.5 Culture

Discussions of *culture* in Pacific scholarship (Anae, 2010; Lopesi, 2018) relate to how *culture* is understood in critical sociolinguistics (Blackledge, 2005; Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Pujolar, 2007). Scholars Kēpa and Manu'atu (2008) conceptualise *culture* from an

Indigenous Tongan perspective in connection with time. Culture in this view is not “not linear, independent, and irreversible” (ibid, p. 1808). Instead, culture is viewed as a dynamic process which interweaves “the past and present lived experience” in which social experience enables Indigenous peoples to “acquire understanding of themselves” (ibid, p. 1808). Anae (2010) warns that imposing static views of culture on Pacific peoples is misrepresentative as it assumes that Pacific peoples all share a core set of cultural beliefs. This misrepresents the multi and intercultural reality (Anae, 2010; Coxon et al, 2002). Contrary to colonial understandings of Pacific culture, whereby people and culture were described as static homogenous groups by others, Pacific peoples’ cultural contexts have always been dynamic and evolving (Coxon et al, 2002; Lopesi, 2018).

Similarly, from a critical sociolinguistic perspective, Blackledge (2005), for example, stresses the importance of not binding shared cultural practices to nationalist ideologies seeking to unify the nation state through a ‘one language/ one culture/ one nation’ ideology. Nation-state ideologies of cultural and linguistic assimilation have led to language education propagating notions of culture which are “equated to a nation” and therefore “static” (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Pujolar, 2007). Such ideologies do not foster the nurturing of multicultural diversity.

Scholarship in both fields share an understanding of culture as a dynamic and fluid “interactional phenomenon” (Anae, 2010; Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998, p. 1; Kēpa & Manu‘atu, 2008), grounded in human activity (Goodenough, 1994; Kēpa & Manu‘atu, 2008). From both stances, culture and language are inextricably linked, as language is used to navigate shared cultural “practices, perspectives and products ... amongst groups of people” (Menard-Warwick, 2014, p. 121). Therefore, a Pacific and critical sociolinguistic lens on the term *culture* is well suited to the context and aims of this thesis, which seeks to explore why and how Tokelau and Tongan languages and cultures should be nurtured in mainstream secondary education in Aotearoa.

#### 1.6.6 Identity

Further correspondence between Pacific writers and sociolinguists can be seen in the area of identity. Pacific scholarship views identity as relationally constructed, multiple, dynamic, and contextual (Mila-Schaaf, 2011; Tupuola, 2004; Vaai & Nabobo-Baba, 2017). Contemporary

Pacific scholarship has also linked strong ethnic identities with enhanced wellbeing (Manuela & Anae, 2017). The sociolinguistic understanding of *identity* is similarly relational, dynamic, and spatial with Norton's (2013, p. 45) widely accepted theory stating that identity is "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how that person understands possibilities for the future." From this stance, identity is therefore being "multiple, changing and a site of struggle" (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 36). Thus, as this thesis explores language and identity in education in a Pacific space, to define the term identity I draw on identity theory in Pacific scholarship and sociolinguistics. The construct of identity is further operationalised in relation to theory and practice and discussed in depth in Chapter 3 as part of the underpinning theoretical frameworks of this research (see pp. 63-8)

#### 1.6.7 Wellbeing

Wellbeing is a complex and difficult term to define and measure (Durie, 2006; Fry & Wilson, 2018). As this thesis aims to understand the role of Pacific languages, cultures, and identities in mainstream education in supporting the wellbeing of students, I look to comprehend and define wellbeing from Indigenous and contemporary Pacific scholarship.

Highly relevant to this research is Te Vaka Atafaga (Kupa, 2009), a Tokelauan model of health and wellbeing. The creator-author of this model, Kupa Kupa (personal communication, February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021), stresses that, although there are commonalities across Pacific (and Māori) models of wellbeing, it is crucial to understand the points of difference. In designing Te Vaka Atafaga, Kupa (2009) used what is Indigenous and unique to Tokelau to visually conceptualise Tokelauan health and wellbeing. Te Vaka Atafaga, therefore, uses metaphorically rich language to describe connections between the six components necessary for successfully navigating a vaka, the Tokelauan outrigger canoe essential to Tokelauan life. This becomes a useful model with which to discuss Tokelauan wellbeing. The components are:

- 1) Te tino o te tagata (the physical human body, represented by the paopao, the wooden structure of the vaka),
- 2) Mafaufau (the mind, represented by the tautai, the expert fisherman and navigator of the vaka who looks after the boat),

- 3) Kaiga/ Pui-kaiga (the family structure, represented by the intertwined threads which bind together the different parts of the vaka)
- 4) Tapuakiga/ Talitonuga (spirituality/ belief systems, represented by the sail of the vaka)
- 5) Puipuiga o Te tino o Te Tagata (the environment, which surrounds the vaka and sustains the people)
- 6) Fakalapopotoga/ Tautua (social support systems for a person/community, represented by the outrigger)

(Kupa, 2009, pp. 159-161)

The Te Vaka Atafaga model integrates Tokelauan values and practices of collective wellbeing and education for wellbeing. These practices include the inati system and the kaiga family structure. Inati is the practice of sharing resources, traditionally food, within the village or Tokelau community. The process of inati is underpinned by Tokelauan values alofa (compassion) and fakahoa lelei (equity) ensuring everyone receives an equitable share. Vā feāloaki, is the caring of relationships and māopoopo (inclusion). Within the kaiga structure and wider village life, each person has their own role to support the inati system as part of the collective; inati sees that the needs of every person in the kaiga are looked after. The Tokelauan value alofa ki te tamā manu (having compassion and looking after the vulnerable, see pp. 8-9) guiding this research is an extension of the inati process ensuring everyone has what they need to live and thrive. As the Te Vaka Atafaga model depicts, these practices and values which support collective wellbeing rely on each part of the ‘vaka’ to be working together. Further implications of this model and its application to language education will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 8.

In the Tongan context, the Fonua model of health (Tu‘itahi, 2009) draws on the concept of fonua - which describes the ongoing relationship between land and its people and the nurturing of this relationship to sustain the community (Mafi, 2018). To nurture the relationship between humans and the environment, the framework includes six dimensions which interweave and thus must all be cared for equally “to sustain holistic wellbeing” (Mafi, 2018, p. 10). These six dimensions are: “Laumālie (Spiritual), ‘Atamai (Mental), Sino (Physical), Kāinga (Collective/Community), Anga faka-fonua (Cultural), Tu‘unga fakaekoloa (Socio-Economic) and ‘Ātakai (Environment)” (Mafi, 2018, p. 10).

While there are differences across the Te Vaka Atafaga and Fonua models, they share a holistic view of wellbeing. For example, Mafi (2018, p. 11) highlights that the six interconnected dimensions of Tongan wellbeing need to be looked after at all levels of society: “Tautaha (Individual), Fāmilī (Family), Kolo (Local/Village), Fonua (Nation) and Māmani (Global Society) (Tu‘itahi, 2009).” Here the holistic nature and understanding of wellbeing in the Tongan context is similar to the Te Vaka Atafaga concept in which no part can stand or work in isolation without the other parts working.

In relation to how language connects with holistic wellbeing, Tongan, educator Feki (2015, p. 41) writes that it is the “weaving of family, respect, language, church, and education that forms my wellbeing.” In the Aotearoa-Samoan context, Parsons (2020, p. 93) connects language and wellbeing discussing how Samoan-speaking participants gained strength and a sense of being grounded, whereby non-Samoan-speaking participants felt “inadequate or unsure of identity, belonging or place.” Pene et al (2009), similarly conclude that young Tokelauans in Aotearoa gain strength from their cultural identity and enhanced fluency in gagana Tokelau when they grow up in intergenerational homes. Kupa (2009) explains that Te Vaka Atafaga encourages Tokelauan people living in Aotearoa to stay connected to cultural identity to help support wellbeing. This connection includes language and culture (Kupa Kupa, personal communication, February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021).

In contemporary Pacific cross-disciplinary scholarship, there is a growing body of work looking at how cultural identity or ethnic identity and wellbeing are connected (Anae, 2016; Manuela & Sibley, 2015; Manuela & Anae, 2017). Manuela and Anae (2017) synthesised both Pacific and Western scholarship surrounding wellbeing, ethnic identity, and Pacific youth and describe how these constructs interrelate. Within their exploration many areas of society are implicated, for example the education, justice, and health systems, as well as many constructs such as languages, faith/church, and cultural practices. From their analysis, Manuela and Anae (2017, p. 140) claim two major points: that ethnic identity can protect people from negative influences on wellbeing, and thus be beneficial in educational or justice sector contexts, and that ethnic identity can also be detrimental to wellbeing, for example by stereotyping. On this point there is specific attention given to the stereotyping of groups such as “NZ-born/ island-born” Pacific peoples (Manuela & Anae, 2017, p. 141). As a result, Manuela and Anae (2017) recommend that for optimal wellbeing outcomes for Pacific youth, existing programmes in institutions such as schools, prisons, churches, health programmes

must be anchored into curricula and extend to ethnic enhancement. The recommendations made in Manuela and Anae (2017) have very tangible connections to the research presented here and will be discussed throughout the thesis.

The literature presented in defining key terms to this research: Pacific, Indigeneity, language, heritage language, culture, identity, and wellbeing, will be referred to and drawn on throughout the thesis. I now provide an overarching guide to the thesis before concluding the chapter.

### 1.7 - Thesis map

Chapter 1 has introduced personal and contextual background details necessary in understanding the impetus behind this research project. Chapter 2 discusses relevant historical background and cross-disciplinary literature in relation to the current research questions. In Chapter 3, I present social justice, identity, and edgewalking, the three theoretical frameworks guiding the research process. This is followed by a discussion of methodology, research design, and data collection and analysis methods in Chapter 4. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 present findings in relation to the three research questions. Chapter 8 synthesises findings to both problematise and offer empirical-based solutions and goals as well as presenting the contributions and limitations of the project. To finish, in Chapter 8, I present outcomes, ongoing work and reflections that have evolved from this doctoral research.

### 1.8 - Chapter summary

In this introductory chapter I have presented my impetus for undertaking this research by describing how my learning journey connects with the research context: Pacific language education in Aotearoa. I explained key connections, relationships, my positionality, and the values and critical, strengths-based stance underpinning the aims of the endeavour. Key concepts to the thesis were defined to ensure clarity of understanding behind terms which are historically and politically loaded. Next, Chapter 2 provides further context to this study through discussion of historical background, relevant research, and policy. This serves as a platform to introduce the guiding three research questions and their potential fill the gap in existing research and practice.

## Chapter 2 - Review of literature

### 2.1 - Introduction

Relevant literature, including history, theory, pedagogy, research, and policy concerned with Indigenous and minority languages in education is interdisciplinary by nature (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Heller et al, 2018; May, 2014). For this reason, in reviewing the relevant literature, I interweave historical background, research, policies, and theories across the broad fields of education and applied linguistics. This combination allows deeper investigation of subfields from academic disciplines including critical education, Indigenous education, and critical applied sociolinguistics, in both international and local settings.

I begin by outlining the historical background of Pacific migration to Aotearoa, focusing on the now Aotearoa-based Tokelauan and Tongan communities. This is followed by presenting big picture ideas and issues pertinent in critical education and applied linguistic research in international and local contexts. I then narrow the focus to specific research in Aotearoa to describe the research ‘gap’ or problem which this thesis aims to address.

### 2.2 - Contextual background

The Pacific migration story to Aotearoa must begin with acknowledgement and understanding of the “Indigenous Moana peoples” who navigated, exchanged “skills, arts knowledge ... social networks and wealth” “extensively” and in an “unhindered” manner (Lopesi, 2018, p. 28). Prior to the arrival of Europeans, expert navigation skills allowed Indigenous peoples from around the whole Pacific Ocean to connect and build relationships (Hau‘ofa, 1994; Lopesi, 2018). This longstanding interconnectedness of Indigenous Moanan Peoples is evident in shared linguistic features, cultural practices, and worldviews throughout the Pacific. Modern migration stories of Pacific Peoples in search of a “better life” for their children (Si‘ilata et al, 2019) are a continuation of the folauga (navigational journeys) undertaken by their ancestors using their navigational expertise to seek “land, food, ... sovereignty, and the right to self-determination” (Si‘ilata et al, 2019, p. 908). For these reasons, there are many relationships in Pacific migration stories, often discussed when prefacing Pacific educational research (May, 2014) in its widest sense. However, the focus

here is on specifically presenting the Tokelauan and Tongan narratives surrounding the history of migration to Aotearoa and its implications for language in education.

### 2.2.1 Tokelau

Settled by Polynesian navigators around 1000 years ago, Tokelau consists of three atoll groups, Fakaofo, Nukunono, and Atafu, situated around 500 kilometres to the north of Samoa (Huntsman & Kalolo, 2007). Tokelau's "common ancient history" recounts each atoll as initially being independent of each other, "unrelated and mutually hostile" (ibid, p. 9).

However, after a period of battles Fakaofo became the conquering atoll bringing to Tokelau the worship of Tui Tokelau, the great god of all Tokelau, whose principal place of worship was represented by a gigantic stone "standing before the god's house in Fakaofo" (ibid, p. 9).

Cross-atoll marriage consolidated relations between the three atolls (ibid). By the mid to late nineteenth century, the three Tokelau atolls were "virtually internally self-governing, each doing things its own way" but speaking a "common language" and recognising and celebrating "bonds of kinship and a common past, but ... also self-consciously different" with each atoll having "its own history" (ibid, p. 8). For a more in-depth account see Huntsman and Kalolo (2007) and Matagi Tokelau (1991).

Tokelau experienced considerable change when Europeans arrived in the mid 1800s with the introduction of new foods, materials, and religion. Missionaries brought Catholicism to Nukunono, and Atafu and Fakaofo became predominantly Protestant. European discovery of Tokelau also brought tragedy to the atoll life with the arrival of Peruvian slave ships in the 1860. This invasion resulted in the kidnapping of almost all able-bodied men (253), most of whom died and/or never returned to Tokelau. Tokelau became a British colony in 1889 with the British handing over the administration to New Zealand in 1926. Post-World War Two, in 1949, Tokelau officially became a part of New Zealand, and it is still a dependent territory, part of the Realm of New Zealand (Government of Tokelau, 2021).

From the 1950s until the 1970s, Tokelau migration to Aotearoa occurred in numerous forms ranging from scholarship programmes, government-assisted migrant programmes for unmarried people and resettlement schemes. These schemes were aimed at easing over-population on Tokelau and at bringing Tokelauans to Aotearoa to ease the shortage in the labour market and fill "low-skill, low-wage" jobs required in the process and manufacturing



industries (Salesa, 2017, p. 12). Many Tokelauans arrived independently without New Zealand government assistance. Since the 1950s, the Tokelauan population in Aotearoa has continued to grow steadily.

The 2006 and 2018 census report the increase in Tokelauan People living in Aotearoa from 6,819 to 8,676 (Statistics New Zealand, 2018). The 2018 census indicates that 78.5% of Tokelauans were born in Aotearoa and many more identify as having Tokelau heritage as well as other cultural backgrounds (ibid). This is compared to 1,383 Tokelauan people living in Tokelau (Te Ara, 2015). Unlike other Pacific communities, whose largest communities are in Auckland, the majority of Aotearoa based Tokelauan people live in the wider Wellington region, Tokoroa, and Taupo. There are smaller communities in Auckland and other parts of the country. Tokelau community life in Aotearoa is active often centred around atoll-based groups, (Tokelau community, personal communication, December, 2020).

Tokelauan experience of New Zealand education has not always been optimal. The Tokelau scholarship programme, a New Zealand government initiative during 1960s until 1980s, sent top students from Tokelau primary schools to New Zealand to undertake secondary education. For families, this was an honour and an opportunity for children to gain useful skills to bring back to serve their villages and atolls (Huntsman & Kalolo, 2007). On arrival in New Zealand, these children with little English, aged 13 to 14, were placed in low-streamed<sup>12</sup> classes. To begin, students performed well comparative to their peers in low-streamed classes, but then often failed School Certificate<sup>13</sup> once they reached the fifth form. Their early placement in low streamed classes was inadequate preparation for academic skills required to pass the national qualification. Students were admonished by their families for their ‘failure’ and some students were too “embarrassed to return” home with no qualification after their schooling (ibid). Huntsman and Kalolo (2007) report that, though some students succeeded and successfully navigated their bicultural worlds, the New Zealand government did not well serve these Tokelau students on many levels. Little support was provided for students, who had until aged 12 or 13 lived an atoll life, to cope with the cold or with living in a completely different cultural environment in New Zealand. Expectations of the school system such as streaming classes were not explained to parents or students (ibid). Tokelau students were

---

<sup>12</sup> Streaming is the practice of grouping school students by age and ability.

<sup>13</sup> School Certificate was a New Zealand examination based school qualification for students in Form 5 (aged 15/16), similar to British O-Levels. It was used from the 1940s until 2002.

expected to assimilate, resulting in students often “caught in a cultural mismatch” (ibid, p. 38).

Contrary to the understanding of Tokelau parents, that their children were being sent to New Zealand to gain useful skills to bring back to serve their villages, the scholarship programme in fact served to resettle Tokelauans in New Zealand (ibid). Several government officials at the time believed that depopulation of Tokelau was ‘the Future of Tokelau’ with New Zealand as the ‘promised land.’ For the New Zealand government, the scholarship programme served as a means of turning Tokelauans into “good productive ... citizens” working in low-paid, low-skill jobs, “who would encourage and support their parents and others when they too moved to New Zealand” (ibid, pp. 37-8).

In my current experience of working in the secondary school system, 70 years since Tokelauan New Zealanders first migrated to Aotearoa, there have not been many changes in educational opportunities for Tokelauan-New Zealanders. An indication is the lack of progress to see Tokelau language and culture valued, sustained, and developed, even though Tokelau remains the only dependent colony in the Realm of New Zealand. Census data over the past two decades shows the number of Tokelauans able to speak Tokelauan is decreasing, with 70.2% of Tokelauan children under 15 speaking only English (Statistics New Zealand, 2018). Furthermore, the trauma of the scholarship experiences, of not being able to “cope” without English in the New Zealand school system is impacting decision-making in the current Tokelau Curriculum Review for schools in Tokelau (Tokelau community communication, June 2021). As part of this review, there is a strong push for English-Tokelauan bilingual development in order for students to develop English proficiency to complete higher school and tertiary qualifications. Some people in Tokelauan communities are concerned this focus on English-Tokelauan bilingual development in Tokelauan schools will further contribute to language shift in Tokelau itself as this approach will place English at the top of the linguistic hierarchy in Tokelau-the “only place in the world” where Tokelau language can be revitalised (Tokelau community communication, June 2021). The negative implications of language shift on the future educational experiences and wellbeing of Tokelauans in Aotearoa will be discussed in more depth throughout this thesis.

### 2.2.2 Tonga

Tongans are the first Polynesian descendants from the Lapita People who migrated to the Pacific from South East Asia over 3000 years ago (Taumoeofolau, 2005). From around 950 - 1500 AD the Tu'i Tonga Empire conquered many areas of the Pacific, creating strong ties between Pacific nations such as Samoa, Fiji, and Wallis and Futuna. These links are still acknowledged through bloodlines. Physical evidence of the Tu'i Tonga Empire can be seen in Tonga today, for example the Ha'amonga 'a Maui, a large stone structure erected by King Tu'itātui. Indigenous cultural practices, values, and language connect contemporary Tongans with their early Polynesian ancestors (ibid). Anga Fakatonga (the Tongan way) centres around community focused values of faka'apa'apa (respect), talangofua (obedience), fakaongoongo (waiting and listening for instructions), and 'ofa (reciprocal sharing and helping) (Taumoeofolau, 2005).

Tongans' first contact with Europeans was in the 1700s when Dutch explorers reached Tonga, followed by Captain Cook in the 1800s. After Cook's visit, the Wesleyan Missionaries arrived and contact between Tongans and Europeans intensified more rapidly (New Internationalist, 1991). The arrival of the missionaries introduced both Christian values and written Tongan language (Taumoeofolau, 2005). From then, Anga Fakatonga evolved and included Christian beliefs and Christian spirituality (ibid).

Unlike other Pacific nations, Tonga has never been officially colonised. It became a British protectorate voluntarily in 1900 to avoid German colonisation, and became subsequently fully independent in 1970 (New Internationalist, 1991). Tonga is the only remaining Polynesian kingdom.

Tongans have been moving between Aotearoa and Tonga for over 100 years for study and work purposes (Taumoeofolau, 2005). Tongan migration to Aotearoa intensified during the 1960s and 70s when the New Zealand government offered short-term contractual work in factories and other unskilled low paid jobs. In 1974, during an economic downturn, many Tongans were implicated in the Dawn Raids, raids on Pacific homes at dawn, where police sometimes violently arrested Pacific overstaying migrant workers. The Dawn Raids are described by Anae (2020a) as "the most blatantly racist attack on Pacific peoples in New Zealand's history." The Dawn Raids duly led to Tongans and other Pacific peoples being stereotyped as overstayers and blamed for taking employment from locals, crime, and for straining housing, health, and education (Anae, 2020b). These stereotypes were reinforced by

the media and in politics (ibid) and systemic racism prevailed as migration policies listed northern European migrants as the most preferred immigrants as they were more able to assimilate (ibid).

Although immigration policies for Tongans improved with temporary initiatives (tala‘ofa<sup>14</sup>) 1976, visa waivers-1980s, Pacific access categories from 2002) (Taumoefolau, 2005), the impact of the Dawn Raids on Pacific peoples is still relevant today (Anae, 2020b). Toleafoa (2020) describes how the explicit “in-your-face” racism he experienced as a young Pacific person growing up in the 1970s is now expressed covertly through prejudice, discrimination, and stereotyping.

Despite facing continuing social injustices, over the 20<sup>th</sup> century Tongan communities have grown and thrived, contributing much to all aspects of society in Aotearoa (Saleasa, 2017; Taumoefolau, 2005). The largest Tongan communities are in South Auckland, with communities also in Wellington, and rapidly growing communities in parts of the South Island.

Taumoefolau (2005) describes the linguistic and cultural identities of contemporary Tongans in Aotearoa as emerging in three different ways. Those who are raised in anga fakatonga, speaking Tongan at home; those who were born in Aotearoa and live by Tongan values, understanding but not speaking Tongan and therefore not passing on the language to the next generation, and finally, the third group identify more broadly as Pacific peoples, using a “distinctive brand of English, often mixed with smatterings of their mother tongue” (ibid, p. 5). Taumoefolau (2005, p. 6) writes that this broad and youthful Pasifika identity provides a sense of community for young people who still “switch to the traditional way” at church or in community settings. Taumoefolau (2005, p. 5) writes that lea faka-Tonga is “vulnerable to language loss” as the number Aotearoa-born Tongan children increase. She indicates educational pathways from ECE to tertiary institutions as an important means of maintaining Tongan language in Aotearoa (ibid).

My research story specifically focuses on the Tokelau and Tongan contexts and connections to language education in Aotearoa. However, I note that as encapsulated in Hau‘ofa’s (1994) concept of Pacific peoples being bound together by the great Sea of Islands, these stories and

---

<sup>14</sup> an amnesty whereby ‘overstayers’ were granted permanent residence

experiences bare many relationships to those of other migrants from Pacific nations in Aotearoa and the wider Pacific diaspora. For these communities, schools and educational policy makers have until recently viewed Pacific and migrant “relative lack of educational achievement” in a deficit manner, viewing bilingualism and culture as hindrances to academic achievement (May, 2014, p. 22, 2020). The following sections highlight how academic achievement and bilingualism has been problematised in cross-disciplinary literature.

## 2.3 - Critical perspectives on education

A critical approach to education is concerned with how education can support goals of social, political, and economic equity; in other words, social justice (Freire, 1973). Critical educators and researchers advocate for education to be a dialogic process in which everyone is trusted and valued (Freire, 1973; Kēpa & Manu‘atu, 2008). Through a process of dialogue and reflection, it is intended that students, educators, and communities become aware of injustice or conscientised (developing, strengthening, and changing consciousness) to take critical action, or praxis, to resist oppression and make transformational change (Freire, 1973; Milne, 2017; Phipps, 2019; Smith & Smith, 2019). Pacific scholars have often conceptualised goals for Pacific education within the critical approach to research, policy, practice, and advocacy which focuses on equitable educational outcomes and best practice for Pacific learners in Aotearoa (Anae, 2020b; Kēpa & Manu‘atu, 2008; May, 2014; Milne, 2017; Reynolds, 2017).

### 2.3.1 Culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy

Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2017) is one wide-reaching approach to pedagogy within a critical framework, including in mainstream education in Aotearoa (Hill & Thrupp, 2019). Ladson-Billings (1994) confronted ongoing deficit narratives in research and practice surrounding educational success for African American children. Her work resulted in CRP, an asset-based or funds-of- knowledge pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Moll & Gonzalez, 1994). In response to centuries of deficit approaches to teaching which positioned cultural capital other than White middle-class norms as a hindrance to gaining a successful education, CRP “repositioned the linguistic, literate, and cultural practices of working-class communities - specifically poor communities of colour - as assets to honour, explore, and extend” (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 4).

Culturally relevant pedagogy as a term is now found throughout educational policy and school talk in the English-speaking world. Known by similar terms, for example, cultural modelling pedagogy, or third space pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 13), CRP is considered a goal to strive for in schools. CRP has become so ubiquitous in educational settings that some scholars observe the term CRP is increasingly used without real enactment (Ladson-Billings, 2017; Milne, 2017; Paris & Alim, 2017). One example of this can be appreciated by the contrast between liberal versus critical approaches to multiculturalism in schools (Kubota, 2004; Milne, 2017; Norton & Toohey, 2004). In attempting to provide culturally responsive learning, schools often organise international food or costume days with the aim of promoting equality, tolerance, and respect. Without a critical lens applied to doing and experiencing multiculturalism, such occasions tend to assume White cultural norms whilst exoticising or stereotyping the ‘other’ (Kubota, 2004). In the bicultural Aotearoa context, Milne (2018) terms liberal multiculturalism as ‘dial a powhiri’ - encapsulating the ‘token’ nature of multicultural approaches without providing opportunities for students to critically explore and problematise issues of power, inequality, and race inherent in society.

In response to these weaknesses, discussion of culturally *sustaining* pedagogy (CSP) (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017) has evolved. Building on and honouring CRP, CSP aims to further break down “social and educational inequality ... in pluralistic societies” such as the United States and other nation-states which were founded on colonisation and continue to live out legacies of land theft and enslavement (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 1). Paris and Alim (2017, p. 1) define culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) below:

*CSP seeks to perpetuate and foster - to sustain - linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of schooling for positive social transformation. CSP positions dynamic cultural dexterity as a necessary good, and sees the outcome of learning as additive rather than subtractive, as remaining whole rather than framed as broken, as critically enriching strengths rather than replacing deficits. Culturally sustaining pedagogy exists wherever education sustains the lifeways of communities who have been and continue to be damaged and erased through schooling.*

In line with critical educational theory, CSP explicitly places issues of power and race as central to teaching, learning and research. CSP encourages communities to envisage new or

revitalised models of community-rooted education “where diverse, heterogeneous practices are not only valued but *sustained*” and provide “emancipatory ... schooling” (ibid, p. 3) rather than that education critiques and oppresses minoritized groups.

Endorsing the evolving term of CSP, Ladson-Billings (2014, p. 76) underlines the need for pedagogy which supports consistently marginalised students to “become subjects in the instructional process, not mere objects” to flexible, adaptable, and not standardised. CSP has many tenets which are theoretically and practically relevant to language education internationally and in the local context of Aotearoa and Pacific. Non-standardised culturally sustaining pedagogy is essential if education is to support and sustain the multilingual and multicultural competence of Pacific learners. Aotearoa-based scholars and educators have also discussed and endorsed the term culturally sustaining pedagogy in work advocating for Māori and Pacific learners (Milne, 2017; Si‘ilata et al, 2019). Their work will be discussed in section 2.6 of this Chapter.

I now turn to look at how theory and praxis of critical education have evolved and implicated Indigenous and heritage language education.

## 2.4 - Indigenous education and language revitalisation

CSP can be connected to goals of reclaiming and sustaining linguistic and cultural identities in the field of Indigenous education. Indigenous educational scholars internationally have focused in detail on language and language revitalisation within Indigenous educational models (Benham, 2008; McKinley & Smith, 2019). In line with critical theory, international literature names the ongoing consequences of the “legacy of colonialism and genocide” (Skerrett, 2019; Smith, 2012; Spring, 2008, p. xiii) as the underlying reason preventing Indigenous Peoples being able to easily access their right “to establish and control their educational systems and institutions” in their own languages and in keeping with Indigenous worldviews (Article 14, United Nations General Assembly, 2007, p. 6). Literature in this field is clear that efforts to counter hegemonic forces in the implementation of Indigenous education systems have all come from the grass roots level (Benham, 2008; McKinley & Smith, 2019; May, 2001, 2014; Skerrett-White; 2003; Stein-Chandler & Cherrington, 2008). Indigenous school models are often centred in communities or tribes with pedagogies supporting students and their families to connect with their ancestors and to the land and

environment from which they come (Benham, 2008). In-depth exploration of Indigenous school models goes beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it is relevant to discuss the Kōhanga Reo and subsequent Kura Kaupapa and Whare Wānanga movement in Aotearoa, as this further illustrates local and big picture contexts within the thesis and provides a model of what has been done around language revitalisation within these shores (McCaffery & McFall, 2010; May, 2020).

Before the arrival of Pākehā in Aotearoa, Māori education was based on a sophisticated, complex, and vast knowledge system passed on through oral traditions (May, 2001; Smith, 1989). Māori “actively sought to complement their own educational knowledge ... with Pākehā wisdom” when Europeans arrived in Aotearoa and set up mission schools which were taught in te reo Māori (May, 2001, p. 294). During this time (1816 to the mid 1840s) Māori-English biliteracy developed swiftly (May, 2001, p. 294). However, hegemonic colonial forces present in the establishment of state education in Aotearoa during the 1860s - 1870s rapidly turned to assimilationist policies, essentially removing te reo Māori and Mātauranga Māori from education. By the 1900s speaking Māori was prohibited at school. Colonial education served for “taming and civilising the natives ... forging a nation which was connected at a concrete level with the historical and moral processes of Britain” (Smith, 1992, p. 6). Racist assumptions were rife throughout a colonising education system designed to “lift Māori from one society to another, but only as they were not lifted *too* high” (May, 2001, p. 201), preparing Māori to become part of the working class. Though te reo Māori was banned at school, it was nurtured in predominantly Māori rural communities and remained the language spoken at home in many areas until post World War II. The necessity to move to urban centres for work after World War II took tangata whenua away from Māori community life and language leading to extensive language loss.

By 1975, the percentage of school-aged Māori able to speak te reo Māori had dropped to less than 5%. Grassroots movements from within Māori communities seeking to reverse this language shift saw the birth of Māori immersion education run by Māori with the first Kōhanga Reo (ECE birth until five years old) opening in 1982 and subsequently many more established in following years. Kura Kaupapa, Māori immersion primary (then secondary) schools were established from 1985, followed by Wānanga (Māori tertiary institutions). The New Zealand Government has supported Māori immersion education since 1990 and in 1992 Māori immersion education had its own Kaupapa Māori curriculum which aligns with the



mainstream NZC. Though each Kōhanga Reo, Kura, and Wānanga has its own identity, the underlying Kaupapa Māori philosophy (Smith, 1999) that education is whānau-led, delivered in te reo Māori, and within te Ao Māori is ubiquitous. For these reasons, Māori immersion education has been a key aspect of successfully reclaiming and revitalizing te reo Māori. The underpinning Kaupapa Māori philosophy empowers Māori to explore how Māori ontology, epistemology, and knowledge can support the navigation of present realities (Manuela & Anae, 2017, p. 141).

The model of language revitalisation employed by Māori has been recognised, hailed, and imitated by linguists and educators internationally (Benham, 2008; Hornberger & Wang, 2008). Furthermore, though Māori student enrolment in Māori immersion education is only around 15%, (a much higher percentage of Māori students are enrolled in English-medium education) students in Māori immersion schools are leaving school with higher pass rates in NCEA (O’Callaghan, 2019). The model of immersion Kura Kaupapa education provided a starting point for Pacific bilingual education in Aotearoa (May, 2020). Based on the Kōhanga Reo centres, Pacific languages nests were first established in the ECE sector during the 1970s and 1980s (Education Gazette, 2021a). In 1987, the first bilingual Samoan programme in a primary school context was established (May, 2020). In this way, the language revitalisation experience of Māori a platform to support Pacific people to navigate language shift. Bilingual Pacific language education in Aotearoa will be discussed in more detail in section 2.6.

## 2.5 - Research conversations in critical applied sociolinguistics

Conversations across critical and Indigenous education connect with research conversations in (critical) applied sociolinguistics on many levels. In this sub-section I briefly present international perspectives on language shift, language ideologies, and multilingual education and policy as they inform both international and local issues at play in this research.

### 2.5.1 Language shift

The process of language shift happens in multilingual societies when dominant languages (languages with more privilege and political power) gradually assume the place of a minority or minoritized language (Fishman, 1980; May, 2001). Fishman’s (1964, 1980, 1991; 2013) model of language shift, describes how this process happens over two to three generations.

The first generation of speakers are more fluent in the minority language, the middle generation are bilingual, and the third generation are partially bilingual or monolingual in the dominant language.

### Language shift in Aotearoa

Over the past 40 decades there have been several sociolinguistic studies examining language shift, language maintenance, and language revitalisation in Pacific communities (Bell et al, 2005; Hirsch, 1987; Holmes & Harlow, 1991; Hunkin, 2012; McCaffery & McFall, 2010; May, 2020; Parsons 2020). Writing in the 1980s and early 1990s, a time when numbers of migrants to Aotearoa began to grow rapidly, Hirsch (1987) and Holmes and Harlow (1991) covered important ground creating awareness of Aotearoa's linguistic diversity.

Hirsch's (1987) work describing the different language communities of Aotearoa and their challenges discussed language maintenance and language shift in Samoan and Tongan speaking communities in some depth (Talaitapu-Kerslake & Kerslake, 1987; Tu'inukuafe, 1987). A description of initial pilot programmes of *vagahau Niue*, Cook Islands Maori, *gagana Samoa*, and *lea faka-Tonga* in one Auckland secondary school was provided as one means of recognising how language vitality could be maintained within the school (Gluckmann, 1987). Formal education was identified as a key institution for supporting ongoing maintenance of Pacific languages as school is the main institution which "governs the lives of Samoans [and other Pacific peoples] in this country" (Talaitapu-Kerslake & Kerslake, 1987, p. 148). At the time of Hirsch's (1987) publication, the teaching of *gagana Samoa* and occasionally *lea faka-Tonga* and Cook Islands Maori had just begun in Auckland secondary schools. For example, three Auckland schools with a majority Samoan student population taught *gagana Samoa* (Talaitapu-Kerslake & Kerslake, 1987).

Building on Hirsch (1987), Holmes and Harlow (1991) discussed generational language shift and loss in the Wellington Tongan, Greek, and Cantonese speaking communities. They examined patterns of language proficiency, language use in different domains, and attitudes to language. Fishman's (1980) theory of generational language loss was used in comparing language use of the Tongan community, a relatively recent migrant group in Aotearoa (Holmes & 'Aipolo, 1991), with the Greek (Verivaki, 1991) and Cantonese-speaking communities (Roberts, 1991) who had lived in New Zealand for longer. Hirsch (1987) and

Holmes and Harlow (1991) promoted the need for society as a whole to nurture linguistic diversity, for example, calling for students to have their bilingual proficiency supported in schools; being able to use their home languages at school; and having access to other speakers of the home language in the classroom (Holmes, 1987).

Between 2001 to 2003 , a major study of language shift in the Manukau area in South Auckland looked at language use in Samoan, Tongan, Cook Islands, and Niuean communities (Davis et al, 2001). Although Samoan and Tongan appeared the healthiest languages in this study, the researchers described them as at risk as fluent speakers were mainly found amongst older members of the community. More extensive language shift amongst Niuean and Cook Islands Maori communities was attributed to having a greater percentage of New-Zealand born members (Davis et al, 2001). Many papers from and pertaining to the Manukau study have explained and provided further insight to the complexities of language shift in the relevant communities (McCaffery & McFall, 2010). Findings implicate the limited options for bilingual Pacific education as a major cause of Pacific language shift and advocate for improved bilingual Pacific education as part of the solution to language revitalisation in the largest Pacific urban centre in the world. McCaffery and McFall (2010) and May (2020) warn that Pacific children not exposed to their languages will lead to Pacific communities finding themselves to a similar situation to Māori in the 1970s, a backwards step not worthy of repetition.

Parsons (2020) presented an alternative and personal sociolinguistic perspective on the relationship between language shift in young second and third generation Aotearoa-born Samoans and their and wellbeing. Interviewing six Aotearoa-born Samoans, Parsons (2020) found her participants yearned to connect with their language and culture but were unable to access these as opportunities in education were not available. Parsons (2020) concludes that connection or lack thereof to community through language innately impacts one's wellbeing. Consistent with the literature reviewed above, Parsons (2020) calls for language policy in Aotearoa to support Samoans to learn their heritage language.

### 2.5.2 Critical, strengths-based approaches to language shift

Although language shift is a serious concern in many societies and should be problematised and acted upon in research and practice, the ways in which this has been done differ.

Mainstream narratives (e.g. in the media) often frame language shift in terms of language death or by comparing endangered languages with endangered plants or animals (Olsen-Reeder, 2018). This approach has been critiqued by critical sociolinguists who argue that such views imply language shift or loss as part of a natural cycle, constructing certain languages as not able to survive into the modern world (Cameron, 2007; May, 2001; Olsen-Reeder, 2018). May (2001, p. 3) points out that such biological and Darwinian metaphors for language shift come from majority language speakers, secure in their languages. These perspectives hide the role of power under natural metaphors.

Olsen-Reeder (2018) argues that deathly narratives surrounding language shift are not helpful. Instead, the focus should be on developing language health. Similarly, in researching contemporary Pacific issues such as language shift and identity, Mila (2014, p. 47) argues for strengths-based approaches, whereby the focus is on what is right about Pacific young people and not about how they can catch up with their Palagi counterparts.

As I adopt a critical strengths-based approach to this research, I aim to problematise language shift whilst focusing on a strengths-based approach that examines what is being and can be done in communities. This requires examination of how language shift is connected with issues of power within wider social, historical, and political contexts (Fishman, 2013; May, 2001). One example is nation-state ideologies and policies of language assimilation through standardised language instruction and language use in education is one example (Fishman, 2013; May, 2001; Seals, 2019).

### 2.5.3 Language ideologies

The following section explores the literature surrounding language ideologies (nation-state languages, monolingualism, symbolic domination, linguistic purism, and multilingualism) and how they reflect the complex relationships between language and issues of power. It is relevant as language ideologies influence people's perceptions of language and how it is used.

#### Named, nation-state languages

Nationalism can be linked to language shift. Scholars (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Cameron 2007; Heller, 1999, 2006, 2007; Li, 2018; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007; May, 2001, 2014)

have critically explored the ideology of nationalism which pushes for one common and standardised language to ‘unite’ a nation and its way of thinking. Whether nations are theoretically welcoming of multilingual diversity (as is the case in countries such as Canada or Aotearoa) or open about linguistic and cultural assimilation policies, the need for speakers of ‘minority languages’ to use the ‘majority language’ to participate in society inevitably reduces the spaces in which the ‘minority language’ is spoken which leads to language shift (May, 2001). Linking goals in the fields of critical education and sociolinguistics, critical sociolinguists argue in favour of moving beyond the nation state in order to conceptualise and decolonise language ideologies in our global and transnational era (Cameron, 2007; Heller, 1999; May, 2001, Phipps, 2019; Pujolar, 2007). However, ethnographic studies suggest that concepts of nationalism and the nation state are still widely understood as being important for many people in different contexts around the world (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Seals, 2019).

### Monolingualism

Monolingualism stems from nation-state language ideology. Education is often the vehicle through which a nation is unified. This includes instruction in a standardised language. Thus, in many contexts internationally political leaders believe that monolingualism is a desirable goal, especially, but not only, in English-speaking countries (Blackledge & Creese, 2010). A nation united by language is often portrayed as having a united understanding of a national culture - cultural and linguistic unification (Bourdieu, 1998). Critical sociolinguists, however, highlight the unrealistic nature of such ideologies (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; García & Li, 2014; Seals, 2019). Monolingualism ignores the multiple regional varieties of English for example (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Rampton, 2006). Similarly, monolingualism does not realistically reflect the diversity of societies (Major, 2018). Heller (1999) discusses how conceptually “linguistic minorities are created by nationalism which excludes them” (Heller, 1999, p. 7). This exemplifies how a creation of a national hegemony requires a national language (Billig, 1995), thus explaining why some politicians and intolerant groups argue that minority language use in public is problematic in society (Blackledge & Creese, 2010).

Major’s (2018) summary of contradictory teacher beliefs in relation to attitudes of minority language use shows the power of hegemonic views of language. Although teachers in this study expressed positivity towards refugee and migrant bilingual practices, they believed that a student’s use of first languages delayed their acquisition of English. As a consequence

teachers encouraged assimilationist classroom practices (Major, 2018). This finding can be framed by Bourdieu's (2000) theory of *méconnaissance*, whereby repeated narratives across different parts of society (e.g. media, politics, education) misrepresent the value of the dominant language. In English-speaking countries, a consequence is English as being "misrecognised" as the "sole legitimate language" of education (Blackledge & Creese, 2010). Standardised language use in education and assessment reinforces how hegemony expresses itself through language. The repeated nature of this narrative works as a form of symbolic domination of ideology.

### Symbolic domination and linguistic purism

Hegemonic language assimilation has led to the development of ideologies around linguistic purism - the belief in the existence of a pure, correct version of a language (Heller, 1999; Li, 2018; Seals, 2019). Among language communities and Indigenous peoples who have been colonised and suffered symbolic domination through repression of languages, there has been a rise in linguistic purism in approaching language use, maintenance, and revitalisation (Kramsch, 2020; Seals, 2019). Symbolic domination occurs "when speakers of a minority language "accept the centralised state's often negative evaluation of their language[:] they denigrate the very language they call their own, while accepting the authority of a dominant, state-supported language" (Gal, 1998, p. 114). Seals (2019, p. 7) discusses this in the context of the Russification of Ukraine during the Soviet era and subsequent Ukrainian independence in 1991. Russification resulted in people internalising the ideology that the Russian language was superior to Ukrainian, a belief still held by many. In response to the linguistic domination of Russian, as Ukraine reclaims its identity as an independent nation many Ukrainians now prefer 'pure' Ukrainian, valuing how the Ukrainian language looked before Russification assimilation policies (Seals, 2019, p. 7). Referencing pre-Russian grammar and linguistic forms tends to favour Ukrainian varieties "most associated with high cultural capital" (Seals, 2019, p. 7). This means young people find it more difficult to speak "pure Ukrainian" as they have grown up with a mix from the influence of Russification, Russian-dominant media, and Ukrainian. This process has also meant that varieties of Russian and Ukrainian (e.g. *surzhyk*) are stigmatised and considered not authentic Ukrainian, despite wide-spread use (Seals, 2019, p. 8).

Pacific peoples living in Aotearoa and the Islands have also suffered symbolic domination as British and French colonisers in the Pacific imposed language ideologies of the linguistic superiority of English and French (McCaffery & McFall, 2010). Through years of language assimilation through state-education, being told that English or French were the languages to support getting children a head-start in life, language hierarchies and status have become internalised for many Pacific peoples (McCaffery & McFall, 2010). In the Pacific, symbolic domination through language was also physically and mentally violent. Children heard speaking Pacific languages at school were beaten and/or publicly shamed (McCaffery & McFall, 2010; May, 2001).

The desire and need, born in response to symbolic domination, for people to keep Indigenous and minority languages ‘pure’ and coloniser free are understandable. However, Seals (2019) argues that the linguistic purism ideology can further impact the wellbeing of people as they feel pressured to make sure they use language in a pure manner because they might let people down if they are not able to use their Indigenous language ‘correctly.’ This concern is echoed in the work of Bucholtz et al (2017) who argue that young people of colour are frequently critiqued by adults for their lazy, broken, and sloppy language habits, when in fact linguistic research has proven that “youth ... especially those from economically, racially, and ... marginalised communities, are in fact innovative, flexible, and sophisticated language users” (p. 44).

## Multilingualism

Critical sociolinguists argue that languages and linguistic and cultural competence need to be reconceptualised as fluid, rather than bound to understandings of named languages associated with nation states (García & Li, 2014; Heller, 2007; Heller et al, 2018; May, 2014, Seals & Olsen-Reeder, 2019; Valdés, 2017). This idea is ever more relevant in today’s world where people move and work fluidly across the globe for multiple reasons (e.g., work, climate change, asylum, fighting against global pandemics). Multilingualism is the reality for most of the world’s population (Blackledge & Creese, 2010). For these reasons, scholars believe multilingualism should be the “new norm of applied and sociolinguistic analysis” (May, 2014, p. 1) through which all language practices of young people are viewed as flexible and sophisticated (Bucholtz et al, 2017).

Critical applied sociolinguistics challenges mainstream beliefs surrounding language and bilingualism/multilingualism<sup>15</sup>, that multilingualism consists of producing two or more languages as separate autonomous systems void of meaning and human experience (García & Li, 2014; Heller, 2007, May, 2014, 2020). From a habitual Western stance on language acquisition, multilingualism has been viewed as problematic. In this view, languages need to be compartmentalised and free of interference from other language(s) (García & Li, 2014; May, 2014). Interference from another language, especially in the case of minority language speakers using dominant languages, has been used to justify subtractive views which see multilingualism as a hindrance to learning the dominant language (Franken et al, 2008; May, 2001, 2014).

By contrast, critical applied sociolinguists argue that multilingualism should be viewed from an additive position. This means that knowledge of two or more languages supports linguistic development and gives the speaker cognitive and social advantages (Baker, 2006; Cummins, 2000; Franken et al, 2008). As critical sociolinguistics believe language reflects the “continuous process of becoming ourselves ... as we interact and make meaning in the world” (García & Li, 2014, p. 8), the term ‘linguaging’ has been adopted to encapsulate the notion of being and doing implicated with language use (ibid, Kramsch, 2020; Seals & Olsen-Reeder, 2019). Bringing the notion of linguaging to multilingualism, Li’s (2000, p. 3) 37 definitions of different types of bilingualism reflect how language “co-evolves with us” (Li, 2000, p. 3) and reflects human experience.

Increasing evidence supports scholarship that positions multilingualism as a dynamic process occurring across a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Conteh, 2018; García et al, 2017; García & Li, 2014, Heller et al, 2018; May, 2014; 2020; Seals & Olsen-Reeder, 2019). In this way, the social, historical, and political contexts of human experience are reflected and expressed through language. There have been several terms used to frame how ‘doing’ multilingualism draws on dynamic linguistic repertoire. These include: heteroglossia, multicompetence, hybrid language practices, and translanguaging (Li, 2018). These terms now feature in much research and praxis in the context of multilingual policies and education and will be discussed further.

---

<sup>15</sup> From here on bilingualism and multilingualism will be used interchangeably (see García & Li, 2014, Seals & Olsen-Reeder, 2019)



#### 2.5.4 Language Policy

Language policies inevitably have implications for education; enactment of policy is often rolled out through schools. The field of Heritage Language Education has emerged and expanded in response to the presence of growing multilingual populations, often in response to national policies (or lack of) pertaining to language education.

Many sociolinguistic studies have examined how language policy has treated Indigenous, heritage, and community languages throughout history and around the world contrasting localised experiences (Norrby & Hajek, 2011; Seals & Shah, 2018; Vila & Brexta, 2013). In the West, language policies have evolved from colonial and nationalist policies aiming to eliminate Indigenous and local dialects to focusing on protection and inclusion of Indigenous and migrant language (Seals & Shah, 2018). In addition, internationally, language policies reflect the dominant force of English as a lingua franca (Norrby & Hajek, 2011). Locally and globally, coverage of language policies in the literature also highlights the importance of the existence of language policy and the gaps between policy and its enactment. Aotearoa-based scholarship surrounding language policy illustrates examples of how the presence of language policies, or lack thereof, impacts the whole of society.

As introduced in section 2.4, assimilationist policies in Aotearoa enforced replacement of te reo Māori and other languages with English to the extent that the percentage of Māori children able to speak te reo Māori dropped from 90 percent in 1900 to two percent by the 1980s (May 2001; Seals, 2021). The declaration of te reo Māori in 1987 and New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) in 2006 as official languages of Aotearoa have slowly but surely mandated change in linguistic landscapes and language repertoire in public life (Seals, 2021). Although there is still much work to go in normalising both languages in everyday life, English remains the “official *de facto* language” spoken by 90 percent of the population. Policy that protects languages can support change in attitudes and resourcing (Higgins & Rewi, 2014; Seals, 2021, p. 158).

However, despite policy support of te reo Māori, Aotearoa’s complex multilingual and multicultural population is not recognised by a national languages policy to guide the use, learning, and maintaining of the 160 different languages spoken here. There have been

multiple calls for a national language policy to navigate, give value to, and support this complex linguistic landscape (Auckland Languages Strategy Working Group, 2018; Bell et al, 2005; de Bres, 2015; Major, 2018; Peddie, 2005; Seals, 2017, 2021; Seals & Olsen-Reeder, 2018; Waite, 1992). At present, Pacific languages (e.g., Tongan, Samoan, Tokelauan) receive some support from government with dedicated language weeks. In addition, high-status ‘world’ languages such as Mandarin, Spanish, French, German, Japanese and Korean receive some support from government resourcing abroad (e.g., Confucius Institute, Goethe-Institut). Other languages rely on community and family resourcing (Seals, 2021). However, without support through policy, the social, cultural, and material capital and importance of HLs and HL maintenance in Aotearoa society is largely unrecognised (Major, 2018) and at the whim of funders.

#### 2.5.5 Heritage language education (HLE)

Heritage language education (HLE) supports multilingualism and, broadly speaking, operates in: schools either integrated with or outside the national curriculum; Saturday or complementary schools; evening classes; or in churches, mosques, and other religious centres (Seals & Kreeft-Peyton, 2016). HLE is known under different terms in various parts of the world. Recent edited volumes publishing HLE international research illustrate growing interest in maintaining HLs over the past 40 years as societies have become increasingly multicultural (Hornberger & Wang, 2008; Kagan et al, 2017; Seals, 2013; 2021; Seals & Shah, 2018). Here I touch on relevant issues which have emerged from this growing body of research. These include successes and challenges in: running and accessing sustainable HL programmes; including HLs within national assessment frameworks; and community HL programmes.

Examples of successes in the provision of HLE have been documented in ethnographic case-study research of in-school HLE for primary-aged students of Russian, Ukrainian, and Spanish-speaking heritage (Seals & Kreeft-Peyton, 2016). Successes of in-school HLE programmes include: some programmes being maintained over long periods of time and contributing to high levels of language proficiency: students being able to see cognitive and linguistic benefits of building biliteracy skills; increased investment of parents and communities; students feeling their HLs and cultures are accepted, valued and an asset to

their education, and celebrated; and heightened awareness of all students through sharing of all linguistic and cultural backgrounds (García, 2009; Seals, 2013).

In the Australian context, HLE research (referred to as community and Aboriginal languages) has also documented successes in providing a diverse range of HLE options. Government funding and options for study of many languages are available (Willoughby, 2014). For example, community languages schools (CLS) in New South Wales, offer programmes in 62 languages in 2018 (Cruickshank, 2018). Participating students had their learning recognised through government awards and community languages ambassador programmes. In addition, a shared online platform between CLS and schools exists for students to record their extra-curricular achievements in the CLS (ibid). In Victoria, students and adults have access to HLE through the Victorian School of Languages (VLS), a government school with trained teachers, following government curricula, and the ability (with some CLS) to accredit the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE)<sup>16</sup> in 45 different languages (Willoughby, 2014). Students can attend classes at night or during weekends and in some cases as part of the school day (ibid). Although the above-mentioned successes and programmes provide many affordances, research documents the challenges HLE programmes face in multiple studies.

HLE reinforces language hierarchies. Some HLs (e.g. French, Korean, Japanese) have national organisations supporting HLE with structure and resourcing, but more marginalised immigrant HLE programmes do not have the same access to resourcing (Seals & Kreeft-Peyton, 2016). HLs with more cultural capital in mainstream society are often privileged in HLE over community varieties. An example is the privileging of such as Bengali over Sylheti in Blackledge & Creese's (2010) ethnographic study in complementary schools in Britain. Schools providing HLE opt for more standard HLs, e.g. Russian, Hindi HLs, thus HLE provision in schools still "ignores the linguistic realities of a vast number of students" (Seals & Kreeft-Peyton, 2016, p. 88). In New South Wales, Australia, language hierarchies also exist systemically. Although students can sit HLs as part of school qualifications, status languages such as French are more highly accredited than HLs such as Farsi (Cruickshank, 2018). Similarly, in Victoria where students can sit their VCE in 45 languages, in 2012 60% of language course enrolments could be accounted for by three languages -French, Japanese, and Mandarin (Willoughby, 2014, 2018).

---

<sup>16</sup> the main senior secondary education certificate in Victoria, Australia which allows students entry to universities and other tertiary study pathways

Attitudes towards HLs from the mainstream that question the value of HL maintenance can deter young people from wanting to learn use the HLs (Cummins, 2005; May, 2001).

Blackledge and Creese's (2010) ethnographic study in complementary schools found that young people growing up and negotiating cross-cultural identity in diverse sites such as mainstream English-medium schools and traditional community settings sometimes "contest and subvert schools' attempts to impose upon them 'heritage' identities" (p. 533). In this way the HL speaker's agency in Seals and Shah's (2018) definitions (Chapter 1, section 1.6.4) are important.

### Tokelau HLE in Hawai'i

Literature on community HLE closely linked to this study describes how the Tokelau community in Hawai'i have worked together to create a Tokelau language and culture school Te Lumanaki o Tokelau I Amelika-The future of Tokelau in America. This aims to combat economic challenges, cultural alienation, and rapid decline in linguistic and cultural knowledge (Community Spotlight, 2017). The community started with small informal classes in family garages where people would sing pehe and fātele (traditional songs and dances). The movement has grown steadily since its inception in 2003 (ibid). For example, teachers now receive HLE instruction, that increases their capability to provide students with opportunities to hear and use gagana Tokelau (ibid). There are ongoing projects to grow linguistic and cultural resources and knowledge that involves working with elders in the community and inviting in people such as master carvers from Tokelau (ibid). Young people from the school have travelled to Tokelau, making connections with students and family in all of the atolls and in Samoa (ibid). The school has also engaged the community in learning about shared Polynesian Indigenous knowledge such as navigation and performing arts. Community Spotlight (2017, p. 144) attributes the success of this school to its foundation on "culturally appropriate interaction between generations." The relevance of this Tokelauan model of HLE in Hawai'i will be further discussed in relation to general suggestions for sustainable HLE in Chapter 8.

### 2.5.6 Translanguaging

Emerging from the growing body of research surrounding multilingualism and HLE are different frameworks describing the 'linguaging' of dynamic multilingual speakers. The term

translanguaging was first used in the Welsh language revitalisation context. Williams (1996) used a Welsh term, *trawsieithu* to describe the planned and systematic employment of Welsh and English whereby teachers and students deliberately switch language modes for input and output in one lesson. The term translanguaging was subsequently developed by Williams and Baker (Baker & Wright, 2021). Translanguaging in its earliest construction is considered an effective pedagogy in language contexts where there has been marked intergenerational language loss because of colonisation, such as in the Pacific. As young people in language loss contexts tend to revert to their stronger language, they need to be in language learning situations where they are pushed to use their heritage language as both a target language and a status language in educational and community settings (Si‘ilata, 2021, personal communication, October 2021). The switching of language modes within a lesson provides this opportunity.

The term translanguaging resonates with many scholars who continue to develop its theoretical and practical understandings (García & Li, 2014; García et al, 2017; Li, 2018; Seals & Olsen-Reeder, 2019). Currently, translanguaging is differently understood to codeswitching which, though used by some scholars<sup>17</sup>, to describe skills of drawing on the full linguistic repertoire for making meaning has generally expounded understanding that multilingual speakers use a separate part of the brain to store, and access separated grammatical systems (García & Li, 2014). Recent work applies translanguaging as a theory, as pedagogy, and as a practice (García et al, 2017; García & Li, 2014; Otheguy et al, 2015; Seals & Olsen-Reeder, 2019). Translanguaging theory reflects the natural practice of multilingual speakers and is defined as “the deployment of a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually state) languages” (Otheguy et al, 2015, p.281; Seals & Olsen-Reeder, 2019, p. 13). As Li (2018, p. 18), a multilingual scholar himself, says “we (as multilingual speakers) do not think in a specific named language separately.” Our language or “idiolect” is unique consisting of “lexical and grammatical features from different socially and politically defined languages” (Li, 2018, pp. 18-19, Otheguy et al, 2015).

García et al (2017, p. 2) discuss how translanguaging as pedagogy enables educators to use language practices of bilingual students and communities to maximum advantage in

---

<sup>17</sup> see Holmes (2019) on Gumperz in Seals & Olsen-Reeder (2019)

implementing a curriculum. In classrooms this means discursive practices are fluid, moving in and out of home and community languages for students to make sense of the learning (García, 2009). From this perspective, multilingualism is very much seen through a strengths-based lens, suitable for use in bilingual and mainstream education that aims to care for at risk languages. From a strengths-based perspective, García and Li (2014, p. 21) explain that translanguaging moves beyond additive approaches to multilingualism and refers to “*new* language practices that make visible the complexity of language exchanges among people with different histories, and releases histories and understandings that had been buried within fixed language identities constrained by nation states.” Li (2018) further expands the notion of opening up new possibilities in his discussion of the translanguaging third space. In this way, translanguaging aligns well with theoretical frameworks of identity and my positioning stance as an edgewalker which underpin this thesis to be discussed in depth in Chapter 3.

A translanguaging stance places teaching and working for social justice at the core of language practices. The inclusion of full linguistic repertoire and life experience acknowledges inequalities produced by social positions of speakers (García et al, 2017). This creates space for discussion of power relations present in schools or social groups, helping break down language boundaries (ibid, p. 162). The inclusion of all languages helps conscientise students to see and resist “silent hegemonies” (ibid, p. 162), making translanguaging theory, working with pedagogy, and stance, of huge importance for marginalised students (ibid). Valdés (2017, p. vii) describes the work of García et al (2017) as “by far the most compelling example proposed to date of a culturally sustaining pedagogy.” Translanguaging is therefore one means to decolonise multilingualism and multilingual education. For these reasons I have chosen the concept of translanguaging to be relevant to the applied, community focus in this study as it has been explained in terms that interweave theory, pedagogy, and social justice, positioning itself with a community focus (García et al, 2017; Li, 2018; Seals & Olsen-Reeder, 2019).<sup>18</sup>

This sub-section has alluded to many discussions relevant to multilingual education and will be drawn on throughout the thesis.

---

<sup>18</sup> I acknowledge that applied linguists are divided in their acceptance of the concept of translanguaging (Li, 2018; Seals & Olsen-Reeder, 2019). However, deeper discussion of this theoretical rift is beyond the scope of the thesis.

## 2.6 - Aotearoa-based experience

Research disciplines: critical education, Indigenous education, and critical (applied) linguistics discussed so far in Chapter 2 have addressed international and local contexts. In this sub-section, I focus more specifically on Pacific education in Aotearoa, and educational policy and research surrounding Pacific languages before locating my own research across these disciplines.

### 2.6.1 New Zealand Educational Policy

Current educational policies contain rhetoric in support of multiculturalism, diversity, and inclusion (Major, 2018). Key educational policies, *The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC) (MoE, 2007), and *Our Code Our Standards* (Education Council, 2017) promote equity, diversity, language, culture, and identity. The NZC (MoE, 2007) includes Learning Languages as one of the eight Learning Areas. Within the Learning Languages section of the NZC, Pacific languages are mentioned as having a “special place” because of “New Zealand’s close relationship with the people of the Pacific” (MoE, 2007, p. 24).

Accompanying the Learning Languages section of the NZC is Ellis’s (2005) set of principles for approaches to effective instructed secondary language acquisition. *The Pasifika Education Plan* (PEP) (MoE, 2013), *Tapasā* (MoE, 2019), and the *Pacific Education Action Plan* (MoE, 2020a) explicitly mention Pacific languages as part of successful educational experiences, defining Pacific success as “vibrant, dynamic, successful Pasifika learners, secure and confident in their identities, languages and cultures, navigating through all curriculum areas” (MoE, 2013, p. 3). *Tapasā* (MoE, 2019) is a framework supporting teachers to be culturally aware and competent when engaging with Pacific students and their families. The first guiding *turu* (competency) of *Tapasā* is “identities, languages, and cultures” and explains that teachers should “demonstrate awareness of the diverse ethnic-specific identities, languages and cultures of different learners.” In applying this *turu*, teachers should develop “relational and united approaches in building a future for learners that is respectful of their past and background ... effectively teaching the curriculum that enables Pacific learners to be successful and achieve” (MoE, 2019, p. 8). Similarly, the most recent *Pacific Education Action Plan* (MoE, 2020a) advocates for the nurturing of Pacific languages and cultures in schools, for example by stating that valuing Pacific learners’ cultures by using culturally sustaining pedagogies as a goal and indicator of success.

Another recent educational policy to be addressed by the MoE is the NCEA review and change (MoE, 2020b). This involves consultation with many stakeholders including different Pacific communities. As a result of this process, subjects available for study within NCEA have been reviewed and all of the Achievement Standards<sup>19</sup> available in the curriculum are being re-written, with the first level of the new assessments beginning in 2023. The guiding principles for this change process are to produce a national education and qualification focused on: wellbeing, equity and inclusion, coherence, pathways, and credibility (MoE, 2020b). The MoE have explicitly stated that Pacific peoples, languages, and culture as essential to this change. For example, links to the policies mentioned above and have been made explicit in training for issues pertaining to Pacific education has been provided to all teachers involved in re-writing the achievement standards. How this new policy will support overall wellbeing and equity, as well as strengthened literacy and career pathways for Pacific peoples has yet to play out.

The field of Pacific education research has evolved partly in response to such educational policies over time. From a critical stance, Pacific education research has also involved advocacy of community groups, researchers, and teachers for Pacific learners who have often been depicted in a deficit manner as under achieving and growing up in the most socio-economically disadvantaged areas (Mila, 2014). In the next section, I review relevant Pacific education research which aligns with strength-based theoretical concepts in critical education such as CSP.

### 2.6.2 Pacific education

As discussed in section 2.3, goals for Pacific education have often been conceptualised within the critical framework. This is evident in Samu et al's (2013) statement of purpose for Pacific education as an academic field of research. Samu et al (2013, p. 141) state that the field needs to support Pacific survival and sustainability as Pacific peoples, enhancing Pacific transformative capability. To do so, Pacific education is required to prioritise the success of Pacific learners within this education system, equipping them to "both serve their families and contribute to New Zealand society" (ibid, p. 141). This process must be grounded in

---

<sup>19</sup> Achievement Standards are NCEA assessments. Each standard describes what students need to know or be able to achieve. Once students meet the standard, they gain credits towards a national qualification (NCEA).



diverse cultures of the Pacific and involve “a critique of the values and assumptions underlying education policies and initiatives” (ibid, p. 141).

Coxon et al (2002), Chu et al (2013) and the MoE (2020a) revealed that positive outcomes for Pacific education and Pacific students require; quality teacher-student relationships, strong family-community-school partnerships, Pacific representation in school governance and leadership, and strong family and institutional support around educational transitions. Students learn best when teachers have high expectations, use culturally responsive pedagogies which are relevant to the learners (see Chu et al, 2013; Coxon et al, 2002; MoE, 2020a for full detail). Coxon et al, 2002 and Chu et al, 2013 stressed the need for research to focus more specifically on individual communities rather than under the umbrella term Pacific.

In much Pacific education research to date, Pacific languages, bilingualism, and language maintenance in education are often seen as part of successful outcomes, rather than a focus (Chu et al, 2013; Coxon et al, 2002; Manuela & Anae, 2017; Mila-Schaaf & Robinson, 2010). For example, Mila-Schaaf and Robinson (2010) found that Pacific students who spoke their languages reported higher levels of achievement and engagement. Research reviewed which did focus on languages and culture in education was most frequently conducted in the ECE sector and/or focused on bilingual settings, often in the Auckland area (Chu et al, 2013; Coxon et al, 2002). In ECE, Coxon et al (2002) highlight the need for more support from policy development and implementation in bilingual ECE settings, for example: the development of culturally appropriate bilingual resources, professional development on how to use bilingual resources, and plans for continual bilingual transitions from Pacific ECE centres to primary school.

Further, Chu et al’s (2013) summary of research from 2002-2012 included descriptive discussion of the benefits of bilingual Samoan resources for literacy development in aoga amata (Mara & Burgess, 2007), and practices for language preservation and community partnerships in Cook Islands Maori, Solomon Island ECE centres (Glasgow, 2010; McCaffery & McFall, 2010). In the Tongan language context, Wolfgramm-Foliaki’s (2006) doctoral thesis exploring literacy activities of six ECE-aged Tongan children highlighted the importance of considering, supporting, and developing multiple sites (ECE centres, home, Sunday school, church) to develop children’s literacy and Tongan language proficiency.

Reviews of literature concerning Pacific language-focused educational research at primary level is not extensive, often too generically focused on Māori and Pacific learners rather than specific community groups in both reports (Chu et al, 2013; Coxon et al, 2002).

Generalisations of this nature make it difficult to discern issues at play and ways to use research effectively (ibid).

Overall, the lack of explicit focus on Pacific languages and language maintenance in education in some 400 research papers summarised by reviewers cited above between 1969 - 2012, is indicative of gaps between educational policy and practice. This explains the experience of the student I described in Chapter 1, who was not able to learn her HLs at school. However, there are some important studies not included in these reports which have focused in more depth on Pacific languages in education.

### 2.6.3 Studies focused on Pacific languages in education

Numerous scholars have called for an additive approach to Pacific bilingualism in Aotearoa (Bland, forthcoming; Franken et al, 2008; Major, 2018; May, 2014, 2020; Si'ilata, 2014; Si'ilata et al, 2019, Tuafuti, 2013). An additive approach to bilingualism values and recognises all languages within a student's linguistic repertoire, uses and builds on multilingual knowledge to support teaching and learning (Franken et al, 2008). This is contrast with the subtractive approach to bilingualism prevalent in Aotearoa until recently that has historically positioned Pacific bilingualism in a deficit manner in the monolingual English-speaking New Zealand education system (May, 2014). Maintenance of Pacific languages has, until relatively recently, widely been viewed by schools and policy makers as a hindrance to educational success. Franken et al (2008) and May (2020) compiled comprehensive literature reviews for the MoE examining factors pertaining specifically to bilingual Pacific students and their learning across the curriculum. Based on these reviews, May (2020, p. 7) argues that international research findings from over 60 years demonstrate that students in additive bilingual contexts have "clear and consistent advantages over monolingual speakers in ... : cognitive flexibility, communicative sensibility, and metalinguistic awareness." (See May (2020) for further detailed description of bilingualism and its benefits). In line with international research it is argued that the best additive educational model for Pacific bilingualism to thrive is bilingual education in which students

receive instruction in the target Pacific language at least 50% of the time (Franken et al 2008, p. 82; McCaffery & McFall 2010; May 2020; Si'ilata el al 2019).

Advocating for the bilingual/ immersion approach as a means for Pacific language maintenance and optimal education outcomes for Pacific peoples living in Aotearoa, the most recent report (May, 2020) highlights the lack of systemic support for Pacific bilingual education to date. Most Pacific students currently attend “English-only” schools where they receive “little or no recognition of or recourse to, their first language” (May, 2020, p. 14). May (2020, p. 14) explains that the majority of bilingual/immersion schools exist within the ECE section, for Samoan language, and predominantly in Auckland. Furthermore, most students attending bilingual/immersion ECE centres move to English-medium primary schools (ibid; ERO, 2019). At primary level there are few bilingual Pacific programmes (May, 2020). In addition, May (2020) describes how Pacific bilingual school programmes do not receive extra funding for specific bilingual resourcing or support from policy. Individual schools are left to implement and resource programmes as they see fit (ibid). May’s (2020) report does not include much reference to Pacific languages at secondary school level, but he notes that there is a lack of Pacific languages available for study for NCEA. In this report, May (2020) makes numerous recommendations<sup>20</sup> to the MoE as to how Pacific bilingualism in education can be supported, arguing that bilingual education is the best way to address language shift in Pacific communities.

Franken et al (2008) make practical suggestions how mainstream schools can adopt additive approaches for valuing and maintaining Pacific bilingualism when there are no opportunities for bilingual/immersion programmes. These approaches align with CSP and translanguaging (see sections 2.31 and 2.5.5), whereby students’ first languages and life experience is used in learning in connection with family and community (Franken et al, 2008). The work of Franken et al (2008) has been summarised and turned into an online resource for teachers suitable for primary and secondary schools - LEAP (Language enhancing the achievement of Pasifika, Te Kete Ipurangi, 2021). As a teacher I find this resource and review are well summarised, written in approachable language with helpful and practical suggestions. Unfortunately, I was not made aware of this resource until I began my PhD and I do not know of any schools and teachers using it. Possibly, professional development supporting

---

<sup>20</sup> referred to later in this thesis

teacher use of the LEAP resource was focused on the Auckland region for demographic reasons.

Another support for additive approaches to Pacific bilingualism in mainstream settings is the Va‘atele Framework (Si‘ilata, 2014; Si‘ilata et al., 2019). The metaphor of the Va‘atele, a double-hulled canoe, uses principles of translanguaging (see pp. 45-47) to illustrate how mainstream English-medium primary school teachers can effectively integrate meaningful use of Pacific languages throughout the school day. Si‘ilata et al (2019) draws attention to the value of bilingual texts, and linguistic sharing and comparison to celebrate, normalise, and develop bilingualism and biliteracy. Increased use of LEAP and the Va‘atele Framework in the classroom, teacher training, and professional development are one of May’s (2020) recommendations for understanding quality Pacific bilingual education.

What Franken et al (2008), May (2020), and Si‘ilata et al (2019) did not outline in detail was how schools can support heritage language speakers who do not consider themselves bilingual but who would like to (re)learn their HLs. These are the students I encounter most in my teaching. May (2020) discusses different bilingual models and their suitability to different groups, recommending the enrichment/ heritage model<sup>21</sup> for at risk languages such as Tokelauan. This is a model for language revitalisation suggesting the HL is used between 90 and 50% of instruction. For Tongan, May (2020) recommends both maintenance bilingual or dual language programmes which use no less than 50% of instruction time in the target language and maximise existing bilingual capabilities within communities. In reviewing international literature surrounding bilingual education, May (2020) touches on the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). The CLIL non-language subjects such as maths or history are taught through the medium of another language in addition to focused language lessons (Nikula, 2017). This approach is closely connected to translanguaging as theory, pedagogy, and practice as discussed in section 2.5.6 (pp. 47-8). Though not discussed in depth in May (2020), CLIL approach has potential to enhance Pacific bilingual education in secondary schools in Aotearoa. These models are aspirational, and my teaching experience and time spent in the community have shown me there is much work to be done in order to develop the human resources required to run such programmes.

---

<sup>21</sup> In international literature, enrichment/ heritage models of education are immersion settings where instruction takes place 90 - 50% of the time (May, 2020). This understanding differs from how ‘enrichment’ is used in New Zealand primary schools where it means an initial model of valuing the language and culture.

Franken et al (2008) and the LEAP resources also address Pacific students collectively. For example, they suggest that dual language resources are available (e.g. Tongan-English). Although this is a helpful suggestion, availability of resources in gagana Tokelau is very limited. Tongan resources are also hard to find, especially for secondary school students. For age and level appropriate dual language resources to be created and made available in Tokelauan and Tongan, there is still much work required to develop both basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 2008, 2016). These issues will be touched on in later chapters. As gagana Tokelau and lea faka-Tonga in secondary education are the specific focus areas of education in this thesis, I now examine research and policy which specifically focuses on these languages in secondary education.

#### 2.6.4 Tongan and Tokelauan language education

Tongan students have featured as focus groups in many studies (Chu et al, 2013; Coxon et al, 2002), but research pertaining to secondary school provision of Tongan language education is limited. In the secondary school context, this may be explained by the difficulty in accessing Tongan within NCEA. Whilst Tongan language is assessed within the current NCEA framework, unless students attend a school with a Tongan teacher, it is very difficult for students and schools to access Tongan language classes. Tongan cannot be studied via Te Kura o te Pounamu (the Correspondence School) and there are limited options and teachers for online study of Tongan through VLN (the Virtual Learning Network<sup>22</sup>).

Only two studies to date have focused specifically on Tokelau language in education (Glasgow, 2019; Jamieson, 1976). Jamieson (1976, p. 2) used a series of language tests with Tokelauan students and a control group of English native speakers to empirically investigate whether it was “desirable to discourage continued use of the Tokelau language” in the acquisition of English for Tokelauan children aged between five and seven years old in schools in the Wellington area. Contrary to the prevalent educational belief and practice in schools at the time (still found today in some instances), Jamieson’s (1976) research showed that continuous use of gagana Tokelau at home did not negatively impact children’s

---

<sup>22</sup> a cluster of schools who collaborate to provide curriculum opportunities through a range of digital technologies

acquisition of English. At this time, subtractive beliefs and practices about bilingualism encouraged children of immigrants to give up their heritage language in order to assimilate into New Zealand life and to ensure the development of English proficiency. Jamieson's (1976) thesis concluded that Tokelauan children growing up in Aotearoa who spoke Tokelauan in the home and English at school were not disadvantaged in formal education. She promoted the ongoing maintenance of the heritage language by schools as being beneficial for maintaining strong relationships with parents and elders in the community (ibid). Valuing of home language and culture is one the key aspects of a strengths-based or culturally responsive approach to pedagogy (see pp. 29-31) emerging in the 1990s, now widely promoted in schools through policy.

Nearly 20 years after Jamieson's (1976) study, Glasgow's (2019) doctoral research used ethnographic case study methodology to address the issue of continuous access to language and culture in three ECE language nests for languages spoken within the Pacific Realm nations (PRN) - Cook Islands Maori, Tokelauan, and Niuean. This was the first study of language nests for PRN languages. Glasgow's (2019) case studies highlight the rich linguistic and cultural immersion environments in the language nests and underpin their importance in "stemming" (Glasgow, 2019, p. 2) language shift of these three endangered languages. As part of her research, Glasgow (2019) made several recommendations regarding support required to maintain language nests as a sustainable ECE option for parents. The summary of recommendations included: increased targeted support in funding and professional development for language teaching (both in the PRN language and ESL), and support in developing "stronger emphasis and valuing of the special character" of the language nests both in the PRN communities and in the wider Aotearoa society (Glasgow, 2019. p. 244).

These two theses made important contributions in understanding gagana Tokelau in the New Zealand education system. They are, however, focused on ECE and early primary school aged opportunities for access to language and culture. No studies have discussed opportunities for continuous access to gagana Tokelau and Tokelau culture through primary education to secondary and tertiary education. Gagana Tokelau currently has no NCEA pathway<sup>23</sup>, despite being included within the NZC with guidelines for teaching, learning, and assessment. These gaps in provision are contrary to the overarching narratives which feature

---

<sup>23</sup> In May 2021, it was announced that Gagana Tokelau will become an NCEA subject as part of the NCEA change package - this will be discussed later in the thesis.

in top level policies in support of Pacific languages and cultures in education, discussed earlier in this chapter (see pp. 47-9)

#### 2.6.5 Pacific languages in secondary education

There was no specific focus on Pacific languages in secondary education in both Coxon et al (2002) and Chu et al (2013), the key summaries of Pacific education research from 2002 - 2012. Discussion of Pacific languages in secondary education has tended to state the importance of language maintenance rather than providing an empirical focus (Coxon et al, 2002; Chu et al 2013). For example, Coxon et al (2002, p. 86) state “New Zealand secondary schools have a definite role to play in maintaining Pacific languages” and that collaborative efforts across sectors “have ... potential to arrest and even reverse language loss trends.” In a similar general vein, Hunkin-Tuileufuga’s (2001) work discusses the role of language education in secondary schools in passing on cultural beliefs, understandings, and values, and enhancing student achievement. In addition, he suggests that Pacific language education can potentially bridge the cultural divides between Pacific family and home life and the Westernised New Zealand education system (ibid).

In South Auckland, Milne’s (2017) *Colouring in the White Spaces* emphasises the power of placing development of secure, conscientised, Indigenous cultural identity at the heart of schools’ efforts to positively determining overall educational success. Milne (2017) shows how three South Auckland schools increase overall community, cultural and academic outcomes by enabling Māori and Pacific students to be immersed in Māori and Pacific languages and cultures, to live, learn and develop as Māori or as Tongan for example, throughout the school day. Although Milne’s (2017) work is based in South Auckland with different resourcing available for immersion education, it has many applicable implications for all teachers wanting to embrace culturally sustaining pedagogies regardless of where we are.

More recently, Bland’s (forthcoming) participatory action research addresses how her school can provide Samoan language education in a school where Pacific students viewed as a minority group. Through this process, subtractive bilingualism and other barriers within the system were identified. However, as a result of this process a “Pasifika Village” has emerged in which Bland now facilitates a class where all ‘Pasifika’ students can have access to

learning their HLs through community partnership. All involved have seen the success of this village approach to Pacific language education, however, Bland discusses the challenges in place for its sustainability. Bland's model is important in contexts like my own where bilingual education is not currently available.

Another platform where Pacific language education is vital has been discussed is Polyfest<sup>24</sup>. A growing body of research discusses both the rich learning platform Polyfest provides for the learning of Pacific languages and cultures and how this potential is not yet harnessed in mainstream secondary schools (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2010; Gaugatao, 2018; Kēpa & Manu'atu, 2008; Mackley-Crump, 2013; 2014; Manuela & Anae, 2017).

Reviewing the literature, it is clear that research has not yet explored empirically the role of Pacific language education in the secondary sector in depth, nor how ongoing access to Pacific language education at secondary level might contribute to rich learning and student and community wellbeing. This is despite expectations of education expressed in the New Zealand educational policies.

Returning to the opening story of this research in Chapter 1, in which my Samoan-Tongan student could learn Chinese at school, but not her own languages, a clear picture of the many gaps between policy and practice in relation to ongoing access for Pacific language education emerges from this literature review. The complex and multiple issues at play within these gaps are addressed literature, but the immediate context of this thesis, secondary education, outside of Auckland has not been addressed. Therefore, building on international and local research across the disciplines presented in this chapter, the contribution of this thesis is to provide a different context-specific teacher-researcher perspective, adding nuance to the voice in research and practice which is urgently calling for more equitable opportunities in language education.

## 2.7 - The research questions

---

<sup>24</sup> Polyfest is a festival celebrating Māori and Pacific performing arts. Polyfests are held in major cities around Aotearoa.



Guided by the values of tautua and alofa ki te tamā manu, I have three research questions (RQs) to explore the two overarching aims of this thesis:

- why continued access to Pacific languages (specifically gagana Tokelau and lea faka-Tonga) in mainstream education matters for all stakeholders
- how mainstream secondary schools can provide continued access to language education in schools where immersion or bilingual education are not currently available

**RQ 1** is designed to provide empirical evidence of how languages, cultures, and identity are tied to wellbeing.

*How do concepts of language, culture, identity, and wellbeing emerge in speakers' discourse and experience?*

This question aims to offer opportunities to all stakeholders to engage with some 'substance' behind the concept of wellbeing which is regularly used in education and policy without concrete understanding of what wellbeing looks like and why it is important in specific Aotearoa-Tokelauan and Tongan contexts.

**RQ 2** uses cross-disciplinary theoretical concepts to deeply explore experiences of Pacific language in secondary school contexts and how these experiences have a flow-on impact on family and community life.

*How do (secondary school) experiences of Pacific language education connect with students and communities? Specifically, how do these connect with current and future imagined identities and investment in language learning?*

This question takes a strengths-based approach to focus on what is already working well in secondary schools and examines how this can be further and more widely developed in secondary education.

**RQ 3** addresses the omnipresent narrative of challenges within the education system in provision of Pacific language education.

*What are people's reported beliefs about and experiences of the challenges related to school-based continued access to Pacific language learning/education?*

As the thesis applies a critical lens, this question enables access to the analysis of relations of power and issues of social justice at play in language education in schools. In uncovering the challenges, empirical data can be used to transform and create more equitable educational experiences and opportunities pertaining to continued access to Pacific language education.

## 2.8 - Chapter Summary

Following Chapter 1, which introduced the impetus for this research project and relevant background details, this chapter discussed historical background and examined interdisciplinary literature to further inform the research context, knowledge gap, and guiding questions for this inquiry. Chapter 3 turns to theoretical and methodological underpinnings that guide the research process.

## Chapter 3 - Theoretical methodological underpinnings

In Chapter 1, I outlined my rationale for this research project which stems from both student and personal experience of inequity in continued access to Pacific language education within the New Zealand education system. I explained my positionality and provided key definitions of concepts tied to this thesis. Chapter 2 reviewed historical background and cross-disciplinary international and local literature in the fields of critical education and applied sociolinguistics, revealing gaps in the literature regarding Pacific language education at secondary school level, as well as mismatches between educational policy and practice in Aotearoa. I also proposed two overarching aims and three research questions to explore empirically how these inequities might be addressed, building on existing literature and theory (Chapter 2, pp. 57-8).

Here in Chapter 3, I present three theoretical frameworks; social justice, identity, and edgewalking, which explain and underpin key understandings regarding the why and how of this research. These theories respectively address the education system, and my place and values as a teacher within this system, the significance of language and identity, and my positionality and approach to the research. I then draw on these theoretical underpinnings to describe the chosen methodological approaches informing this study; Tauhi vā-teu le va and critical ethnographic sociolinguistic approaches.

### 3.1 - Social Justice

The work of Paulo Freire and its application to different educational contexts globally is helpful to understanding how social justice theory, research, and practice work together to create equitable educational outcomes (Norton & Toohey, 2004). Freire's seminal theory and method discussed in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1973) involves valuing, respecting, and using learners' lived realities as the base for developing literacy and understanding of the world. Witnessing the landless peoples' struggles in Brazil during the 1960s and 70s, Freire (1973) called for teachers and students to actively be engaged with learning, working together through dialogue to develop critical consciousness rather than operating within the "banking concept of education," whereby students are "receptacles" to be filled with teacher-owned knowledge which is then regurgitated by the students (Banks, 2014, p. xi). According to Freire, a socially just or humanised education allows learners to become conscious about their presence in the world, "the way in which they act and think when they develop all of

their capacities” including their own needs and “aspirations of others” (Freire & Betto, 1985, pp. 14-15, in Darder 2011, p. 180). This process of conscientisation (see Chapter 2, 2.3, p. 30) takes place through critical dialogue based on relevant concepts and arguments to the lived, relatable experiences of students (Lin, 2004). Critical dialogue must be understood within a social praxis that involves reflection and transformative political action with the aim of dismantling social injustice (Macedo & Araújo Freire, 2005, p. xvii; O’Shea & O’Brian, 2011). Although the truths of the lives of those people in Freire’s work are different from the many stories of struggle in today’s world, Freire’s theory and praxis of social justice is internationally resonant in all contexts of inequity. This theory now underpins the foundation of critical and culturally sustaining pedagogies (e.g., Milne, 2017; Paris, 2012). It provides a basis for current Indigenous scholarship and education to go beyond conscientisation to a focus on transformational outcomes (see Smith, 1999; Smith & Smith, 2019 and Chapter 1, p. 9).

### 3.1.1 Social justice theory in language education

Social justice has been theorised in language education using Freire’s concept of conscientisation, as an “interruption of common sense” and “destabilization of authoritative discourse” (Apple, 1999). In a language teacher education setting, Lin (2004, p. 272) uses the conscientisation process to “interrogate ... commonsensical notions about language, culture and education” to draw student attention to the ways in which “traditional education ... tend[s] to reproduce dominant cultural, linguistic, and educational notions and practices as neutral and unproblematic ... thus ... conceal[ing] relations of domination and subordination in the school system” and more specifically in language education. In Lin’s context this involved asking students to question the treatment and expectation to assimilate of immigrant students within a Hong Kong school setting (Lin, 2004). Phipps (2019) draws on Freire and social justice theory in her discussion of decolonising language education in the Western world. As part of this discussion, Phipps (2019, p. 89) suggests that those involved in language education decision making need to ask: “with whom are we to speak, in our new languages?” She questions the continuous focus in education on hegemonic languages which are often taught in Western education systems and asks whether we need to focus on the languages spoken in local communities, such as the languages of “new arrivals, ... refugees, indigenous peoples and marginalised travellers” (Phipps, 2019, p. 90). Phipps (2019) highlights the need

to decolonise language teaching pedagogies to involve the input of communities and indigenous practices rather than simply imposing Western methods into new contexts.

Over fifty years have passed since Freire first published *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. As discussed in Chapter 2, much scholarship surrounding social justice in (language) education has led to concepts grounded in social justice such as culturally sustaining pedagogy, now regularly included in the language current policy and guidelines. Yet, for many Indigenous and minority groups, continuous struggle and oppression, in multiple forms such as racism and disconnection from language and cultural identity, renders the work of Freire and other current theorists working for a more socially just world still relevant in today's world.

Social justice as theory and practice underpin the driving force behind my research which is looking for practical solutions for students who do not currently have the opportunity to access and develop their heritage languages and cultures at school. This research is therefore a critical inquiry centred around questions of power and (in)equality within education and how language is connected with these inequalities (Heller et al 2018, p. 2). Placing Social Justice as the underpinning of this research provides a theoretical framework for my work as a teacher-researcher seeking practical implications through research of the “complex ways [in which] language seem[s] such an important and yet hidden factor in success in education” (Conteh, 2018, p. 7) and how language interacts with other “social constructs in reproducing or unsettling social inequalities” (Copland & Creese, 2015, p. 3).

Furthermore, as a Palagi researcher it is imperative that the theoretical frameworks applied here respectfully embrace the different cultural perspectives of the Pacific and school communities in which I am working. Smith (2012) recommends a social justice framework for research with Indigenous Peoples and minority groups in order to render the research more “respectful, ethical, sympathetic and useful” (p. 9). A social justice framework acknowledges that Western research of Indigenous Peoples and minority groups has caused much harm in the past by breaking protocols, ignoring cultural values, and imposing research-based policies which only served to benefit academics (Keane et al, 2017; Smith, 2012). Research within a social justice theoretical framework seeks to decolonise the research methodologies and requires “a radical compassion ... that seeks collaboration” (Smith, 2012, p. xii) and redistributes and equalises knowledge hierarchies (Keane et al, 2017; Smith, 2012). Researching with compassion and collaboration respond to the Tokelau-Tongan communities

in this project. Compassion and collaboration are values inherent in the inati system in Tokelau communities, and the Tongan values of *kāinga* and *‘ofa* that involve looking after and sharing with the collective or the community (Chapter 1, section 1.6.7). At the heart of a social justice framework for research, lie the following questions: “Whose research is it? ... Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope? ... How will its results be disseminated?” (Smith, 2012, p. 10). Findings should be useful, and disseminated or enacted in a way that empowers the communities involved (Keane et al, 2017). In these ways a social justice framework for research also aligns with the guiding Tokelauan values of this thesis, *alofa ki te tamā manu* - collective responsibility and duty of care to ensure no one misses out, and *tautua* - service.

Research applying a social justice framework requires a detailed understanding of the positionality of the researcher. This will be outlined in section 3.5 of this Chapter. I now outline sociolinguistic and Pacific theories which provide understandings of language which align with a social justice research framework.

## 3.2 - Identity

### 3.2.1 Sociolinguistic post-structural theories of identity

Drawing on social constructionist and post-structuralist theories of identity, Bonnie Norton’s (1995, 2000, 2013) seminal work in sociolinguistics theorises how identity and language are connected. Social constructionism and post-structuralism view reality and knowledge as socially constituted in the context of human interaction (Seals, 2019; Somers, 1994).

Therefore, identity is “relative to ... cultural and historical interpretation” (Seals, 2019, p. 19), “relationally dependent”, “performative” and “constructed in relations of power” (Butler, 1995; Mila-Schaaf, 2011, p. 9). Applying the post-structural lens, “identity [is] constructed in and through language” (Norton, 2013, pp. 3-4; Weedon, 1997) as speakers consciously and unconsciously analyse the relationship between the individual and the social” (Norton, 2013, p. 3). Through language, the way one positions oneself and others is “constantly negotiated and renegotiated, shifting, context-dependent and dynamic” (Seals, 2019, p. 20).

Drawing on a longitudinal case study of the language learning experiences of immigrant women in Canada, Norton (1995, 2000, 2013) theorises identity as “how a person

understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how that person understands possibilities for the future” (Norton, 2013, p. 45). Norton (2000) illustrates her theory in action by describing how her participants negotiated and renegotiated their lives through language. One participant “wanted her daughter to learn English, but she didn’t want her daughter’s knowledge of English to undermine their relationship” (Norton, 2000, p. 125). Here we see this participant’s multiple identities as a mother; an educated professional woman from an Eastern European country, and an immigrant living in Canada migrant are at play. Each time she uses English in different contexts she is “organising and reorganising a sense of who [she is and] how [she] relates to the social world” (Norton, 2013, p. 45) across her past and future self, actively negotiating and constructing her multiple identities. As “language constructs our sense of self,” the social world and relations of power can either “accord or refuse learners the power to speak” (Darvin & Norton, 2015, pp. 36-7). Therefore, the second part of Norton’s theory of language and identity states that identity is “multiple, changing and a site of struggle” (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 36).

The role of human agency and investment in language (learning) are integral to Norton’s theory in understanding one’s possibilities for future identities (Norton, 2013). Whilst relations of power might position people in a marginalised way, human agency allows a person to “resist” this positioning, thus impacting on a person’s investment in learning languages. Norton (2000) demonstrates this through the example of one participant. Using her agency and teaching her co-workers how to speak her own languages, this participant challenged and changed the way she was previously positioned by the co-workers as ignorant. Instead, she became socially accepted and given her opportunities to use English (Norton, 2000, pp. 127-8). Norton (1995, 2013), Norton and Toohey (2011), and Darvin and Norton (2015, p. 37) discuss the connections between agency and investment, outlining that “if learners invest in a language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources which will ... increase the value of their cultural and social power.” Darvin and Norton (2015, p. 37) claim that investment and agency are appropriate terms in understanding the “dynamic negotiation of power” in different language learning contexts. This contrasts with thinking of speaker identity and language learning in terms of motivation which applies a view of identity associated with labels such as “good/bad, motivated/unmotivated, anxious/confident” (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 37).

I now outline Pacific theories of identity before discussing overlapping areas with sociolinguistic theory of identity presented in this section.

### 3.2.2 Pacific theories of identity - Relational identity and vā

Regional scholars discuss Oceanic cultural identity construction in relational rather than individualistic terms (Mila-Schaaf, 2011; Vaai & Nabobo-Baba, 2017); identity is viewed as multiple, dynamic and context dependent. Pacific cultural identity is formed around relationships and spaces between people, their spiritual and physical environment (Anae, 2016). ‘Sela’ a Tongan teacher in Barkhuizen (2016, p. 666) states: “Being Tongan means you are always part of something bigger ... A Tongan never exists as an individual, so the way you are ... [is] representative of the wider society where you are placed.”

The notion of relational space between people, their environment, and the spiritual realm across time is embodied in the concept of vā. ‘Vā’ is a concept found in various across several languages, for example ‘tauhi vā’ (Tongan), ‘vā feāloaki’ (Tokelauan), and ‘va fealoa’i (Samoan)<sup>25</sup>. Though each Pacific language has its own nuanced rendering of relational concepts of space or vā, there is a shared understanding that living in harmony in various vā requires reciprocity and respect (Airini et al, 2010). Vā is a “space that relates”, provides context, and holds “separate entities ... together in unity” (Wendt, cited in Refiti, 2002, p.209; Mila-Schaaf, 2006, p. 8). Vā is “a spatial way of conceiving ... secular and spiritual dimensions of relationships and relational order” (Airini et al, 2010, p. 10). Relationships that occur in the vā space or between vā space are sacred (Anae, 2016). This spiritual connection can be related back to the moment of creation. When all reciprocal relationships are considered sacred, relationships “will be more valued and ... closely nurtured” and developed in a way that benefits all (Anae, 2016, p. 121). As the notion of vā treats relationships as sacred, understanding vā and how to tauhi vā (the Tongan concept of taking care of sociospatial ties with kin and kin-like members) plays an important role in evolving Pacific theories and methodological approaches to research (Airini et al, 2000; Ka’ili, 2005). I discuss this approach in more detail in Chapter 4.

---

<sup>25</sup> Throughout thesis I spell vā with the macron as it is both the Tokelauan and Tongan spelling unless I am directly quoting Samoan scholarship, in which case use the Samoan spelling ‘va’ - without a macron.



From a Pacific relational theoretical lens, language and communication are essential tools which enable *vā* between people, and their environment to be nurtured, strengthened, and restored (Kennedy, 2019). A respectful and reciprocal relationship within the sacred *vā* between a person and their Indigenous or heritage language enriches the linguistic experience and deepens the sense of cultural identity (Tokelau and Tongan Community Leader, personal communication, February 28, 2019). How and when language is used is changing and contextual and dependent on notions of subjectivity and positioning in negotiation of identity. The dynamic nature of relational identity is evidenced in many Pacific languages through the use of different language registers in formal and informal settings and roles.

### 3.2.3 Theoretical overlaps

In the following section I point to the areas of congruence and distinctiveness between sociolinguistic and Pacific theories of language and identity. This is valuable as it provides a foundation for developing diverse perspectives on how issues of identity might play out in Pacific language education - a key focus in this thesis.

Developmental theories of adolescent identity (Erikson, 1968; Phinney, 1990) dominant in the Western world frame identity as “essential, unique, fixed and coherent core” (Norton, 2013, p. 45; Tupuola, 2004). Challenging these theories by viewing identity as relationally constructed around *vā*, “multiple” and “dynamic and changing over time,” and a “site of struggle,” sociolinguistic and Pacific theories of identity dynamic help to explain lived realities.

Tongan scholar, Taumoevalau (2017) discusses the reality and complexity of identity construction around multiple *vā* in ways that resonate with Norton’s participants experiencing “multiple, changing, and a site of struggle” (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 36) in Canada. Taumoevalau (2017) describes how Tongan bilingual (Tongan-English) women experience multiple identities, complexities and tensions for bilingual negotiation of identities around multiple *vā* in their numerous roles as daughters, daughters-in law, sisters, mothers, and professional women.

Norton’s theory of language and identity allows for examination of “the multiple positions from which language learners can speak,” and how social relations of power “affect learners’

access to the target language community.” It is through language “that a person gains access to – or is denied access to – powerful social networks that give the learners the opportunity to speak” (Norton, 2013, p. 45). Power relations at play in construction of identity through language resonate in a Pacific context as well. For second generation, Aotearoa-born people of Pacific heritage, being able to speak one’s own heritage language can play a huge role in identity construction (Anae, 2006; Mila-Schaaf, 2011). In the following examples we see how power relations enable and constrain “the construction of reality” (Seals, 2019, p. 21), consequently leading to identity as a site of struggle.

Anae (1997, 1998, 2006), Mila-Schaaf (2011), and Tupoula (2004) offer work on identity negotiation which problematises of the terms “New Zealand-born” used for children of Pacific heritage born in Aotearoa. Mila-Schaaf (2011, p. 6) writes that the term ‘New Zealand-born’ is “loaded with baggage, tension, and problems.” Tupoula (2004) argues that being labelled a New Zealand-born Samoan essentialises and homogenises young people of Samoan heritage. This term provides a focus of how young Pacific people growing up in Aotearoa struggle with identity when it is “imposed upon them by their elders and peers” (Tupuola, 2004, p. 88).

Further, Mila-Schaaf (2011) draws on Bourdieu (1990, 1991, 2007) to discuss the role of language in identity construction of young Pacific peoples born in Aotearoa, in particular how language shift impacts on identity. In Pacific spaces which value Pacific language proficiency as cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2007) and view language proficiency as a measure of authentic Pacific identity, Mila-Schaaf (2011, p. 10) participants commented on the experience of a sense of not being authentically Pacific when unable to speak a Pacific language. This finding is echoed in Lee (2003), Poutasi (1999), and Tiatia (1998). In light of these types of struggles, Tupoula (2004) argues that Pacific youth are in fact developing multiple identities which are based on both their own Indigenous roots as well as global contexts. She states that these multiple identities need to be recognised. The site of struggle inherent in Tupoula’s (2004) and Mila-Schaaf (2011) studies illustrate the concept of ‘discursive faultlines’ (Menard-Warwick, 2014). Discursive faultlines are a sociolinguistic metaphor for describing “faultlines, where tensions, stresses and collisions occur between discourses” surrounding critical issues such as race and power in the negotiation of identity (Menard-Warwick, 2014, pp. 1-2). In studying the use of Pacific languages attention to the spiritual is essential.

In this section I have discussed points of overlap between sociolinguistic and Pacific theorising of identity. The explicit inclusion of the spiritual and sacred realm that underpins all Indigenous Pacific theory and worldview (Anae, 2016) is the key point of difference from Norton's sociolinguistic theory of language and identity. Whilst Norton's theory does not exclude a spiritual dimension, grounded in post-structuralism it comes from a Western framework of research which is theoretically generally void of spirituality (Anae, 2016).

### 3.3 - Edgewalking

Edgewalking is a term that has been used to describe the complexities of negotiating identity for people living in multicultural societies such as young people of Pacific heritage growing up in Aotearoa (Burnett & Bond, 2020; Mackley-Crump, 2013; Mila-Schaaf, 2011; Reynolds, 2019; Tupuola, 2004). Edgewalking as theory and practice enables one to explore and navigate discursive faultlines and multiple, dynamic process of negotiating identity through language. Undertaking the edgewalk, one can discover uncharted waters where new possibilities for creative solutions and approaches exist. Edgewalking as a theoretical framework is useful to address situations described above in the process of negotiating identity. As a practice, edgewalking is one way of understanding multilingual practice and experience. Furthermore, edgewalking is a means of accounting for my own positionality as a Palagi researcher and teacher in Pacific communities.

#### 3.3.1 Edgewalking as theory

As a theoretical framework, 'edgewalking' describes people able to walk between worlds, building bridges, linking schools of thought, cultural boundaries and worldviews (Krebs, 1999; Neal, 2006; Reynolds, 2017; Stewart-Withers, 2016; Tupuola, 2004). Krebs (1999, p. 9) coined the term edgewalking as being able to walk "the edge between ... cultures in the same persona." Edgewalkers are people who, in spite of adversity in the form of marginalisation because of race, religion, or sexual orientation, choose "to embrace their complex identity and engage the mainstream effectively" (Krebs, 2000, p. 25). This notion of negotiating cultural boundaries is aligned with Heller's (2008, p. 252) proposition that multilingualism is all about boundaries: "what counts as the difference between two languages, ... who counts

as a speaker of particular languages, and ... how the categorization of languages and language practices is connected to the categorization of groups of people.”

Edgewalkers are resilient, vulnerable and take risks. Walking along the edge one might fall, trip, move backwards, forwards (Krebs, 1999; Reynolds, 2017) or discover faultlines. Thus, inherently, edgewalking assumes that identity is multiple, a site of struggle, and changing (Norton, 2013). Edgewalkers move beyond traversing boundaries, and notions of the “melting pot” or multiculturalism (Krebs, 2000, p. 25) through risk, discovery, and joy. Edgewalking steps “beyond our current boundaries to affirm the enlightened values by which our world must go forwards” (Krebs, 1999, p. 13) and in doing so honouring difference in our society in a new light (Krebs, 2000), opening up space for something new, creative, and previously unimagined (Steward-Withers, 2016).

In applied linguistics new open spaces which have opened up as a result of the edgewalking process can be understood in relation to the third space and translanguaging space (Li, 2018; Soja, 1996). As edgewalking opens up new creative spaces along boundaries, so too does the translanguaging space by incorporating “linguistic realities of the 21st century, especially the fluid and dynamic practices that transcend the boundaries between named languages, language varieties, and language and other semiotic systems” (Li, 2018, p. 9).

Translanguaging space, achieved by edgewalking, moves well beyond a hybrid space of first, second and third languages and cultures. It brings together: “different dimensions” of people’s histories, experiences, environments, attitudes, beliefs, ideologies, physical and cognitive capacities (Li, 2018, p. 23), to create a very open, critical “site of creativity and power” (Hooks, 1990, p.152, Li, 2018; Soja, 1996).

Edgewalking can act as a theoretical framework for addressing discursive faultlines (Menard-Warwick, 2014) such as contradictions and tensions, through the sharing and demystification of knowledge (Stewart-Withers, 2016). In this way, it can be a theoretical place for interpreting the experience of young people growing up in multicultural families and places, such as school as they negotiate multiple cultural spaces and identities.

### 3.3.2 Edgewalking as practice

Krebs (2000), Tupuola (2004), and Reynolds (2017) present strong cases that describe how young people growing up in Aotearoa and the USA edgewalk, navigating different worlds in their daily lives. Krebs (2000) highlights how edgewalking is a useful framework to break down and discuss tensions around race and difference, especially for students who have mixed heritage. With an edgewalking framework, Krebs' students are able to see their multiple ethnicities as tools for understanding and positioning themselves as strong and able to navigate different worlds rather than being positioned as 'different.' Tupuola (2004) depicts young people of the Pacific diaspora as edgewalkers who are "able to weave between ... collective and personal and local and global cultures" with seemingly "holistic and integrated identities" (p. 96) as they identify with multiple identities rather than one achieved linear cultural identity. Reynolds (2017) highlights how Pacific students edgewalk each day as they navigate and reconcile their home, school, past and future lives when they are in the education system. He argues that the successful edgewalk is facilitated by "well-configured and negotiated relationships" (Reynolds, 2017, p. 283). Conversely, "hostility, exclusiveness, ignorance, the construction of choice and the exercise of power without love make the edge perilous" (Reynolds, 2017, p. 283).

### 3.3.3 Edgewalking as a practice and a position

Researchers have also positioned themselves as edgewalkers. For Stewart-Withers (2016) edgewalking as theory has been helpful as a way to reconcile the conflicting multiple realities in which she operates as a researcher, member of the university ethics committee, and teacher. Stewart-Withers (2016, pp. 38-9) has used edgewalking theory to "manage ethical tensions and lessen the ethical divide" by promoting "transparency, openness, and relationships" at the borders of each of her roles. To do this edgewalk, Stewart-Withers talks about the necessity of being comfortable with taking risks, addressing tensions, speaking out, and reaching out. Comfort makes her able to facilitate growth, helping herself and those with whom she works to see the bigger picture and create something new (Stewart-Withers, 2016; Krebs, 1999).

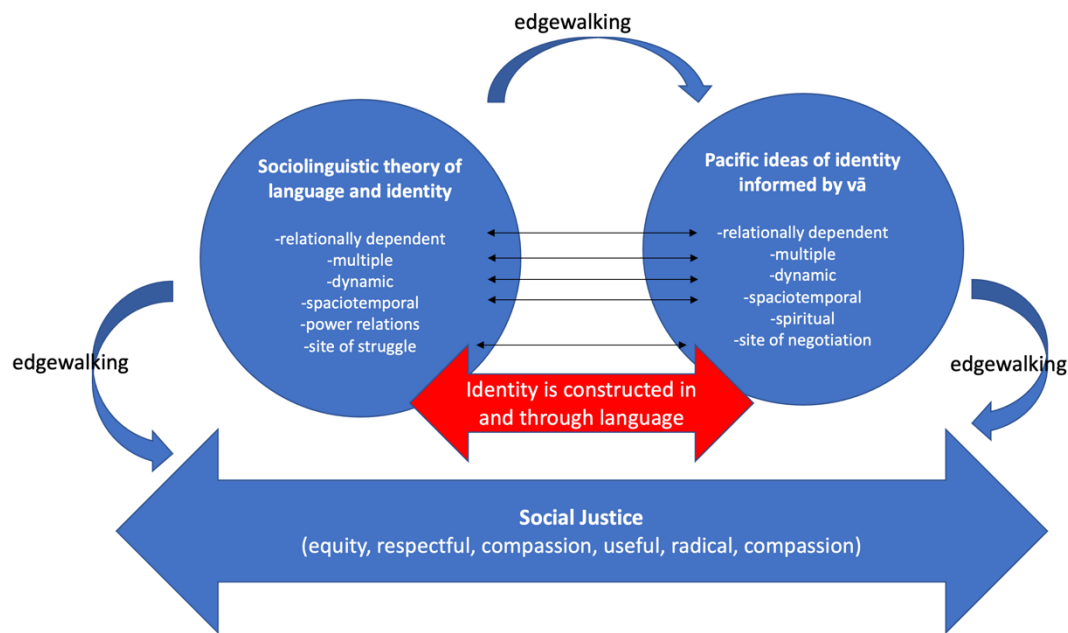
As a Palagi teacher and researcher, Reynolds (2017, p. 264) also positions himself as an edgewalker moving between edges within "the academy and professional practice, various research communities, the case study school's Pasifika and Palangi communities, and my various roles of learner, researcher, teacher and teacher-mentor." Reynolds (2017, p. 264) describes this edgewalk as "relational configurations" which enabled him to step beyond

“previous boundaries” to a place of “enlightened relational values” which are necessary for progress.

Edgewalking as theory, practice, and position resonate clearly for me on my research journey as I navigate, challenge, and move between the different domains and worldviews of community leaders, students, teachers, and school principals, exercising my multiple identities as teacher, friend, researcher, mother, and Palagi). In addition, this research is a collaboration where all edgewalk between their own worlds and those of other collaborators. In this sense, the research centres on a vā of edgewalking.

The theoretical frameworks of social justice, identity, and edgewalking applied in this research project reflect its relational nature. Through these theoretical frameworks I relate and connect this study to the different groups and places that are significant here. In the spirit of tautua, my hope is that the edgewalking in this research process, undertaken together with Tokelauan and Tongan communities will achieve more socially just and equitable language education outcomes in secondary schools which allow students to deeply investigate, learn about and negotiate identities through language. Figure 1 below visually represents the congruence between chosen theoretical frameworks in relation to the aims and context of the research.

Figure 1. A visual representation of theoretical congruence



### 3.4 - Relational, vā-centred methodological approaches

In this research, I am seeking to understand how language, culture, identity, and wellbeing are experienced and narrated by members of Aotearoa-based Tokelauan and Tongan communities. The inquiry explores why ongoing access to language and culture in secondary education matters and how attention to language and culture can be afforded within the secondary curriculum. I take a relational and social constructivist stance to the research process, whereby knowledge and creation of knowledge is considered “social, historical, and political” an animal “raised, tamed, and produced by us” (Heller et al, 2018, p. 8). Two complementary qualitative methodological approaches inform my research process: tauhi vā - teu le va and a critical ethnographic sociolinguistic approach. These methodologies learn from a Pacific worldview and place people and generation of optimal outcomes for the people involved in the research at the centre (Anae, 2016; Arini et al; 2010; Dawson, 2019). A critical ethnographic approach allows for questions of equity and power pertaining to language to be explored in an in-depth situated context (Heller et al, 2018, p. 2). In this section, I discuss my understanding of these methodological approaches to qualitative research, before presenting my positionality

#### 3.4.1 Vā-centred methodological approaches

Operating within a social justice theoretical framework informed by Indigenous Pacific and post-structuralist theories of identity, Tokelauan and Tongan language learners are likely to be well served by combining cross-disciplinary methodological approaches informed by tauhi vā (Ka‘ili, 2005, 2017) and teu le va (Anae, 2016) approaches. In the absence of a Tokelauan methodological approach developed around a similar Indigenous Tokelauan concept vā feāloaki, I apply tauhi vā as a Tongan-inspired theoretical and methodological relational approach to research based on Indigenous understandings (Ka‘ili, 2017). In addition, I draw on teu le va (Samoan) as an approach more developed in the literature designed to incorporate Indigenous Pacific ethics and worldview to shape educational research in Aotearoa (Airini et al, 2010; Anae, 2016). As methodologies, tauhi vā and teu le va are relational, predominantly qualitative methodological approaches, which embrace flexible, exploratory methods situated and centred in Pacific communities. In addition, they are relevant to this research as the notion of vā pertaining to negotiation of identity (see previous sections) one key focus points. I believe both approaches embrace the Tokelauan values guiding this project tautua (service) and alofa ki te tamā manu (showing compassion for the vulnerable).

Tauhi vā “involves the maintenance of exchange relations between social groups by way of performing their reciprocal functions. These social relations . . . can be a source of either harmony or conflict, dependent on either the symmetry or asymmetry of the human arrangement” (Māhina, 2004, p. 195). Therefore, tauhi vā describes the process of nurturing social relations, resolution of conflicts, creation of good health, and sharing of resources (Ka‘ili, 2017, p. 34). In addition, tauhi vā is a “spatiotemporal concept and practice.” Tauhi vā thus highlights the holistic, collective nature of Tongan society (ibid). When social relations and matters of time and space are symmetrical or cared for correctly, there is “harmony and beauty (*faka ‘ofa ‘ofa/mālie*)” (Ka‘ili, 2017, p. 35). One example of tauhi vā in action is seen in Tongan family structural values. From an Indigenous Tongan perspective of time perspective, “people who are first—firstborn or aboriginal—should lead and set the example for the rest to follow” (ibid, p. 37). This is why Tongan people honour and respect elders and ancestors (ibid). When the nurturing of the tauhi vā is followed, there is harmony and beauty within the collective (between people and their environment) (ibid). Conversely, when the elder members of the family do not live up to their leadership roles, there may be conflict or discord, negatively impacting the collective (ibid). See Ka‘ili (2017), Māhina (2008), and Māhina et al (2006) for a more in-depth discussion. As an inspiration to research



methodology, tauhi vā therefore stresses the need to nurture relationships across time and space in the Tongan context (Paea, 2015).

The development of teu le va (literally caring for the va), a Indigenous relational Samoan construct as a methodology has also been helpful. Teu le va was developed as a methodology in response to a call to decolonise traditional Western methodologies (Ponton, 2018; Smith, 2012) in order to respect cultural protocols and to provide a research context in which the needs of community drive the research. It aims to approach research ethics relationally by putting “a‘ano (flesh) on the bones of personhood in a way that recognises and demands respect, attentiveness and responsiveness to our commitments to each other in the humanity of relationships” (Anae, 2016, p.118).

Anae (2016) argues for the need for clarification and development of shared understanding of Indigenous Pacific models for research, as interest in using such approaches grow, particularly in education and health. To more effectively understand and use teu le va research methodology, Anae (2016) recommends engaging with its Indigenous Samoan philosophical meaning. As discussed in the previous section, ‘vā’ (va in Samoan) is a word for relational space in which relationships are enacted and reciprocally respected and which exists between people and their environment (Anae, 2016). Relationships occurring in the va are sacred (Anae, 2016; Lilomaiva-Doktor, 2009). When all reciprocal relationships are treated as sacred, they are “more valued and ... closely nurtured” and will develop in a beneficial way for all (Anae, 2016, p. 121). While I cannot claim a full appreciation of this aspect of Samoan philosophy, I seek to honour the intellectual tradition by learning from it during my work of service.

Indigenous scholars, Vaai & Nabobo-Baba (2017) and Anae (2016, p. 121) call for a “re-appreciation” of “the spiritual, sacred, and tapu in ethical debates” in Pacific research. According to Anae (2016, p. 121), teu le va provides a research framework in which the sacred “can be enacted.” She says that the inclusion of the sacred and spiritual dimension is what sets teu le va apart from Western research ethics and methodologies.

Anae (2016) and Ponton (2018) use traditional Samoan examples of how to teu le va in order to understand its application as a research methodology. Teu le va philosophy is incorporated into traditional Samoan marriage ceremonies to demonstrate how to deal with problems. If

problems occur in a marriage, *teu le va* insists that “direct action” must be taken to “correct the relationship and/or relational arrangement if a breach of the *tapu* in the *va* has occurred” (Anae, 2016, p. 121). Traditionally in a marriage, if the *va* is damaged, *teu le va* may involve one or the other partner relenting. However, *teu le va* invokes the understanding that correcting and reconciling the break in the *va* will improve the outcomes for all involved. In this case, applying Indigenous understanding to the research methodology, *teu le va* implies researchers in Pacific spaces must continuously expose, understand, and reconcile *va* between the different communities involved, including taking care of tensions that arise.

Ponton (2018) gives another traditional Samoan example of how *teu le va* teaches how the *va* is cared for by expected respectful behaviours and language between brothers and sisters. In the research context, Ponton (2018) applies this relational behaviour to how the researcher and host should interact at social or research-related events. *Teu le va* as a methodology therefore, aims to identify, cultivate and nurture the *va* or spaces and relationships between all stakeholders in Pacific educational research. In looking after relationships, collectively and collaboratively generated new knowledge is more likely to be transferred across these *va* to achieve optimal outcomes and action for Pacific people in spheres such as education (Airini et al, 2010, p. 10).

### 3.4.2 A critical ethnographic sociolinguistic approach

I also apply a critical ethnographic sociolinguistic approach (CESA), to the key points of language itself, why it matters, and how relations of power impact people’s access to language. Taking note of these features has the potential to guide ways to care for the relationships between language learners, teachers, Pacific peoples and education. A critical ethnographic sociolinguistic approach has been applied to seminal studies exploring language and identity in education. Examples of research with communities have been undertaken to understand how relations of power either enhance or take away from people’s access to language (Conteh, 2018; Dawson, 2019; Menard-Warwick 2009, 2014; Norton, 2013; Seals, 2019). Such studies are all linked in their search for social justice in language related matters. By employing a CESA, I seek to align a critical ethnographic sociolinguistic approach with *vā*-centred methodological approaches as they place people and relationships at the centre of the research, with the emphasis of researching *with* participants rather than *on* participants and generates positive outcomes as a result of the research (Cameron et al, 1993; Conteh,

2018; Dawson, 2019; Heller et al, 2018; Menard-Warwick, 2014; Seals, 2013). Like tauhi vā and teu le va, a critical ethnographic approach employs flexible and explorative methods. In the research process, all people and experience involved are respected and seen as equally valid.

A critical ethnographic sociolinguistic approach views research as experience and as a conversation (Heller et al, 2018). It is used in applied sociolinguistic research to explore language in social practice as it unfolds (Heller et al, 2018, p. 8). This means that data collection methods must be participant-centre, dialogic, and flexible to fit around social practices such as education, work, and family life. According to Conteh (2018, p. 17), claiming an ethnographic approach to qualitative research requires the researcher to maintain “transparency about their own role” and demonstrate “a commitment to understanding the importance of what participants bring to the contexts of which they are members, and how personal experiences are mediated and influenced by their contexts - social, cultural, political, and historical.” In these ways a critical ethnographic approach to research is also compatible to tauhi vā-teu le va methodology, as both require transparency of researcher positionality (Ponton, 2018; Reynolds, 2017).

In line with theoretical and methodological approaches applied to this research, I outline my positionality in relation to ethical decisions and actions taken, before introducing the study and research methods.

### 3.5 - Statement of Positionality

I aim to locate my positionality with transparency and remain accountable to all involved in order to relate knowledge generated in the research back those who contributed (Conteh, 2018; Keane et al, 2017). As outlined in Chapter 1, I am a Palagi teacher-researcher who in undertaking this doctoral project aims to provide additional support to ongoing language maintenance efforts in communities where I work. In this way I position myself as a servant leader who is both an outsider and insider to communities and individuals in this research project. This entails many different roles and in the following section I outline the different ethical considerations and actions I took to many relations of power throughout the research process.

### 3.5.1 Ethical considerations

Approval from the university human ethics committee for this study was received in December 2017 and permission was granted for the official data collection to take place from February to December, 2018. In January and February 2018, prior to contacting the majority of schools and communities, I spoke with two experienced Pacific educational scholars from two universities in New Zealand; a Pacific advisor from a government agency with a stakeholder relationship and interest in Pacific education and Pacific languages; and one Palagi friend and colleague who recently completed doctoral studies in the field of Pacific education. I asked for advice about establishing and developing relationships with Pacific communities and about how I, as a Palagi researcher, should most appropriately conduct myself in Pacific worlds. The collective advice of these four people can be summarised as follows; the research needs to have tangible and helpful outcomes; ongoing contact and active follow-up with the communities involved; and I should be open and honest about who I am and my motivations for the research. This advice continues to inform my thinking, my actions, and my interactions throughout the work and beyond data collection and into the wider research process.

Contact with community representatives from different Pacific communities was established via connections through family, friends, and colleagues. Initial contact was made via an email in which I described my motivation and plan for the research, intended outcomes. In some cases, I invited the community member to meet up informally if they were interested in talking more about language in the community in relation to the research project. In other cases, I was invited to come and speak in the community. As part of ethical considerations, to respect people's time and busy lives, I asked for a single audio-recorded interview at a location and time that suited participants<sup>26</sup>.

My roles and positions with the five different community members interviews in this thesis differed according to the context. For all five, I probably appeared as a secondary school teacher of languages and a PhD researcher. However, prior to research interviews taking place, our connections differed. For three community participants, we had already spent time together talking in detail about the project. For the two others, we were introduced via friends or colleagues at the time the research began.

---

<sup>26</sup> see examples of ethics forms in Appendices A and B

Contact with schools was initially established via email. I identified and contacted secondary school principals or teachers of 27 schools around the country. These were selected because I knew, or had been told, that Pacific language and/or cultural programmes of some kind were offered. In each email I stated who I was and where I had been teaching previously, my connection with the school (if there was an existing connection), my motivation and plan for the research, and the intended outcomes. I also asked if the principal or staff member addressed in the email would be willing to be part of the research. I suggested an interview lasting between 20 to 30 minutes at a time convenient for them. Of 27 schools contacted, I had research interviews with principals and/ or teachers from 13 different secondary schools in the Wellington, Porirua, Hutt Valley, Christchurch, and North Otago regions. From these 13 schools, there were 11 schools with whom I already had some prior connection, either with the principal or a staff member. Again, I asked for a single audio-recorded interview to respect participants' time and schedules (see Appendices A and B). All participants and their communities in this study chose or were given pseudonyms to protect identity.

In addition Pacific relational ethical boundaries demand ongoing service and commitments in the various communities and schools (Airini et al, 2010). I outline these considerations and actions in the following section.

### 3.5.2 Actions and management of power relations

Approaching this research in the spirit of *tautua* and *alofa ki te tamā manu*, guided by *vā*-centred ethics and methodologies, I have endeavoured to treat all relationships with Tokelauan and Tongan communities with respect and as sacred. From the outset of our first interactions, I endeavoured to make my positionality and motivations for the research (outlined in Chapter 1) as clear as possible, offering time and space for iterative clarification. A significant degree of control over meetings and interactions was offered to communities, and the direction for my role within the process has evolved from these interactions. I continue to seek advice as I write up the thesis, especially on interpretation of Indigenous Tokelauan and Tongan understandings discussed and applied in the thesis. All meetings followed community protocol with community leaders in control of procedures such as *lotu* (prayer). I attended all events that I was invited to and only spoke at meetings when invited.

Throughout and after the research process, I have remained committed to supporting language projects and obtaining optimal community-desired outcomes from my involvement with the research. This commitment and engagement continue to involve:

- participating in community events and meetings
- supporting the development of links with local secondary schools and other language education stakeholders (NZQA)
- supporting the establishment of Wellington-based Tongan language clusters for secondary students
- informing communities of relevant NCEA assessment pathways for languages and cultures which are now well known in schools or in communities,
- supporting applications for language education-related grants from bodies such as New Zealand Association of Language Teachers (NZALT)
- developing community programmes in collaboration with local secondary schools which teach language, culture, and history and can be NCEA assessed using the Pacific Studies Unit Standards
- participation in language advocacy and activism within the wider community, such as by meeting with MPs and local authorities (for example about having gagana Tokelau recognised as an NCEA subject).

Since July 2020, I have been back in a fulltime teaching position in which I am trying to enact learnings from this project. This will be discussed more in the final chapter of the thesis.

All in all, I have, as far as possible, signalled my status as an outsider to the various communities by seeking to bring my professional knowledge and privilege of being a researcher, as elements of *tautua*. While I have inevitably made mistakes, I have sought to honour community ways of being and understanding through my own learning, accepting knowledge and experience as valued gifts or *taonga*.

### 3.6 - Chapter summary

Chapter 3 has outlined the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this research. It has explored and explained the rationale of applying critical and relational sociolinguistic and Indigenous Pacific theories and methodological in the undertaking of this project. In doing so, ethical considerations and actions further clarifying my positionality were discussed. Chapter

4 now turns to practical aspects of conducting this project presenting the research methods and details of the participants.

## Chapter 4 - Methods

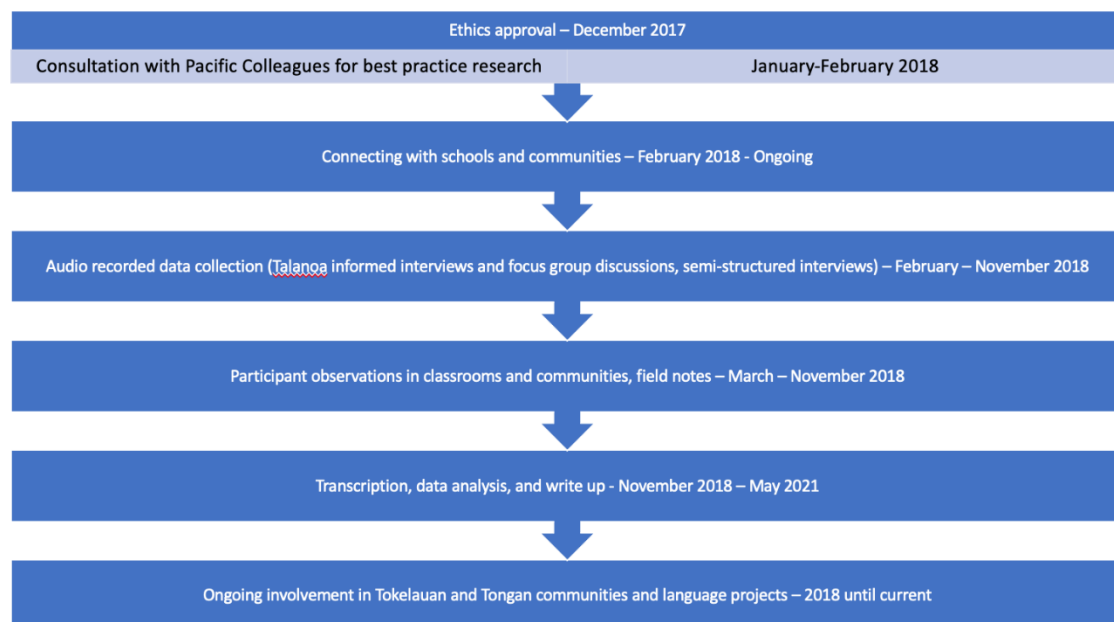
In this Chapter I outline further detail surrounding the research design, participating communities, and methods of data collection and analysis.

### 4.1 - Research design and participating communities

Relational theoretical and methodological approaches are exploratory by nature.

Relationships are always a matter of negotiation, thus, the research design was dynamic and ongoing, changing as I connected with people and issues that arose (Heller et al, 2018). The unfolding of this dynamic research design is depicted in the flow chart in Figure 2 below<sup>27</sup>.

Figure 2. Research design



### 4.2 - Participating communities

In total there are eight participating different communities or groups in this study (26 people in total). All groups are based outside of the greater region of Auckland. In most cases, these people are grouped together as they are part of a community, school class, or have collegial relationships. In the case of the school principal group, the four school principals grouped together professionally but were not known to be linked through language learning connections at the time.

<sup>27</sup> Details of this research design (e.g. methods) are described in this chapter.

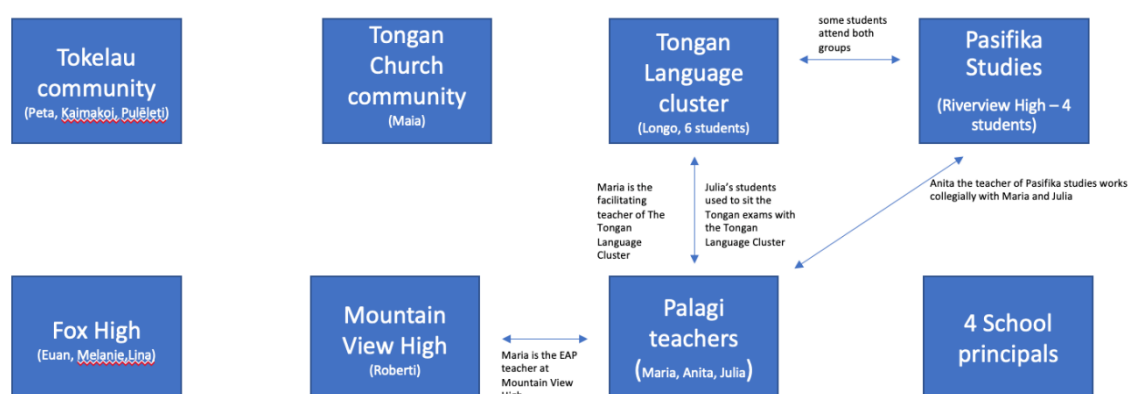


These communities or groups are:

- The Tokelau Community, (3 members)
- The Tongan Church Community, (1 member)
- The Tongan Language Cluster (1 teacher, 6 students)
- Palagi teachers who facilitate Pacific language programmes, (3 teachers)
- Students from Pasifika Studies at Riverview High, (4 students)
- Student from Mountain View High, (1 student)
- Students from Fox High, (3 students)
- School principals (4 principals)

Figure 3 below presents a visual representation of the eight groups and how certain groups interconnect.

Figure 3. Connections between participating communities



I now provide background details of each group including information about data collection<sup>28</sup>.

#### 4.2.1 Tokelau community participants - Peta, Kaimakoi, Pulēleti

As discussed in Chapter 1, I was initially introduced to Peta, a member of the Tokelau community by a mutual friend. Through Peta, I have come to know the leaders of the Tokelau community and many of the young people and their families. Though most of the community members did not contribute directly to the data presented in this research, our interactions and time spent together inform and are reflected in the analysis of the findings. The three Tokelau members whose narratives are included in the audio-recorded data are Peta,

<sup>28</sup> All names are pseudonyms.

Kaimakoi, and Pulēleti. The latter two were introduced specifically to me by Peta and a family member. Because of our mutual interest in language, Peta connected me with her cousin Pulēleti, a linguist and translator of gagana Tokelau and gagana Samoa who is associated with the community through his mother's side. Kaimakoi was introduced to me by both a family member and by Peta. Kaimakoi is a key figure in the wider cross-atoll Tokelauan community in Aotearoa and has worked professionally and in community roles in projects for gagana Tokelau maintenance and revitalisation. Kaimakoi identifies both as Tokelauan and Tongan. However, most of our contact in relation to this research has been gagana Tokelau-focussed. All three have continued to advise me during the research process, especially Peta and Kaimakoi.

Table 1. below provides relevant details of these three Tokelau community leaders and our interviews.

Table 1. Tokelauan participant details

Pseudonym	Community role	Informal meetings prior to interview	Date, location and length of audio recorded talanoa-informed interview	Ongoing contact
Pulēleti	Community member, translator	No	9th June 2018, café, 40.29 minutes	Yes , semi-regular via email
Peta	Community member, leader of the Tokelau community language education programme	Yes, regular, at Tokelau events and meeting with a mutual friend	18th July 2018, my home, 27.16 minutes	Yes, very regular, continuous collaboration of Tokelau language projects in the community
Kaimakoi	Community leader	Yes, semi-regular at Tokelau events and meeting with a mutual friend	18th November 2018, Kaimakoi's workplace, 31.33 minutes	Yes, semi-regular via email and face-to-face

#### 4.2.2 Tongan Church Community Participant - Maia

The Tongan Church Community provides lea faka-Tonga programmes for school-aged children within the community, particularly during the school holidays. The parent and grandparent-aged members are mainly born in Tonga with the young people in the community being born in either Aotearoa or Tonga. My contact in this community is Maia who runs the education programmes in the community. We knew each other quite well prior to this research project as we both taught at the same school for two years. During the data collection period I interviewed Maia once. However, I have attended several meetings in the

church about lea faka-Tonga in schools and cultural fundraising evenings. We continue to work together on establishing lea faka-Tonga programmes in secondary schools. Table 2. below provides relevant details of my connection with Maia prior to, during, and after the research process.

Table 2. Tongan Church Community participant details

Pseudonym	Community role	Informal meetings prior to interview	Date, location and length of audio recorded talanoa-informed interview	Ongoing contact
Maia	Community member, leader of community Tongan language programme	Yes, former colleague, email contact and catching up at Tongan community gatherings	29th March 2018 café, 19.49 minutes	Yes, regular, continuous collaboration of Tongan language projects in the community

#### 4.2.3 Teachers and students from the Tongan language cluster - Longo (Teacher), David, Vai, Langi, Mele, Toniseni, and Tevita (students)

The Tongan language cluster is open to all students of Tongan heritage from many different secondary schools around the region and operates during Terms 2 and 3 of the school year. It meets outside of school hours, after school on a Friday afternoon in a centrally based school (Mountainview High) in a major city outside of the wider Auckland area. Participation in this language learning group is optional. Students are required to get themselves to the classes after school. At the time of data collection, the Tongan language cluster was well attended by roughly forty students. However, one of the Tongan teachers told me in an interview, she believed there were many more students who could belong if they chose to do so.

The language cluster is facilitated by Maria (the English Language-EL teacher at Mountainview High, and a well-known advocate for community languages), and there are three Tongan language teachers. In each session the group first meets for opening prayers and food, then announcements, after which students split up into school year levels to work on language. At the end of Term 3, most students sit the NCEA lea faka-Tonga examinations which contribute to their overall school qualification. The cluster approach to learning a language is an opportunity for Tongan students to learn socially and have their Tongan language and culture recognised as part of their studies although their schools are not able to offer specific courses in Tongan.

The Tongan language was initially a volunteer-led initiative. As it grew, it received some funding, and the organising group now charges schools NZ\$300<sup>29</sup> per student to participate in this group. This allows for the Tongan teachers and Maria (the facilitating teacher) to be paid for their work; the complex nature of running interschool cross-year level classes is very time consuming.

From this community, I interviewed Longo, one of the lea faka-Tonga teachers. Longo is Tongan-born but moved to Aotearoa as a teenager. She has worked in New Zealand and in Australia during her adult life. I did not have any connection to Longo prior to meeting her at the language classes on the Friday night of the discussion groups, observation, and interview. However, I felt that we immediately ‘clicked’ as Longo is passionate about ensuring that Tongan children maintain their language and therefore, she stated she supported the aims of this project. I remained in contact with Longo for quite some time after our meeting and was able to arrange for NZALT<sup>30</sup> funding for her to connect with the Tongan language teaching community in Auckland. However, we have not had so much contact since she moved to a different city.

Six Aotearoa-born students from the Tongan language cluster actively participated in the focus group discussion though many more students sat and listened to their peers. These students ranged from sixteen to eighteen years old with varying levels of Tongan language proficiency. Unlike the other community Tokelau and Tongan adult community members, I met these students once and I did not remain directly in touch, although I remained linked with two of their teachers. Although I did not have existing connections with these students, students’ knowledge of my connection with their teachers provided us with a positive starting place for discussions about experiences of language, culture, and identity. In addition, the students knew I was a secondary school teacher keen to support the setting up of a similar Tongan language learning community in my own city. I believe this made them open and eager to tell me how to proceed. To protect student identities, these students have been named David (student 1), Vai (student 2), Langi (student 3), Mele (student 4), Toniseni (student 5) and Tevita (student 6). A summary of relevant details from the Tongan language cluster and the interviews and focus group discussions which took place is found in Table 3. below.

---

<sup>29</sup> NZ\$300 at the time of data collection February to December 2018.

<sup>30</sup> New Zealand Association of Language Teachers

Table 3. The Tongan language cluster participant details

Pseudonym	Community role	Informal meetings prior to interview	Date, location and length of audio recorded talanoa-informed interview/ focus group	Ongoing contact
Maria	Facilitating teacher	Yes	see details in Table 3.4	Yes , semi-regular via email
Longo	Tongan language teacher	No	31 <sup>st</sup> August 2018, host school of Tongan language cluster, 23.20 minutes	Yes initially but not since December 2018
David (student 1) aged between 16-18 yrs old	Student in the Tongan language cluster	No	31 <sup>st</sup> August 2018, host school of Tongan language cluster, 22.42 minutes	No
Vai (student 2) aged between 16-18 yrs old	Student in the Tongan language cluster	No	31 <sup>st</sup> August 2018, host school of Tongan language cluster, 22.42 minutes	No
Langi (student 3) aged between 16-18 yrs old	Student in the Tongan language cluster	No	31 <sup>st</sup> August 2018, host school of Tongan language cluster, 22.42 minutes	No
Mele (student 4) aged between 16-18 yrs old	Student in the Tongan language cluster	No	31 <sup>st</sup> August 2018, host school of Tongan language cluster, 22.42 minutes	No
Toniseni (student 5) aged between 16-18 yrs old	student in the Tongan language cluster	No	31 <sup>st</sup> August 2018, host school of Tongan language cluster, 22.42 minutes	No
Tevita (student 6) aged between 16-18 yrs old	student in the Tongan language cluster	No	31 <sup>st</sup> August 2018, host school of Tongan language cluster, 22.42 minutes	No

#### 4.2.4 Palagi teachers who facilitate Pacific language programmes - Maria, Anita, and Julia

I had previously met several Palagi language teachers who like myself had worked in secondary schools and who had roles (some official and some volunteer) which involved advocating for, supporting and facilitating Pacific language educational opportunities in some way. I initially contacted three teachers, Maria, Anita, and Julia, whom I already knew a little, to ask if they would be prepared to be interviewed for my research. These teachers are all very experienced language teachers (each with over 20 years of experience). All share the belief that students need ongoing access to maintain heritage languages and cultures as part of their formal education. I interviewed each teacher once. Our existing relationship, shared

professional knowledge, and values seemed to facilitate these discussions hugely. I remain in touch with Maria, Anita, and Julia and we continue to work on advocacy and supporting projects for improved access to Pacific language education in schools together. Relevant details about these teachers and the interviews which took place are found in Table 4. below.

Table 4 Palagi teachers who facilitate Pacific language programmes participant details

Pseudonym	School role	Informal meetings prior to interview	Date, location and length of audio recorded talanoa-informed interview/ focus group	Ongoing contact
Maria,	-ESL teacher at Mountainview High -facilitating teacher of the Tongan language cluster	Yes	31 <sup>st</sup> August 2018, Maria's classroom -40.53 seconds (just Maria and myself -28.43 minutes (with Maria and Roberti, a student)	Yes , semi-regular via email
Anita	- ESL teacher and facilitating teacher of Pasifika studies at Riverview High	Yes	23 <sup>rd</sup> March, in a meeting room at Anita's school, 52.43 minutes	Yes, regular contact via email and face-to-face when we are in the same city
Julia	HoD Languages, supports Tongan students to sit NCEA lea faka-Tonga	Yes	email interview as logistics of travel to Julia's school were too difficult	Yes, via email

#### 4.2.5 Pasifika Studies students at Riverview High - Samisoni, Leilani, Kate, Viola

Pasifika Studies is a timetabled course which runs at Riverview High, a multicultural secondary school with a school roll of around 1000, in which about 50 students identify as being of Pacific heritage. Riverview High is situated in a major city. Pasifika Studies is a cross-curricular course, combining three Learning Areas within the NZC (Learning Languages, Social Sciences, and Performing Arts). In this course students learn their heritage languages, undertake research based around Pacific issues, and are involved in Pacific performing arts. Students have four hours of course time per week. This is a multi-year level course with students from ages 13 to 18 in the same class.

The course is facilitated by Anita, an experienced EL teacher who co-teaches with a number of community language tutors employed by the school. In Pasifika Studies (depending on the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the students) students are learning multiple Pacific languages in the same space focusing on developing proficiency in their own Pacific language(s) but also looking at similarities and differences across languages. These languages

have included: Gagana Samoa, lea faka-Tonga, vagahau Niue, Kiribati, and Fijian. At the time of data collection, Pasifika Studies had been running for four years.

Four students from Pasifika Studies at Riverview High participated in focus groups. Samisoni, Leilani, Kate, Viola were aged between sixteen to eighteen at the time, with varying degrees of Pacific language(s) proficiency. Like the students from the Tongan language cluster, I did not know these students prior to meeting them in class. However, they knew I was also a teacher with similar principles and values to their own teacher, Anita (as she told them). Perhaps because of this, our conversations felt easy and open. I did not keep in touch with these students but remain in touch with Anita, their teacher.

Table 5. Students from Pasifika Studies (Riverview High) participant details

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Year level, identified ethnicity, place of birth</b>	<b>Informal meetings prior to interview</b>	<b>Date, location and length of audio recorded talanoa-informed focus group</b>	<b>Ongoing contact</b>
Samisoni	Year 13 Tongan student in Pasifika Studies, born in Aotearoa	No	30th August, Pasifika Studies classroom, 36.39 minutes	No
Leilani	Year 12 Samoan student in Pasifika Studies, born in Aotearoa	No	30th August, Pasifika Studies classroom, 36.39 minutes	No
Kate	Year 11 Tongan student in Pasifika Studies, born in Aotearoa	No	30th August, Pasifika Studies classroom, 36.39 minutes	No
Viola	Year 11 Tongan student in Pasifika Studies, born in Tonga	No	30th August, Pasifika Studies classroom, 36.39 minutes	No

#### 4.2.6 Roberti - Student from Mountain View High

I interviewed Roberti, one student of Samoan-Fijian heritage from Mountain View High. Although Roberti was not able to study his heritage languages at the time of this interview, he had participated in various language projects his EAP teacher Maria had been involved with.

Table 6. Student from Mountain View High - participant details

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Year level, identified ethnicity, place of birth</b>	<b>Informal meetings prior to interview</b>	<b>Date, location and length of audio recorded talanoa-informed focus group</b>	<b>Ongoing contact</b>
------------------	---	---	---	------------------------

Roberti	Year 12 Samoan-Fijian student in Year 12 EAP, born in Samoa	No	31 <sup>st</sup> August 2018, Maria's classroom, 28.43 minutes (with Maria and Roberti, a student)	No
---------	---	----	--	----

#### 4.2.7 Students from Fox High - Euan, Melanie, and Lina

During three months of the data collection period, I taught at Fox High undertaking a secondment. During this period, I initiated several opportunities for access to Pacific language and culture within the curriculum, outside of my prescribed duties of teaching a European language. Three students that I met during this time agreed to be interviewed.

Table 7. Students from Fox High - participant, interview, and relational details

Pseudonym	Year level, identified nationality, place of birth	Informal meetings prior to interview	Date, location and length of audio recorded talanoa-informed focus group	Ongoing contact
Euan	Year 12 student of Pakeha and Samoan heritage, born in Aotearoa	Yes, I was Euan's home room teacher for one term during this period and he knew about my PhD project	8 <sup>th</sup> June 2018, classroom during interval with Melanie 17.18 minutes	No
Melanie	Year 12 student of Māori, Samoan, Tokelau and Pakeha heritage, born in Aotearoa	Yes, I was Melanie's home room teacher for one term during this period and she knew about my PhD project	8 <sup>th</sup> June 2018, classroom during interval with Euan 17.18 minutes	No
Lina	Year 11 Samoan student, born in Samoa	Yes, I supported Lina with sitting NCEA Samoan and entering the Samoan speech competition whilst teaching at her school for one term prior to this interview	18th August 2018, school meeting room, 17 minutes (one-on-one interview not focus group)	No

#### 4.2.8 School principals

I interviewed four school principals <sup>31</sup> from schools in major cities. To protect the identities of principals and schools, they are named simply Principals 1-4 and High Schools 4-7.

All these schools appear to have a vibrant and visible group of students from different Pacific backgrounds, Pacific parent groups, and active Polyclubs. Three offer gagana Samoa as a formal option course within the curriculum, one school has no formal option to study a

<sup>31</sup> None of the Principals I interviewed are from, or associated with the same schools as the teachers, students, and community members who feature in this thesis.



Pacific language. I had no previous connections with these school principals prior to the interviews. However, from my introductory email they were aware that I was a registered teacher and of the schools in which I had taught. Since the time of the interview, I have had ongoing contact and collaboration with the principal from High School 7 as a result of this research.

Relevant details about these school leaders and the interviews which took place is found in Table 8. below.

Table 8. School principals - participant, interview, and relational details

Pseudonym	School name and percentage of Pacific students at the time	Connections prior to interview	Date, location and length of audio recorded interview	Ongoing contact
Principal 1	High School 4, 20%	No	26 <sup>th</sup> July 2018, in Principal's office, 19.27 minutes	No, however I supported a Samoan student in sitting NCEA Samoan exams after this interview
Principal 2	High school 5, 20%	No	19 <sup>th</sup> March 2018, in Principal's office, 20 minutes	Yes initially but not since December 2018
Principal 3	High School 6, 15%	No	9 <sup>th</sup> April 2018, in Principal's office, 13.39 minutes	No
Principal 4	High School 7, 70%	No	16 <sup>th</sup> February 2018, in Principal's office, 30 minutes	Yes, ongoing

### 4.3 - Data collection methods

In keeping with the methodologies of this thesis I selected data collection methods which enabled me to respectfully care for relationships whilst exploring real world contexts in a conversational and dialogic manner (Conteh, 2018; Hammersley, 1993). The exploratory nature and theoretical and methodological stances applied to my study lend themselves to using “discursive ... socially situated,” flexible and exploratory methods in which meaning and knowledge are co-constructed (Talmy & Richards, 2011, p. 2) rather than those which search for an absolute truth (as discussed in Dawson, 2019). This inevitably leads to data analysis which is descriptive and interpretive in its explanation of human words and actions (Hammersley, 1993; Shahriar, 2018).

A summary table of all of the data collection methods used in this research process is found on page 97.

#### 4.3.1 Talanoa-informed research methods

As a Palagi doctoral researcher embracing Smith's (2012) call for decolonised methodologies in Pacific research, I want to respect and draw on the appropriate methods in the most ethical way. Therefore, I use the term 'talanoa informed methods' to refer to the data collection tools which align with Indigenous ways of researching with Tokelau and Tongan communities. The following section outlines considerations I made regarding talanoa as part of the research process.

Collecting data in Tokelau and Tongan community contexts and with Pacific students, my intention at the outset was to use talanoa as a data collection tool. Talanoa is a widely used data collection tools in Tongan research (Fa'avae et al 2016; Vaioleti, 2006). The term talanoa is found in many Pacific languages and can mean to chat or tell stories in a purposeful way (Clery, 2014). Talanoa as a research method takes place within a specific context in response to the needs of those participating in the talanoa. Its function is to "strengthen relationships" (Clery, 2014, p. 108, Vaioleti, 2006) and subsequently foster the collection of rich data. This involves creating a space "for people to story their past, their issues, their realities, their aspirations ... to produce an authentic Pacific knowledge" in personal or group settings (Kalavite, 2014, p. 162; Vaioleti, 2006). In such a setting, talanoa is guided by "rules of relationship and kinship, sharing ways of knowing and knowledge, and worldviews" (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2014, p. 327). Talanoa can incorporate different levels of formality, and provide "opportunities, to probe, challenge, clarify, and re-align" disseminating "valid and up-to-the minute knowledge" (Vaioleti, 2006, pp. 25-6). The exact form of talanoa is governed by context. The relative level of skill and knowledge of the researcher as talanoa participant is part of the context.

Tongan-specific talanoa guidelines require researchers to respect "ulungaanga faka-Tonga (Tongan behavioural characteristics) by being faka'apa'apa (respectful, humble), anga lelei (tolerant, kind, calm), mateuteu (well-prepared, hard-working, culturally versed, professional), potu he anga (knowing what to do and doing it well), and 'ofa fe'unga (showing appropriate compassion ... love for the context" (Fa'avae et al, 2016, p. 142;

Vaiioleti, 2006). In this way, talanoa sessions are part of, or connected to, caring for vā. This is achieved through compassion and love for the context. Commitment is made to achieving improved outcomes at the end of the research process. I found Tongan scholarship and guidance surrounding talanoa (Fa'avae et al, 2016; Vaiioleti, 2006) helpful in the Tokelauan context.

There are aspects of talanoa present in the research conversations and interactions I have had over the past three years. For example, the conversations were purposeful and participant-led, held in the spirit of seeking positive outcomes for young people of Tongan and Tokelauan heritage. As I undertook the data collection process, conversing with community leaders and students, I was acutely aware and tried to enact and honour the Indigenous values associated with talanoa (see Fa'avae et al (2016) above). Introspection suggests that these values such as “‘ofa fe'unga ... compassion ... love for the context” have become increasingly deliberate through my ongoing involvement and commitment to Tokelauan and Tongan community language projects which happened after and as a result of recorded conversations in 2018.

However, I decided against naming these recorded conversations talanoa for the following reasons. Firstly, the data collection period took place relatively early on in my research journey between late March to November 2018. Although I had already established relationships with community leaders before audio recording and transcribing “official” conversations, my community connections and involvement have since significantly deepened. The more I participate in community meetings and events, the more I have discovered the spirit of talanoa and deepened my still partial appreciation of other Indigenous Tokelauan and Tongan concepts such as vā fealoaki and tauhi vā. Through experience I feel that the official audio-recorded research conversations held (in hindsight early on in the process) are only approaching talanoa. Although the official audio recorded conversations took place as part of something bigger, they were still done specifically for the purpose of my doctoral research, driven by own agenda.

Furthermore, Vaiioleti (2006) and other Indigenous Pacific scholars (Chu et al, 2013; Ponton, 2018) express a preference for talanoa and other Indigenous research models and methods research to be conducted by a person of the same culture, often in the Indigenous language of the focus group. The audio recorded research conversations in this research were all held in English. Perhaps, subsequent conversations have been more talanoa-like as they have

evolved from meetings and collaborative projects working toward the bigger picture of improving access to gagana Tokelau and lea faka-Tonga in secondary schools.

.

#### 4.3.2 Ethnographic Interviews and focus group discussions - structured conversations

With a talanoa informed lens and intent, I employed ethnographic interviews and focus group discussions or structured conversations from the five community leaders, two of the four supporting language teachers, and students from various school settings<sup>32</sup> to contribute data. Spradley (1979, p. 58) described ethnographic interviews as sharing “many features with the friendly conversation.” Conteh and Toyoshima (2005, p. 23) built on this description with the term “structured conversations” to describe the more informal nature some research conversations have when researchers and participants are comfortable and empowered to discuss the topic of research openly. Blommaert and Jie (2010) and Dawson (2019) who also described ethnographic interviews as conversations or “chats” (Dawson, 2019, p. 75).

A more informal, relational approach to ethnographic interviews and focus groups supports collaboration and attempts at an equal sense of power relations (Conteh, 2018, Cummins, 2000, Dawson, 2019) which can promote natural conversation rather than encourage people to “behave like interviewees” (Blommaert & Jie, 2010, p. 49). I audio recorded only one ethnographic interview and focus discussion to respect people’s time and commitments and to respond to geographical constraints related to some participants. However, in each case I felt that we were able to converse freely in a structured way as we already had strong connections built on shared professional and personal experiences, shared values and goals, and time spent together informally talking about language education and many other topics. I view the one audio-recorded structured conversation held with each community member and language teacher, as part of our ongoing conversations and actions we continue to have and take about languages, cultures, identities, and wellbeing in education.

Focus group conversations in this thesis refer especially to the conversations with students who ‘chatted’ with me in small groups rather than one-on-one conversations. During Pasifika Studies and the Tongan language cluster, participating in focus group conversations were part of learning activities on offer during the classes I attended. Students were able to choose

---

<sup>32</sup> Please refer to the tables in the previous sections about all participant and interview details such as interview type, duration and connection with participants.

whether they participated in these conversations. Furthermore, as the conversations took place during class time, participating teachers, teachers were present and actively joined in during some or all of the conversation. I did not have existing connections with most students prior to our recorded conversation. However, possibly my connection with their teachers enabled the students to position me as an ally. This made these conversations feel very relaxed and every day to me. I felt a sense of open and honest discussion, as there was much laughter, informal ways of speaking, and behaving in the throughout our interaction (see Chapter 5, sections 5.4.2 & 5.4.3).

Despite not being talanoa, the ethnographic interviews and focus group discussions were intended to be held in the spirit of talanoa, to created a respectful space “for people to story their past, their issues, their realities, their aspirations” (Kalavite, 2014, p. 162; Vaiioleti, 2006) in personal and group contexts enabled by deepening relationships. Matters pertaining to Pacific language maintenance in education were discussed and addressed with respect and compassion.

#### 4.3.3 Semi-structured Interviews

I apply the term ‘semi-structured interviews’ to data collection tools used to gather data from school principals, and two language teachers. In the case of the school leaders, I knew two participants very well, however the interviews still felt more formal as they took place in a more time constrained manner. Our audio recorded interviews were not part of an ongoing conversation in the same way as the ethnographic ‘structured conversations.’ Similarly, although I knew one of the language teachers well, due to geographical and time constraints, we conducted the interview via email conversation in which I sent some open-ended questions, and the teacher wrote a written response. This rendered the interview less ethnographic in nature. In the case of all of the school leaders and teachers, even when we did not have existing connections, I felt that we were able to have open and productive conversations based on our shared experience and knowledge of working in Aotearoa secondary schools.

With all these research conversations (broadly termed interviews here), my approach to the ‘hows’ of the interview (Talmy & Richards, 2011) was similar. All were conducted in the place and time of choice of the participant. I began with open questions or prompts but also

left room for participants to discuss experiences and beliefs which arose. I attempted to remain flexible and enabling the explorative nature of the research to take its course (Corbin & Morse, 2003; Dawson, 2019; Heller et al, 2018). I tried to listen well and respectfully. Acknowledging that interviews are co-constructed and discursive (Blommaert & Jie, 2010, Menard-Warwick, 2014; Talmy & Richards, 2011) by nature, I also actively participated.

Following qualitative data transcription processes in applied linguistics outlined by Mackay and Gass (2005), all adult participants were given the opportunity to review and comment on the transcripts of the interviews to support the trustworthiness of the data. As all student participants lived in a different city from me and I was not in regular contact with students, students did not review transcripts as it was too difficult to support ethical procedures pertaining to privacy. As Anita and Maria participated in the student focus group conversations with students during class, transcripts of these conversations were given to these teachers to review. With the exception of all five community members (who enjoyed and were moved by reading the transcripts, passing on helpful feedback), Anita (a language teacher), and Principal 4, the participants chose not to take up the opportunity to comment on the transcript.

#### 4.3.4 Ethnographic participant observations

Conteh (2018, p. 30) writes that “observation forms an essential part of most research projects” and that “watching what is going on underpins research in many fields.” Researchers can observe in many ways, structured or unstructured. However, ethnographic approaches require an open, non-structured approach to observation “to capture the complexity of what is happening and to contribute to the quest of understanding all the different perspectives at play” (Alasuutari, 1995; Conteh, 2018, p. 30). This inclusive approach is helpful when edgewalking. Key to reliably using observation data is my positioning and reflexivity of myself as researcher, teacher, and everything else I bring to the situation, and how my presence interplays with the context.

I broadly describe my observations as informal and participant observations (Conteh, 2018; Dawson, 2019; Scollon, 1998). I see the lead up to my decision in undertaking PhD research as the beginning of my informal participant observations. As a teacher, I spent much time observing and experiencing how hard it was for my students to gain access to Pacific

language education and how meaningful access to language education at school could be when it happened. Since beginning the doctoral research project, I continue to spend much time in the Tokelauan and Tongan communities interacting with people at meetings, advocacy sessions with MPs, cultural events, information evenings, and even planning teaching and marking. I also attend Pacific language and educational events such as an open discussion held at MFAT<sup>33</sup> about what it meant to be part of the New Zealand Realm for people of Cook Islands, Niuean, and Tokelauan heritage living in Aotearoa and MoE open conversations about the future of Pacific Education (held during 2018-2019). I was an informal participant so that my participatory role was not prescribed, but I continue to be regularly and actively involved in acts such as teaching, marking and advocacy. However, I am also an observer as I am not Tokelauan or Tongan, and although I feel warmly welcomed in the community, it is the act of research which has drawn me initially to establish contact.

The strong relationships which have evolved from this research resonate with Dawson (2019, p. 77), who used the term “deep hanging out” to capture the sense of researchers and participants overlapping as friends, underlining the research experience as an “ongoing social experience” (Garner et al, 2006). This is my way of understanding how I might put “a‘ano (flesh) on the bones of personhood in a way that recognises and demands respect, attentiveness and responsiveness to our commitments to each other in the humanity of relationships” Anae (2016, p. 118). This deep hanging out from the research has enhanced my social relationships and community engagement so that they will continue once the research part has finished, enabling me to stay committed to my values of social justice in education. It is part of my commitment to the edgewalk.

I undertook two more formal participant classroom observations, one at the Tongan Language Cluster, and one in the Pasifika Studies class at Riverview High in August 2018. In addition, I observed the multicultural celebration at Riverview High in March 2018. In these instances, I was more of an ‘observer as participant.’ However, in the classroom I still participated in the sense that the two teachers drew on my own teaching experience, by asking me to give advice to both students and teachers on NCEA assessment skills for Pacific languages. In this way, my professional knowledge was my contribution to Pacific language contexts.

---

<sup>33</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

#### 4.3.5 Fieldnotes and other relevant data

During the formal data collection period, I regularly took fieldnotes to capture what I observed, my impressions and feelings after certain situations, advice from people, noting down points of interest that arose for further exploration and connections between my observations and what different people had said. These fieldnotes helped me to begin to make sense of the data, my positionality and reflexivity, and eventually my analysis (Conteh, 2018). As many ethnographers have pointed out, there is no one way of taking or using fieldnotes. However, they are most useful in supporting formal data collection (Blommaert & Jie, 2010; Conteh, 2018; Copeland & Creese, 2015; Seals, 2013).

In addition, I collected many documents given to me throughout the duration of the data collection period as well as in my professional roles as a teacher and teacher educator. These include documents such as the Tokelauan community strategic plan, classroom materials used in the community gagana Tokelau classes, and presentations from colleagues given to the MoE advocating for more access to Pacific language education within NCEA. Close reading and interaction with these materials and with people by whom they were generated informed my data collection and analysis as well.

#### 4.3.6 Transcription of audio recordings

By transcribing the audio recorded structured conversations and semi-structured interviews I was able to “come to grips with what actually went on” and deepened my knowledge of the data (Heller et al, 2018). In making initial raw transcriptions, I was then able to look for “rich points” (Agar, 2006; Conteh, 2018, p. 18) which highlight emerging themes and points of further exploration. I acknowledge that I am engaging in a theoretical and political process in terms of choosing the evidence I present to substantiate and make claims (Buchholz, 2000; Ochs, 1979). However, in edgewalking research, this is the role of the researcher, their contribution - a gift of skill and time to reciprocate the gift of knowledge from the community. As my transcriptions are merely a representation of the actual interaction (Ochs, 1979), I unavoidably bring my own biases which influence the thematic focus and means of presentation (Buchholz, 2000; Dawson, 2019; Ochs, 1979). This once again strengthens the argument for ongoing researcher reflexivity.



As my analysis of the data is chiefly theme-based, looking at the messages being conveyed, rather than discursive practices, I have chosen to follow the transcription conventions of sociolinguistic studies with a similar thematic analytical approach (Menard-Warwick, 2014; Seals, 2019). Transcription achieved in this way, aims to maintain a cohesive narrative, with the focus on the story being told rather than the minute detail of how it is told (e.g. intonation, length of pauses, etc). This is consistent with trying to tell a community story rather than a seemingly objective case. Therefore, the transcription conventions I use are those explained by Menard-Warwick, 2014, p. 201 (Appendix C). These transcription conventions are simplified, generally leaving out “backchanneling, false starts and repetitions” so as not to distract from the stories being told (Menard-Warwick, 2014, p. 201; Seals, 2019, p. 40). I have kept line numbers in order to more easily reference speaker discourse. That said, in spite of the thematic focus of the analysis, Menard-Warwick, (2014, p. 3) reminds us that thematic analysis should keep in mind that “stories (are) co-constructed ... discursive constructions that are situated in a specific place in history.”

#### 4.3.7 A ‘bricolage’ approach to methods

Undertaking research with vā-inspired, critical ethnographic sociolinguistic approaches was a complex process that involved multiple stakeholders and components. The multiple groups of people and methods contributing to this project reflect the many worlds and perspectives of the various stakeholders involved in Pacific language education. This ‘bricolage’ approach therefore aims to capture the complexity of the different issues by adding layers of depth and perspective to the data. The data comprised eight hours and ten minutes of audio recorded data, nine hours of official observation data, and many hours spent in schools and communities working together on language related projects such as Tokelau language school NCEA research projects and language week celebrations. Figure 4 below summarises all data collection methods, the data collection time frame, and amount of data. These data contribute to the three following chapters which present findings.

Figure 4 . Summary of data collection

<b>Data collection method</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Amount of audio recorded data/official observation data</b>
-interviews with	-June - November	-Total = 2 hours 40

community members	2018	minutes
-focus groups with students	-August - November 2018	-Total =2 hours
-interviews with facilitating teachers	-March - November 2018	-Total =1 hour 50 minutes
-interviews with principals	-February - November 2018	-Total =1 hour 40 minutes
-participant observations in school settings	-March 2018 -August 2018	-High School 1 multicultural celebration - 4 hours -Pasifika Studies - 2 hours -Tongan language cluster - 3 hours (Total=9 hours)
-participant observations in community	-March 2018 - present	
-community involvement	-September 2018 - present	-Many hours from which field notes and reflections were made

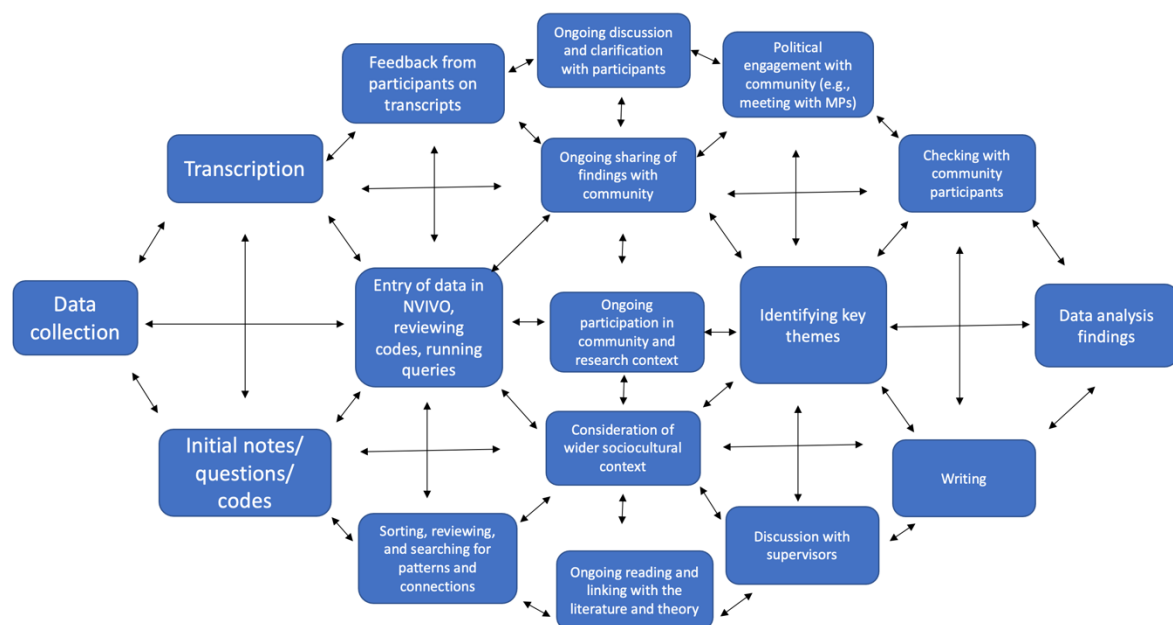
#### 4.4 - Data analysis

Undertaking the data analysis, I followed what Heller et al (2018, p. 103) describe as a rhizomic, recursive process. Through this process, I mapped, categorised, traced, and connected the data in iterations to gradually make sense of the story being told within the data set. As part of the analysis, I used NVIVO 12 software to manage the coding systems in the data. By sorting, reviewing and further refining patterns and connections emerging in the data, “rich points” or themes (Conteh, 2018) and events of significance were identified and analysed, using interactional sociolinguistics (IS) with a critical lens. I have chosen the IS approach to discourse analysis as it allows the researcher to incorporate background and relevant knowledge to the discourse being analysed (rather than only analysing what is transcribed). Applying a critical lens to the IS approach allows for consideration of the wider sociocultural context of the interaction, community, and institutional knowledge the researcher brings whilst supporting “politically involved research” and analysis seeking to “have an effect on social practice and social relationships” (Stubbe et al, 2013, p. 147).

A critical IS approach to analysis allows specific layers of attention to be given to interactional data, the wider sociocultural context, and issues of power. Therefore, this analytical framework fits with the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this

research, enabling the analysis to continue as part of the ongoing ethical and political conversation (Heller et al, 2018). I demonstrate my ethical commitment to the analysis in my consideration of “fair and accurate use of data” (Heller et al, 2018, p.120) and by seeking respondent validation to strengthen the analysis. I achieved this by inviting community and teacher participants to contribute to the analysis. Ongoing conversations take place with participants as findings have been shared with those who have done similar work in the past, and through conversations with future stakeholder readers such as teachers, community leaders, and policy makers. In this way I have endeavoured to make the analysis and findings explicit and traceable (Heller et al, 2018). Figure 5 below depicts the data analysis process described in this process.

Figure 5. A visual representation of the data analysis process



## 4.5 - Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 has outlined the practicalities and details of the research design, data collection and analysis. In addition, participants, their communities and relevant, and connections were introduced. The following Chapter presents findings to RQ1.

## Chapter 5 - Findings: Connections between language, culture, identity and wellbeing

### 5.1 - Introduction

The overarching aims of this thesis are to explore:

- why continued access to Pacific languages (specifically gagana Tokelau and lea faka-Tonga) in mainstream education matters for all stakeholders, and
- how mainstream secondary schools can provide continued access to language education in schools where immersion or bilingual education are not currently available

To empirically explore these aims, findings presented in this chapter relate to Research Question One:

*How do concepts of language, culture, identity, and wellbeing emerge in speakers' discourse and experience?*

This question aims to give all stakeholders some 'substance' behind the concept of wellbeing which is regularly used in education and policy, but with little attention to concrete understanding of what wellbeing looks like and why it is important in specific Aotearoa-Tokelauan and Tongan contexts. To answer this question, I draw on the highly complex connections between language, culture, identity, and wellbeing which emerged from community and student narratives. These connections are discussed in relation to five salient themes or "rich points" from the data (Conteh, 2018) illustrating how language, culture, identity, and wellbeing connect to:

1. Confidence and self-esteem
2. Language and Indigenous understandings of identity and wellbeing
3. Authentic cultural identity
4. Transgenerational language acquisition
5. Multilingualism as the norm in Pacific communities

In this Chapter, I present each theme with relevant data analysed in relation to supporting literature and theory (social justice, identity, and edgeworking), to illustrate how language

and culture are interwoven with negotiation of identity and wellbeing in the Tokelau and Tongan contexts explored in this thesis<sup>34</sup>.

Empirical investigation of speakers' experiences and discourse in this chapter is primarily based on interview data sets transcribed from the Tokelau Community (Kaimakoi, Peta, Pulēleti) and the Tongan Church Community (Maia), and the Tongan language cluster (Longo). These five people were interviewed separately. Some are related or friends, and others do not know each other. All five community members are connected through: experiences of growing up in and/or being part of Tokelauan or Tongan Aotearoa-based communities, their active membership and participation in these communities, and passion for young Aotearoa-born people of Tokelauan or Tongan heritage to grow up being strong in their languages, cultures, and identities. Experiences of and beliefs about language, culture, identity, and wellbeing will be discussed in detail in this chapter.

In addition, supporting focus group discussions data with secondary school students from the Tongan language cluster and Tongan and Samoan students from Pasifika Studies (Riverview High) are integrated into the analysis to highlight shared and contrasting experiences within the broader picture. These focus group discussions were held on a Thursday morning during a timetabled Pasifika studies class and on a Friday evening after school in the Tongan language cluster in August 2018. Students' voices presented in this chapter capture a 'spread' of what the students presented to me and provide an overarching picture of student experience and beliefs pertaining to language, culture, identity, and wellbeing.

Where relevant, I provide additional detail surrounding the participants and their experiences before presenting data sets and analysis. Different data sets used (talanoa-informed interview and focus group discussions, classroom and participant observations) will be indicated throughout the chapter.

## 5.2 - Theme 1: Confidence and self-esteem

Speaker experiences of language, culture, and identity contribute to enhancement or hinderance of confidence and self-esteem. To illustrate this first theme, I explore narratives

---

<sup>34</sup> In all three findings chapters, participant narratives are presented with line numbers as per sociolinguistic conventions to help locate specific statements within an excerpt. All participant narratives and quotes are presented in italics to differentiate participant voices from supporting quotes from the literature.

from Kaimakoi, Longo, and Peta; discussions of confidence and self-esteem emerged strongly from all three participants in interview data. This theme continues in our ongoing conversations.

### 5.2.1 Kaimakoi

Kaimakoi is a first-generation Aotearoa-born Tokelauan-Tongan. She was brought up and still lives in an intergenerational environment surrounded by extended family. Kaimakoi identifies as a mother, daughter, professional woman, active member of Tokelauan and Tongan communities of Aotearoa. Professionally, she works in roles which have enabled her to actively advocate and create opportunities for gagana Tokelau and lea faka-Tonga in wider public domains. In Excerpt 5.1, Kaimakoi explains her upbringing in an intergenerational family, immersed in both Tokelauan and Tongan language and culture, and links this linguistic and cultural environment of her upbringing with her ability to confidently establish friendships and community relationships.

#### Excerpt 5.1

(00:52)

- 1     **Kaimakoi:** *I think they were my first two languages from birth, so the language has*  
2     *always been spoken in our home, [...] I lived in an extended family, intergenerational*  
3     *home with grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins from birth, [...] my parents took on*  
4     *the responsibilities for the extended family and others that may have needed a place*  
5     *to stay [...] I guess that the seeds were [...] sown then. So, the language has always*  
6     *been around where I was brought up. [...] I think those early years of having the*  
7     *language, being a part of my upbringing, [...] whilst I may not have been a fluent*  
8     *speaker growing up, once I went to university my circle of friends were Tongan. [...]*  
9     *That's allowed me to be immersed in the language and [have] the confidence to speak*  
10    *it. I've always understood it, but you know at home it is always aunts, uncles and*  
11    *grandparents on both sides, so very lucky to have been exposed to that. [...] Growing*  
12    *up I've been a part of Tokelauan Sunday schools [...], so [...] when I hit college, I've*  
13    *been involved with Pacific groups and they were largely Tokelauan. My peer groups*  
14    *were Tokelauan, but across Pacific so you get a sense of the language and the culture*  
15    *still being a part of that. But the ability to really speak [...], perhaps in my adulthood*  
16    *with university, as I said all of my friends were Tongan but when I left university, I*  
17    *got involved with Tokelau community work perse. [...] that allowed me to have the*

18     *confidence to speak Tokelau or to conquer my fear of not getting it right. I [...] had*  
 19     *the privileged life of being immersed in both languages but also participating in*  
 20     *activities, events and family responsibilities in a very proactive way. [...] That further*  
 21     *[...] sort of feeds that aspect of your identity and now I'm doing the same with my*  
 22     *daughters.*  
 (03:26)

Kaimakoi describes gagana Tokelau and lea faka-Tonga as what she has known “*from birth*” and as the languages which have “*always been around*” (lines 1, 5-6). Kaimakoi has used both languages throughout her life to communicate and connect with her extended family. During her childhood, Kaimakoi did not consider herself as a “*fluent speaker*” (lines 7-8) of gagana Tokelau or lea faka-Tonga. In bilingual terminology, a fluent speaker is often interpreted as what Li (2000, p. 6) terms a “maximal bilingual - someone with near native control of two [or more] languages.” This links to the traditional view of bilingualism and the commonly held belief by many that bilinguals are “two monolinguals in one person” (García & Li, 2014) - a view disputed by sociolinguists (see Chapters 2 and 7). Seen through Li’s (2000) definitions of bilingualism, Kaimakoi’s immersion and exposure to both languages and cultures in the home supported early bilingualism. This provides Kaimakoi with foundational knowledge of both heritage languages. This foundation supported Kaimakoi to have the confidence to use her spoken lea faka-Tonga more as she formed a Tongan “*circle of friends*” (line 8) at university. She reiterates how her childhood linguistic and cultural immersion supported her socially, adding how this enabled her to form friendships with peers at “*college*” with others who had also grown up in Tokelauan or Tongan households.

Kaimakoi describes how a shared “*sense of the language and culture*” provided common ground for making friends from “*across [the] Pacific*.” On leaving university, Kaimakoi began taking on Tokelau community work and responsibilities. This narrative provides an example of Norton’s (2013) theory of how language connects with negotiation of identity. Gagana Tokelau and lea faka-Tonga, Kaimakoi’s home languages, support her to make friends with other students from similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds during university. Here language has helped her to discover and negotiated her “relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space” (Norton, 2013, p. 45). As Kaimakoi became more involved with Tokelau community work, she was able to “*conquer my fear in not getting it right*” (line 18) and speak gagana Tokelau with more confidence. In discussing

her “*fear*” of not “*getting it right*” we catch a glimpse of how language and identity are also a site of struggle (Norton, 2013). Here the struggle may be observable as a reaction to linguistic purism, an ideology whereby speakers focus on using the pure, perfect, singular version of a language, often, understandably in response to repression of language and language loss through symbolic domination and colonisation (see Chapter 2, pp. 39-40).

Kaimakoi had the confidence and agency to move beyond her fear of making mistakes and she was able to draw on her language repertoire to build the confidence in speaking gagana Tokelau and lea faka-Tonga in public and social settings. Perhaps this agency and confidence enabled Kaimakoi to understand how ability to speak these languages might relate to identity possibilities for the future (Norton, 2013). However, the feeling of inadequacy or fear of not “*getting it right*” in regard to heritage language use emerges often throughout the data and impacts differently on each person depending on context. I highlight this both in the discourse of other participants here and also in the discussion chapter with regard to the complex nature of multilingualism and what this means for education.

Though not discussed in detail, later on in her narrative, Kaimakoi briefly alludes to how she has always felt Tokelauan-Tongan “*as opposed to being a New Zealander.*” However, as an adult she understands she cannot “*deny my New Zealand experience*” and therefore she wants to honour this to be part of her identity by connecting with Te Ao Māori and learning te reo Māori. In discussing her active decision to learn more te reo Māori, Kaimakoi may be showing an awareness of how important language is in negotiating and cultural identity. Norton’s (2013) theory of identity shows how language plays a key role in negotiating multiple and changing sites of identity for Kaimakoi over time. Now, as an adult who does feel confident in her cultural identity as an Aotearoa-born Tokelau-Tongan, Kaimakoi is passing on what she has learned to her daughters (lines 21-2).

In the following excerpt, Kaimakoi explicitly articulates how she attributes her language, culture, and identity to her confidence and self-esteem.

Excerpt 5.2

(11:40)

- 1     **Kaimakoi:** *your language, culture and identity is very much at the heart and*
- 2     *the essence of your self-esteem, your confidence and how you present yourself to the*



3      *world. I think for me and my experience, my sense of place, internally myself and in*  
 4      *terms of my place in my family, or in my workplace or in the community is absolutely*  
 5      *tied to that connection. I have an absolute sense of belonging and connectedness to*  
 6      *both my Tongan and Tokelauan worlds. I can walk in many worlds confidently*  
 7      *because those two worlds have been my foundation. [...] it doesn't matter where I*  
 8      *walk, the Tongan and Tokelauan world view, as well as my New Zealand Aotearoa*  
 9      *sort of experience*  
 (12:34)

Kaimakoi describes language, culture, and identity as being “*very much at the heart and the essence of your self-esteem, [...] confidence, [...] how you present yourself to the world*” (lines 1-2). She explicitly attributes her ability to walk confidently in multiple worlds as a result of her strong foundation in her Tokelauan and Tongan language, culture, and identity (lines 6-7). Describing her experience of language, cultural identity, and confidence, Kaimakoi uses absolute terms such as her “*sense of place*” being “*absolutely tied to that connection*” and that this sense is “*an absolute sense of belonging and connectedness*” (line 5). Her use of absolute terms implies she has already given this issue consideration and is very sure of her comment. She does not separate her individual self from her place in her family, workplace, or community as they are all “*tied to that connection*” (line 5). Her relational identity which stems from the foundations laid in her Tokelauan and Tongan upbringing relates to the pan-Pacific Indigenous relational worldview that we and the world are all connected (Hereniko, 2018). This is reinforced and discussed in relation with how Kaimakoi is able to conduct herself with confidence in accordance with her worldview in the workplace. This is illustrated in Excerpts 5.3 and 5.4.

Excerpt 5.3  
 (17:44)

1      **Kaimakoi:** *In terms of professional [...] and your personal values [...] [they] are one*  
 2      *and the same, [...] in my professional career, my Tongan-Tokelauan values and*  
 3      *worldview is a part of what my professional world view is as well [...] there is no*  
 4      *differentiation, being a public servant and my professional outlook on life is very*  
 5      *much a reflection of [...] Tongan and Tokelauan values as well.*  
 (18:11)

Kaimakoi refers to how her professional and personal values reflecting Tongan and Tokelauan values, being “*one and the same*” (lines 1-2). As Kaimakoi’s social and overall confidence is strengthened by her linguistic and cultural identity and her worldview and values shaped by her upbringing are part of her professional identity as a public servant. Kaimakoi is able to use her confidence, cultural capital, and sense of agency gained from a strong sense of identity to actively advocate for Tokelauan and Tongan language, culture, and wellbeing in several ways professionally. She was a key actor in establishing the Pacific language weeks designed as a framework for communities to take action towards language awareness and revitalisation. Professionally she continues to be an active spokesperson fronting policy, decision making, and raising awareness surrounding Pacific languages and cultures within the Public sector. Kaimakoi has been involved with projects to get children’s literature published in gagana Tokelau and actively supports ongoing events in numerous Tokelau community settings.

In Excerpt 5.4, Kaimakoi reiterates and further discusses how experience of language, culture, and identity have enhanced social, workplace, and overall confidence in relation to herself and other people.

Excerpt 5.4  
(13:39)

1     **Kaimakoi:** *being Tongan-Tokelauan, New Zealand-born, because you claim that as*  
2     *part of an intimate part of who you are, then you can resonate that in the world [...]*  
3     *I’ve seen how family members, [...] circle of friends, who do not know heritage,*  
4     *whether that is Samoan, Tongan, there is often something missing and a desire to*  
5     *connect with what that is for them, [...] I think it is connected to your self-esteem and*  
6     *confidence. I also definitely believe it gives you a cutting [...]or competitive edge in*  
7     *the world in terms of your profession or in the workplace, [...] I think the last 20*  
8     *years is probably a testament to that [...] being here at [name of workplace], there is*  
9     *a direct link [...], where I think my career pathway, and [how] it just aligns to what I*  
10    *think my purpose in life is. It is almost an alignment of your passion and your soul’s*  
11    *purpose,[...]intimately tied to my Tongan and my Tokelauan heritage.*  
(14:59)

Kaimakoi states how claiming her cultural identity as an “*intimate part*” of who she is enables her to “*resonate that in the world*” (line 2). Kaimakoi recognises that a strong sense of linguistic and cultural identity can give you “*a cutting [...] or competitive edge in the world in terms of your profession or in the workplace*” and discusses her professional experience as an example of this cutting edge. Kaimakoi has worked in the public service for “*the last 20 years*” and is now one of the few people of Tokelauan heritage in highly ranked positions in the public service. She attributes her successful career in the public service with connection to her Tokelauan and Tongan heritage, describing her career pathway, life and soul’s purpose, and passion as all one and the same. This connection again links back to the pan-Pacific Indigenous relational worldview discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 and which link to Kaimakoi’s narrative in Excerpt 5.3.

In contrast to Kaimakoi’s sense of confidence, Kaimakoi mentions later she has observed that her family and friends “*who do not know heritage*” appear to have “*something missing*” and “*a desire to connect with what is for them.*” Kaimakoi does not expand anymore on what not knowing heritage might mean or do, however, this is a theme that is picked up by Longo, Peta, and students from Pasifika studies and the Tongan language cluster and explored in the sections to follow.

Linking Kaimakoi’s narratives to Pacific theory of identity negotiation (see Chapter 3, pp. 65-6), demonstrates how multiple *vā* exist and link different worlds and relationships, for example *vā* within and between families, the workplace, one’s culture(s) and language(s). Further connecting the concept of *vā* with edgewalking and translanguaging theories (see Chapter 3, p. 71). Kaimakoi’s experience illustrates the ongoing edgewalk being negotiated across different cultural and physical boundaries. Her seeming awareness of how language, culture and identity link appear to give her strength or “*cutting edge*” and open up new possibilities, for example in the community and in the workplace. One gets the sense Kaimakoi has found a third space in which her languages and cultural knowledge can exist (Soja, 1996). This is also a translanguaging space (Li, 2018). This translanguaging third space is an extremely open social space which moves beyond going between different languages and cultures. It allows for language users “to bring together different dimensions of their personal history, experience, and environment; their attitude, belief and ideology; their cognitive and physical capacity, into one coordinated and meaningful performance” (Li, 2011, p. 1223, Li, 2018). Such a space gives confidence by empowering multilingual

creativity and critical exchange creating transformative possibilities which have previously been hindered due to linguistically and culturally defined borders (Li, 2018; Soja, 1996). The linking of Pacific, edgewalking, translanguaging, and third space theories has implications for culturally sustaining pedagogy which will be discussed further in Chapter 8.

In analysing Kaimakoi's experience and discourse in the four excerpts presented, it is clear that Kaimakoi attributes her strong sense of Aotearoa-born Tokelauan-Tongan identity (expressed through culture and language) to her sense of confidence and self-esteem. In turn, her confidence and self-esteem strengthen her wellbeing, which empowers her to make positive contribution within and across her family, community, and professional life. In addition, her narrative provides examples of both Indigenous Pacific and post-structural theories of identity in action.

I now explore how concepts of language, culture, identity, and wellbeing emerge in Longo's experiences and discourse.

### 5.2.2 Longo

Longo is Tongan-born and migrated with her family to Aotearoa at age eight. As an adult she has lived in both Aotearoa and Australia. She identifies as a mother, a professional woman, a teacher of lea faka-Tonga, and as an active member of a Tongan church community where she teaches in Sunday school.

In Excerpts 5.5 and 5.6, Longo discusses how her confidence as a bilingual speaker of lea faka-Tonga and English reinforces her investment in, ability, and enjoyment for professional and community work and how this bilingualism has increased the academic and social confidence of herself and her children. These narratives also illustrate how Longo views being able to speak lea faka-Tonga as an integral part of Tongan cultural identity and how a sense of Tongan identity may or may not contribute to confidence and wellbeing.

#### Excerpt 5.5

(00:40)

- 1       **Longo:** *I thoroughly enjoy my teaching the kids [...]because [...]I know the language*
- 2       *very well, the culture, and [...] I am happy to share what I know with the children*

3      *[...]it is like passing on what I know to them and hopefully they will take that with*  
 4      *them, and [...] they continue to teach others. The other side is I'm actually very [sad]*  
 5      *to see the level of understanding of the language, [...] especially when ... both*  
 6      *parents are Tongan, they are born here, but very little [...] Tongan maintained at*  
 7      *home, [...] I feel saddened that they are not maintaining the language at home*  
 8      *because that is part of their identity. [...] I can tell how upset they are [...] when you*  
 9      *say their answer was "I don't want to seem like plastic", now I understand what they*  
 10     *mean, [...] it is especially when we have a gathering, [...] people are talking in*  
 11     *Tongan and children are the same age as they are, they are sitting there having no*  
 12     *idea what they are talking about [...]it is actually sad for them you can tell with the*  
 13     *expression, of their facial expression, they are ashamed that they do [...] know very*  
 14     *little of the Tongan.*  
 (02:59)

Here, Longo describes why she enjoys teaching lea-faka Tonga in Aotearoa, both in the secondary school setting with the Tongan language cluster, and at Sunday school. Her enjoyment of teaching language and culture comes from her confidence in knowing the language and culture well and a sense of purpose in being able to “*share*” Tongan language and culture with the children (lines 1-2). She hopes that “*they will take that with them, and ...continue to teach others*” and presumably enjoy a similar sense of confidence that Longo has gained from knowing the language and culture “*very very well.*” Longo, explicitly states she views language as “*part of [...] identity*” (lines 7-8). This motivates her to teach Tongan to help children learn or maintain their language, as she notices there are many Tongan children unable to understand Tongan and participate in community gatherings. As Longo mentioned later in the conversation, she is concerned that the language and culture “*will be lost.*”

In lines 8-13, Longo refers to a conversation we had had earlier in the evening about how the Tongan students called each other “*plastic*” if they were not able to speak Tongan and participate knowledgeably in Tongan cultural life. Longo links this conversation with her observation of young Tongan people seeming “*sad*” and “*ashamed*” at Tongan community gatherings, when they are “*sitting there having no idea what they are talking about*” (lines 10-13 ). In discussing shame or sadness around not being able to speak or understand one’s heritage, Longo’s experience and discourse is similar to Kaimakoi’s experience when

Kaimakoi comments, “*I’ve seen family members ... friends, who do not know heritage, whether that is Samoan, Tongan, there is often something missing and a desire to connect.*” As we saw earlier in Kaimakoi’s narrative (Excerpt 5.4, p. 106), sadness and shame linked to language shift is continual theme throughout interview and focus group data in this study. This can be related to the impact of symbolic domination experienced through language repression from hegemonic forces such as colonialism and globalisation leading many families to English only assimilation (Kramsch, 2020; Major, 2018; Parsons, 2020).

In Extract 5.6 below, Longo contrasts this sense of sadness and shame she has observed amongst those who cannot communicate in Tongan, with what she describes earlier in the conversation as the “*luxury*” her children benefit from being confident bilingual Tongan-English speakers.

#### Excerpt 5.6

(07:27)

- 1       **Longo:** *the good thing about having two languages is how it strengthened their*
- 2       *academic side [...] you can use what you learn, because it is not much different*
- 3       *between the two, but you can use the skills and the knowledge that you have from the*
- 4       *Tongan as well as the English society, so once they blend in together and connect,*
- 5       *you can see it makes sense, [...] see more perspective.*

(08:10)

This excerpt shows how Longo perceives academic advantage of two languages from her experience. She has observed that her children have had their academic ability strengthened because they can transfer “*skills and [...] knowledge*” they have from being able to walk confidently in both the Tongan and mainstream English-speaking worlds. By having this bilingual and bicultural capability they can “*connect*” and have doors opened by seeing “*more perspective*” (line 5). Prior to this excerpt Longo discusses emotional benefits of her children being bilingual as they can communicate with family in Tonga, children who arrive in Aotearoa from Tonga who are not yet able to speak English, and older people in the community, as well as their English-speaking family and friends. Longo discusses later in the conversation that this bilingual ability makes her children “*linked [...] connect better.*”

For Longo and her daughter, bilingual, cultural and social capital enable them to actively participate and contribute positively to community life. Later in the interview, Longo describes how she and her daughter used their ability to move between two worlds to support community health and wellbeing. Longo is acutely aware of the health of her community and concerned about “*seeing a lot of our people fading away at an early age [...] with a lot of different [...] diseases.*” She is involved in various community projects which promote healthy lives. Longo encouraged her daughter to present her school research project looking at the importance of fibre in the diet and its health benefits to the community. According to Longo, because this information was presented confidently in Tongan, by a young person from within the community, both young and older generations were very open and positive to learning more about healthy lifestyles. Describing the presentation Longo said:

*when she did her presentation that day, man you should have seen the response from our children and the elderlies, so it is just a type of self-awareness [...] so you take it back to your community and that is the whole purpose of [being bilingual]*

For Longo, this reinforced the importance and power of developing multilingual confidence for young people as her daughter was able to take knowledge she gained from her English-speaking world and transfer it meaningfully into the Tongan context to benefit herself and her community. Longo described this as follows:

Longo’s experience illustrates again how Tongan-English bilingualism and sense of cultural identity attached to bilingualism for adults and children living and growing up in Aotearoa confidence and self-esteem. In Longo’s case, the confidence and self-esteem she gained from being strong in her linguistic and cultural identities supports her own wellbeing by giving her a sense of purpose in teaching young people Tongan language and culture. For her children being bilingual supports their academic and social confidence. In return, this confidence, stemming from bilingual ability, empowers Longo and her daughter to look after community wellbeing. They do this by teaching language and culture in the church setting and sharing health knowledge gained through school projects.

As we heard from Longo and Kaimakoi, multilingualism can enhance confidence and self-esteem confidence, but it can also be a source of shame and sadness. We now turn to Peta who experiences both confidence and shame in connection to her multilingualism.

### 5.2.3 Peta

Peta is a first-generation Aotearoa-born Tokelauan. She is a daughter, wife, parent, teacher, and active member of a Tokelau community which was established by her parents and Tokelauans from the same atoll. Peta is part of the leadership team in her community, a team that works tirelessly to support the overall wellbeing (language, education, culture, health) of all community members.

In Peta's discourse and experiences of language, culture, identity, and wellbeing illustrate the complex, multiple relationships between language and culture in construction of identity and how this ongoing site of struggle can be tied to confidence and self-esteem.

#### Excerpt 5.7

(00:57)

- 1      **Peta:** *I didn't have any English until I was five, [...] Tokelau is supposed to be my*
- 2      *first language, but I never spoke it again until I had gone through college when I took*
- 3      *Māori language [...] that is when I began to think Tokelau again. When I say I didn't*
- 4      *use it again, I heard my parents speak it all the time, when I went to the community I*
- 5      *could talk, but it wasn't my language of choice, I just spoke English all the time [...] I*
- 6      *think back in those days, we were discouraged from speaking Tokelau because it*
- 7      *would hinder our education. I think I was at the tail end of that kind of thinking. [...]*
- 8      *I think there was a lot of shame in being a Pacific Islander when I was growing up.*
- 9      *[...] you wanted to discard anything that would remind you of who you were [...]*
- 10     *because I think growing up in New Zealand you really wanted to fit in. So, from a*
- 11     *New Zealand-born perspective, now as an adult, I'm trying to reclaim it back, I'm*
- 12     *trying to speak it, I'm not doing a good job, but I married a Tokelau, which makes it*
- 13     *easier, because we are trying to talk a bit more, than if I had married another culture*
- 14     *[...] I try to speak in Tokelau to my children [...] they are really good, they*
- 15     *understand a lot of it but they can't respond back.*

(02:27)

Throughout Peta's narrative, we see the role of language in reinforcing identity negotiation as a site of struggle (Norton, 2013). This is evidenced in Peta's description of feeling a sense of



shame and lacking in confidence. Peta describes how gagana Tokelau was the only language she knew before school. gagana Tokelau was spoken by her family and community members, a community started by her parents and other families who were all migrants to Aotearoa in the 1960s and 70s. As Peta describes, her pre-school language practices change from only speaking gagana Tokelau, to mainly communicating in English once she began school (lines 1-7). She explains that this change occurred because she was discouraged from speaking her own language, presumably by teachers at school, and that because of the “*shame in being a Pacific Islander*” she wanted to use English to “*fit in.*”

Peta is the only community participant to mention a sense of “*shame*” in being heard speaking a Pacific language growing up (lines 7-10). Although not mentioned here by other adult participants, feeling a sense of shame is a common reaction towards speaking their home language for children of migrants growing up in multicultural societies as children are desperate to fit in and there is pressure from school and the dominant culture to assimilate discussed in Chapter 2. Peta’s experience connects with literature surrounding subtractive views of bilingualism in Pacific or minority communities and how this view contributes to language shift (Bell et al, 2005; Fishman, 2001; Franken et al, 2008; May, 2014). Further to this, through Peta’s narrative we can see how perceptions about whether or not one can or cannot speak a language however, connects to confidence or lack of confidence, again highlighting the huge role language plays in the site of struggle in the process of negotiating identity (Norton, 2013). From Peta’s narrative of negotiating her Tokelau-Aotearoa identity we can see how Menard-Warwick’s (2014, pp. 1-2) metaphor of ‘discursive faultlines,’ describing the tensions, stresses, and collisions which occur between discourses and multiple identities can interrupt or ignite the site of struggle at any time.

For Peta’s generation growing up in Aotearoa, shame was associated with speaking the heritage language. However, now for Aotearoa-born Tongan students participants in this study, the discussion of shame related to language and culture is reversed. Instead of feeling ashamed of speaking Tongan, they feel a sense of shame if they cannot speak Tongan. This further informs Kaimakoi’s comment (p. 106, lines 3-5) on there being “*something missing*” for her peers who “*don’t know heritage*” and Longo’s observation of Aotearoa-born Tongan children seeming “*sad*” or “*ashamed*” when they cannot understand lea faka-Tonga spoken at community events (p. 109, lines 4-14). As a teacher in both the school and community context, I have also observed and discussed with students this sense of shame or lack of

confidence surrounding ability to speak a Pacific language as someone of Aotearoa-born Pacific heritage.

Examples of Norton's (2013) theory of identity are further apparent in Peta's narrative as she negotiates her understanding of her "relationship to the world and possibilities for the future" with identity therefore being multiple and changing (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 36). As a teenager, the experience of learning te reo Māori at secondary school enabled her to "*think Tokelau again*" (line 3) reconnecting her with gagana Tokelau. Although, she was able to understand gagana Tokelau throughout her primary and secondary education, she "*spoke English all the time*" (lines 2-3). Learning te reo Māori tapped into Peta's linguistic repertoire, enabling her to notice and make links between commonalities shared by te reo Māori and gagana Tokelau. Being able to notice connections between the two languages perhaps enabled Peta to regain some confidence to begin reusing her heritage language. Noticing that te reo Māori and gagana Tokelau are connected possibly spoke to Peta on a subconscious level that her heritage language had value with a subject that was deemed as important enough to be taught at school. Later, Peta discusses the idea of learning te reo Māori, being as a starting point for gagana Tokelau revitalisation when she mentions how she can understand her sister who speaks fluent te reo Māori.

Now as an adult Peta finds confidence through her language, culture, and identity, as an Aotearoa-born Tokelauan. "Understanding her possibilities for the future" (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 36), she is trying to "*reclaim*" her language, "*trying to speak it*" and use it with her children. Peta sees the fact that her husband is also Aotearoa-born Tokelau as important and helpful for her children to "*speak Tokelau*" (lines 12-14). Peta wants for herself and her children to be able to be connected with their language and Tokelauan heritage in the future. Her children are able to "*understand a lot of it but [...] [not] respond.*" Peta does however make a short aside comment saying that in spite of reclaiming her language "*trying to speak it, [...] trying to reclaim it*" she feels she is "*not doing a good job*" (lines 11-12). Although this might appear as a 'throw away' comment, dialogically it is evaluative and reflective of social expectations Peta has of herself and cultural expectations of what other people think she should be doing, which links back to the context of the rising of linguistic purism ideology (pp. 39-40). Through this comment, we can see the role of language as Peta negotiates the edgewalk of discursive faultline (Menard-Warwick, 2014; Krebs 1999) which once again ignites the 'site of struggle' as well as new opportunity in negotiation of identity.

The role of language in negotiating identity along discursive faultlines and implications for language education will be further discussed in Chapter 8.

It is necessary to mention that although Peta sometimes experiences self-doubt or lack of confidence in relation to language, culture, and identity, overall engaging in “*reclaiming Tokelau language and culture*” appears to enhance Peta’s sense of confidence and self-esteem in a way that supports her family and the wider community. For example, Peta and her cousin run classes afterschool for Tokelauan primary to secondary aged students to learn their language at the community hall as well as other educational programmes linked to Tokelau and the wider curriculum. She is part of the community leadership team who have a strategic plan to sustain the people of this Aotearoa-based Tokelau community, supporting their wellbeing by engaging with programmes, initiatives, and partnerships which enhance the education, language, health, housing, and economic strength of the community. Here we can see how Peta’s human agency and investment interact with language, identity and possibilities for the future (Norton, 2013) for both herself and her community.

The narratives presented so far provide examples of complex sociolinguistic issues at play such as tensions and shame in using and not using heritage languages, variable confidence in HL use, belonging, and agency. These issues provide examples of normally hidden elements of multilingual communities, for example the impacts of symbolic domination, language repression, and subsequent ideologies of linguistic purism. On the other hand, narratives thus far show examples of community members drawing on and developing their cultural and linguistic capital to successfully navigate the edgewalk across cultural and linguistic. In doing so breaking new ground in community spaces, for example instigating the Pacific weeks (Kaimakoi) and sharing school project findings about the importance of fibre on one’s health with Tongan elders (Longo).

Analysis of narratives presented here shows how experience of language, culture, identity, and wellbeing are intricately connected and either contribute to the enhancement or hindrance of confidence and self-esteem. This discourse supports the claim that being able to understand use heritage languages with confidence and feeling grounded in cultural heritage is seen to enhance social and emotional wellbeing by:

- enabling the establishment of relationships with friends, community and professionally,
- enhancing academic ability and professional confidence,

- providing purpose and motivation for teaching language to younger generations and supporting community projects,
- reclaiming heritage language for oneself, one's family, and community.

These findings have implications for communities, students, schools, and policy to be discussed in Chapter 8. The focus now shifts to how participant narratives link language and culture to Indigenous identity and wellbeing.

### 5.3 - Theme 2: Language and Indigenous understandings of identity and wellbeing

Analysis of speaker discourse and experience also reveals that language is bound to the understanding and construction of Indigenous Pacific identity and wellbeing. To reiterate key theoretical underpinnings outlined in Chapter 3, Pacific scholars describe the process of negotiating Indigenous Pacific cultural identity as relational rather than individualistic (Vaai & Nabobo-Baba, 2017). Indigenous identity is therefore “constructed around relationships and spaces between people, and their spiritual and physical environment” (Kennedy, 2019, p. 27, drawing on Anae, 2016). This relational space is called *vā* in both gagana Tokelau and lea faka-Tonga. Each language has its own nuanced differences in meaning but also share a common understanding that living in harmony with these *vā* requires reciprocity and respect (Airini et al, 2010). Language and communication are essential tools which enable *vā* between people, and their environment to be nurtured, strengthened and restored. *Vā* also exists between a person and their language. A respectful and reciprocal relationship within this sacred *vā* between a person and their Indigenous or heritage language, enriches the linguistic experience and deepens one's sense of cultural identity and wellbeing (community contact, personal communication, February 28, 2019).

Experience of this process is discussed and analysed in the following section in the narratives of Maia, Pulēleti, Peta (Tongan and Tokelauan community members), Samisoni, Kate, Viola, and Leilani (students from Pasifika Studies, Riverview High), and Toniseni, Tevita, Mele, Langi, Vai, and David, (students from the Tongan language cluster).

#### 5.3.1 Maia - Language, culture, and family structure

Maia was born in Tonga and migrated to Aotearoa in 2017. She identifies as a parent, a secondary school teacher, and an active member of a Tongan church community (in a

different city and church denomination to Longo's Tongan church community). Maia teaches lea faka-Tonga to the children in her church community during the school holidays.

In Excerpt 5.8, Maia explains how she teaches the children in her community about the Indigenous Tongan family infrastructure underpinning Tongan culture during Tongan language week, and why this is important for Tongan children to understand.

#### Excerpt 5.8

(08:12)

1     **Maia:** *I think all the children came up with specific words like for your mother's*  
2     *brother you call it fa'etangata [...] in Tonga, your fa'etangata is like, if you are*  
3     *hungry you go to fa'etangata, if you want something you go to fa'etangata and ask*  
4     *and fa'etangata would always be the one who is there providing you with stuff. But if*  
5     *you are at home and you have staying your mehekitanga which is your father's sister,*  
6     *she comes to your house, you have to treat her with royalty, so you go to your*  
7     *fa'etangata's house, they treat you with royalty, if your mehekitanga comes to your*  
8     *house, you treat her with royalty [...]. It is something that parents teach their children*  
9     *to become aware of, who is who, and how to treat so and so. When you come over*  
10    *here [New Zealand] you kind of don't really get that because, like for me and my*  
11    *children, they don't have a fa'etangata, they don't have a mehekitanga here, and so*  
12    *that part of life is not taught. But when we go back to Tonga, it is when we teach, so*  
13    *we say we all go to our mehekitanga's house and we don't do the things we do at*  
14    *home, we don't go and lie down in the house, we don't go and do this. It is just a*  
15    *Tongan thing. When we go to our fa'etangata's house, which is your mother's*  
16    *brother, you just go and do whatever. You go into the kitchen, make yourself*  
17    *comfortable.*

(10:45)

Throughout this excerpt Maia explains the different roles of the fa'etangata, the mother's brother and the mehekitanga, the father's sister and their significance in understanding Indigenous Tongan values. The fa'etangata provides the role of caring and advice for his nieces and nephews from his sister's side of the family, whilst the mehekitanga, is the family figure to be treated with utmost respect “*with royalty*” (line 8). Maia explains that these guidelines are important for children to understand how to behave and who to go to for what

purpose when they are visiting family in Tonga. As Maia explains, the roles of the fa‘etangata and the mehekitanga show and teach the reciprocity of respect as “*if you have your mekikatanga [...] staying [...] you have to treat her with royalty*” but if “*you visit your fa‘etangata’s house, they treat you with royalty.*” This “*Tongan thing*” (line 15) articulated through language, encapsulates relational Tongan values which look after the collective wellbeing of the whole community. Firstly, each family member knows their role and how they exist in relation to others, and this guides each person as to what they should do and how they should behave. Maia’s discussion of how expected behaviour changes between different houses illustrates how vā between different people extend beyond relationships to physical spaces. The reciprocity of respect learnt by children through the fa‘etangata and mehekitanga relationships enacts and underpins Indigenous Tongan values of Tongan wellbeing and care of the whole community, through fefaka‘apa‘apa‘aki (mutual respect), feveitokai‘aki (sharing, co-operating, and fulfilment of mutual obligations), and tauhi vaha‘a (loyalty and commitment). These cultural concepts are learnt and understood through language and context and form the basis of Indigenous Tongan cultural identity, worldview, and wellbeing (verified by Tongan community member, July 2020). Although Maia discusses these cultural protocols as being relevant for her children when they go back to Tonga, understanding Indigenous cultural ways of being is important for young people of Tongan heritage who are negotiating their cultural identities growing up in Aotearoa. This is evident in the discourse of Tongan students to be discussed in the following sections and the implications of this for education in Chapter 8.

### 5.3.2 Pulēleti and Peta - Formality, register, and appreciation

Gagana Tokelau and lea faka-Tonga both use different registers to reflect levels of formality and respect expected depending on the context. Being able to use the more formal and respectful register of language is harder to pick up ‘via osmosis’ for Aotearoa-born Tokelauan or Tongans when the main register being used is the informal language of the home. In the following excerpts both Pulēleti and Peta discuss how their appreciation of Indigenous Tokelau worldview grew as their understanding of gagana Tokelau and its more formal register deepened.

Pulēleti is Aotearoa-born. His mother is from Tokelau and his father is from Tuvalu. He grew up in a multilingual household where gagana Tokelau, Tuvaluan, and English were spoken at

home, and gagana Samoa in the church. He studied linguistics, gagana Samoa and Cook Island Māori at university in Aotearoa and gained a scholarship to study gagana Tokelau in Norway. Now, he is a translator of gagana Tokelau, gagana Samoa, and occasionally Tuvaluan. On his mother's side he is affiliated with the same Tokelau community as Peta.

#### Excerpt 5.9

(07:48)

- 1       **Pulēleti:** *growing up it was just the one register, but as I have gotten older, I've*  
2       *come to appreciate that there are quite a few different registers depending on the*  
3       *environment that you are in. So that the language you use in church is very formal, it*  
4       *follows more of the Samoan style of oratory and the same thing when it comes to*  
5       *formal occasions such as funerals and gatherings, there is a different register we use*  
6       *there, which is almost along the lines of the church form of the language, but it is just*  
7       *fascinating stuff and I've come to really love the oratory and the use of the sharing of*  
8       *kakai which is the old stories, kind of like fairy tales and I was trained to transcribe*  
9       *and translate into English when I was in Norway. So I've developed an appreciation*  
10      *for that and also really come to understand that [...] I really don't know that much.*  
(08:54)

Pulēleti mentions that growing up he was using “*just the one register*” (line 1). This refers to the informal register used in everyday language of the home. As he has grown older, he has come to know and the different registers and their contexts. These more formal registers of gagana Tokelau are used in oratory, funerals and gatherings, in the church, and by chiefs (lines 3-7). A deeper understanding of language enables Pulēleti to understand kakai (old stories with wisdom) and translate them for the benefit of those who cannot understand the more formal language. Pulēleti describes his experience of deepening his language understanding as “*fascinating stuff*.” As a linguist, he connects his linguistic understanding of register with his developing understanding of Indigenous knowledge, enhancing his enjoyment. He says: “*I've really come to love the oratory and [...] Kakai*” (line 7). For him the experience and process of going ‘deeper’ into his Indigenous identity through language in oratory and old stories have enabled him to “*develop an appreciation*” as well as perhaps wanting to learn more when he says he has “*really come to understand that [...] I really don't know that much*.” From this, we get a clear sense of how when nurtured, the vā between a

person and their Indigenous language is reciprocal as Pulēleti's experience of language nourishes him with meaning, emotional and intellectual wellbeing.

Pulēleti's experience analysed in Excerpt 5.9 is comparable to Peta's narrative. Peta discusses her awareness of the beauty of formal registers in gagana Tokelau and how this relates to her opportunities for future identities. This is evidenced in Excerpt 5.10.

Excerpt 5.10

(13:50)

- 1       **Peta:** *I can't get up and do the formal side of things but I can stand up and express*  
2       *my ideas and views on things at a very basic level, but I want to be able to get up and*  
3       *do all the chief walawala words, you know the real formal, beautiful imagery kind of*  
4       *language that it is preserved for the men type thing. I don't want to know a lot of that,*  
5       *I just want to be able to establish who I am within my community, so that when I*  
6       *speak, I have some sort of validation.*

(14:22)

Peta describes how she can communicate in basic ways but not use more formal language and register (lines 1-2), perhaps further examples of linguistic purism (pp. 39-40) and the tense interplay of language and identity along the discursive faultline (Menard-Warwick, 2009). However, this also shows she is very aware of different registers in gagana Tokelau. She would like to be able to speak in front of the community using “*chief walawala words*,” the formal language which has “*beautiful imagery*” and was traditionally used by men. She feels that being able to use language formally would provide “*validation*” as to her place in the community, indicating that she believes a deeper level of understanding and ability to communicate would strengthen her Indigenous identity as a Tokelauan in the future. There appear to be elements of both Pacific and post-structural theories of identity at play here. Peta appears aware of her relational and multiple identities and roles which connect to both her past (her parents who established the Aotearoa-based community and ancestors), present, and future. She seems to know that in nurturing the *vā* between herself and her language by developing her formal command of gagana Tokelau, she will strengthen her place in the community and connections with to those around her.



The mention of register, formality, *kakai* (old stories with wisdom) and oratory hints at how Indigenous concepts of wellbeing are communicated through language. In *gagana Tokelau*, being able to communicate in different registers for different occasions and with different people is one way of showing *fakaaloalo* (respect), a guiding principle of *agānuku Tokelau* (Tokelauan culture) for the wellbeing of the community. As discussed in Chapter 1, an Indigenous Tokelauan approach to wellbeing is considered collective, involving the whole community rather than a concept for the individual. As well as *fakaaloalo* (respect), *agānuku Tokelau* (Tokelauan culture) has several other key Indigenous concepts and ways of wellbeing which are expressed through language; vocabulary, phrases, songs which exist together with cultural protocol. (See Chapter 1, section 1.6.7 for further detail). Throughout the narratives from all of the community leaders and many students, Peta's narrative in particular, it is very clear identity and sense of self comes from community. Peta for example, uses “*we*” and “*our*” and language of belonging throughout her narrative. She discusses her own experiences in relation to her family and community.

Maia, Pulēleti and Peta's discourse and experiences illustrate examples Pacific and sociolinguistic theories of identity in action. We have seen how identity is constructed relationally around multiple *vā* (for example around different relationships in the family or roles) and therefore a multiple, changing construct based around time and space (Norton, 2013). In addition, we see how language is required to understand and strengthen these *vā* (understanding of formal registers), and how in return looking after the *vā* helps support identity and wellbeing .

The narratives of Maia, Peta, and Pulēleti in this subsection have many implications for education and enactment of educational policy (Tapasā, MoE, 2019) which place Pacific languages and cultures as central focus points for successful pedagogies working with Pacific learners. Discussions about register illustrate the need for further development and understanding of the theory and practice surrounding basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 2008) in Tokelauan and Tongan educational contexts.

This is discussed empirically in the following section, as well as in Chapter 8 as part of the implications for this thesis.

### 5.3.3 Samisoni and Tevita - Language learning, and Indigenous negotiation of identity

Language learning is one opportunity in which young people of Tokelauan, Tongan, and mixed heritage growing up in Aotearoa can learn and make sense of how Indigeneity is expressed through language, and how this might enhance or support students in making sense of their own lives.

Samisoni is a Year 13 Tongan student from the Pasifika Studies class who also attends the Tongan language cluster. He is Aotearoa-born and speaks Tongan and English at home and in his church community. In Excerpt 5.11 Samisoni discusses his language learning experience of *lea faka-Tonga* in Pasifika studies and at home.

Excerpt 5.11

(09:07)

- 1     **Samisoni:** *in class we get assigned work [...] I usually start writing whatever comes*  
2     *to mind and we have a Tongan teacher in here which helps tells me that my words are*  
3     *too basic. So I go home and start talking to Grandma and Grandma is like “these are*  
4     *the type of words, like they are not informal, because the main Tongan language is*  
5     *like informal sometimes.” But if you learn more about your Tongan language, you*  
6     *can see ((emphasis)) the words, how to make it much more formal than normal*  
7     *talking, so that is what I have been working on in my formal writing in Tongan [...]*  
8     *that is where I ask my grandma for help and she gives me some words. I write it*  
9     *down, I got like a little list of Tongan words and I write the meaning of each word.*

(10:15)

In having to write in more formal contexts in class, Samisoni is able to develop his existing knowledge of *lea faka-Tonga* which he has learnt in the home and at church. His teacher has told him that his vocabulary is “*too basic*” (lines 2-3) for developing ideas in assignments. He is able to learn more about the formal registers of *lea faka-Tonga* through his teacher at school and by “*talking to Grandma*” at home. Grandma is able to explain in more detail about when Tongan is used formally and informally, pointing out that Tongan in the home is informal, but that there are more formal words to be used for different occasions. In digging deeper into his heritage language, Samisoni appears to find a sense of clarity or satisfaction saying “*you can see ((emphasis)) the words, how to make it much more formal than normal*

*talking*” (lines 5-6). This seems to motivate Samisoni, providing him with a sense of purpose. He is “*working on [his] formal writing in Tongan.*” Later on, Samisoni adds to this sense of purpose, he says he would like to do “*more than just learning but improve [...] I don’t wanna just know the basics I wanna know more than just the basics.*”

Comments made by Samisoni’s peers about why they enjoy and what they gain from attending the Tongan language cluster imply that for Samisoni and his friends going beyond the basics of a language you here spoken in the home by your parents and grandparents, enables you to form a better idea of Indigenous identity as a Tongan whether you are born in Aotearoa or in Tonga. This is clear in the following set of excerpts from Tevita during the focus group discussion at the Tongan language cluster.

Tevita is an Aotearoa-born Tongan who was one on the eldest members in the Tongan language cluster at the time of data collection. At the time, he was head boy of his school, and his mother was one of the tutors in the group. Tevita joined the group about 20 minutes into the discussion. Once he joined, he clearly took on the leader and spokesperson role for the group. He spoke with passion and energy. It should also be noted that Samisoni also arrived at the language cluster at the very end of our focus group discussion.

#### Excerpt 5.12

(15:56)

- 1     **Tevita:** *there are some things that we have never heard of before, like [...] the*
- 2     *economy, [...] you think as a Tongan person growing up in NZ, [...] that the economy*
- 3     *doesn’t affect Tonga, [...] you think that Tongan people are real freelance and just go*
- 4     *with the flow but actually Tonga is really structured.*

(16:18)

Tevita identifies new learning he and his friends have done since attending the Tongan Language Cluster. Prior to coming to these classes, they did not know about “*the economy*” and how it impacts life in Tonga. In addition, he mentions how Tongan classes have changed his assumptions of what it means to be Tongan. Attending class, he has learnt how “*Tonga is really structured*” when he previously had thought that “*Tongan people are real freelance and just go with the flow.*” This adds to our understanding of what Samisoni described and said in Excerpt 5.11 about how he is learning to use the more formal register in lea faka-

Tonga and that this learning is making him “*want to know more than just the basics*” (Samisoni). In learning more about Tongan society at the Tongan Language Cluster, both Samisoni and Tevita are able to get a deeper understanding of who their parents and grandparents are, how and why they think and behave as they do. Interestingly, later on Tevita also brings up the topic of “*formal*” or “*hard*” words. In the next Excerpt he discusses how his learning the “*hard*” words in Tongan class help him. Learning more about lea faka-Tonga in an educational setting helps him to understand and relate and connect traditional Tongan to his life as a Tongan growing up in a predominantly Western environment.

#### Excerpt 5.13

(17:54)

- 1      **Tevita:** *in order to understand topics that are in the Bible and how they interpret it*
- 2      *[...]it is easier if you learn, if we learn our language then it is easier for us to*
- 3      *understand really hard words for us to understand and it is easier for us to*
- 4      *communicate* [with parents, grandparents, and elders].

*((Other students nod and vocalise agreement with Tevita))*

(18:12)

Here, Tevita describes his experience of how learning “*our language*” has made it “*easier*” for him and his friends to “*understand topics that are in the Bible*” and how to interpret these topics. The Bible is the most commonly used vehicle for the teaching of Indigenous Tongan values such a fefaka‘apa‘apa‘aki (mutual respect), feveitokai‘aki (sharing, co-operating, and fulfilment of mutual obligations), and tauhi vaha‘a (loyalty and commitment) which underpin Indigenous ways of Tongan wellbeing (also discussed above in connection with Excerpt 5.8-Maia). As Tevita implies learning the language and understanding the “*topics*” and their interpretations that pertain to heritage language, culture and identity also make it easier to “*communicate*” with family and community. Tevita describes how this deeper understanding and knowledge of Tongan language and culture is grounding and a source of strength for him in Excerpt 5.14. In this Excerpt he is giving advice to other young Tongans growing up in Aotearoa as to why learning Tongan is a good idea.

#### Excerpt 5.14

(19:26)

- 1      **Tevita:** *be open to topics that they have probably never heard of, keep your mind*

2      *broad [...] like when it comes to Tongan history, [...] it doesn't make any sense*  
 3      *whatsoever in terms of what we grew up with [in Aotearoa], especially [...] because*  
 4      *we are growing up in [...] modern technology and stuff [...] all of the perceptions have*  
 5      *all changed, [...] if they keep their mind broad, everything just sort of clicks in and*  
 6      *just makes sense in terms of if you apply it to [...] Western countries.*  
 (20:20)

Here, Tevita explains how it can be hard for young people to make sense of Tongan topics or history which they may not have heard of growing up in a Western country. However, he advises students to “*keep their mind broad,*” and to persevere with learning about Tongan language, history, and culture, as eventually the Indigenous Tongan knowledge “*just sort of clicks in and ... makes sense*” and can be applied to life in Western Cultures. Though not stated but perhaps implied by Tevita’s excitement and enthusiastic tone throughout the discussion, one has a sense that this new understanding of Indigenous Tongan knowledge might enhance his modern life. In Tevita’s narrative here, we can understand a later comment made by Samisoni’s in relation to what it means to understand “*more than just the basics.*” Through this deepening of knowledge, students can make more sense of and draw on their Indigenous identities as Tongans in the modern world, through language and the deeper connection language allows with family. This connection through study of language and culture enriching understanding of Indigenous Identity and ways of wellbeing can be summarised in a statement made by Viola, a Tongan-born student in Pasifika Studies: “*I think it is important to [...] keep your language, because that is the language that your parents gave you and their grandparents gave it to their parents in a way.*” Here Viola has captured the essence of a relational identity.

In these excerpts from students, we see a bigger picture. Opportunities to have continued access to heritage language education within the mainstream curriculum is more than just about improving language proficiency. The act of language learning has enabled these students to become more aware of their language as a taonga. Understanding language as a taonga - something with special properties such as structure, register and personality, that is passed on from generation to generation - increases the sense of belonging and connection with community and identity. This is important for students of Pacific heritage who are educated in a Western education system in Aotearoa largely focused on written literacy. Non-Western languages, such as lea faka-Tonga and gagana Tokelau, with strong oral

traditions, complex layers of formality and imagery are not generally given status and the opportunity to be understood and appreciated within the curriculum. Pasifika studies and the Tongan Language Cluster have changed this narrative enabling students to understand their language as a taonga which ultimately enhances student sense of identity, connection to community and culture, and wellbeing, as well as academic benefits of increasing bi-multilingual language proficiency.

Analysis narratives from Malia, Pulēleti, Peta, and students from Pasifika studies (Samisoni and Viola) and the Tongan language cluster (Tevita) illustrate how a deeper understanding of language and culture in the Aotearoa Tongan and Tokelauan contexts can provide insight for Indigenous identity and wellbeing as discussed by Pacific scholars. This deeper understanding comes from ongoing access to language, culture, and identity in communities and schools. This insight comes through:

- understanding traditional relational structures within the family which are based on Indigenous concepts of reciprocity and respect,
- learning to understand, use, and appreciate more formal registers of language,
- enabling heightened understanding and appreciation of Indigenous concepts, worldview, and knowledge (through language)
- enhancing a sense of Indigenous identity by strengthening vā between a person and their language,
- strengthening vā between people (past and present), land and places.

The voices of all participants in this sub-chapter are important for communities, schools, and policies looking to support and maintain Pacific languages. Implications of findings for all stakeholders will be further discussed in Chapter 8.

#### 5.4 - Theme 3: Authentic cultural identity

Data from Tongan student focus group discussions and from Tongan and Samoan students in Pasifika Studies emphasised the notion that students unanimously believed they had to be able to speak lea faka-Tonga (or their heritage language) relatively well to justifiably claim authentic identity Tongan identity. As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, Pacific scholars have debated and problematised the concept of ‘authentic’ Pacific identity for Aotearoa-born young people of Pacific heritage (Anae, 1998; Mila-Schaaf, 2011, Milne, 2017, Tupuola,

2004). As this is an issue particularly pertinent to young people, the following series of excerpts predominantly focuses on students' experiences and beliefs of language and authentic identity as Tongan or Samoan (in one case). To capture the bigger picture, discourse from two community leaders Kaimakoi and Longo has also been incorporated into the excerpts discussed.

#### 5.4.1 Samisoni - They won't believe you until you speak the language

In the following excerpt Samisoni (Pasifika Studies) describes his experience meeting two young Tongan girls while out shopping.

Excerpt 5.15

(10:34)

1       **Samisoni:** *I was walking one day and I remember I was shopping and these two little*  
2       *girls they were like "are you Tongan?" and I was like "yeah, I'm Tongan" and they*  
3       *were like "you are not Tongan" and I said something in Tongan and they both*  
4       *laughed and they were like "oh you are Tongan!" It is just things like that where you*  
5       *see another Tongan and they ask you if you are Tongan but they won't believe you*  
6       *unless you talk the language and then they understand. It is just ways to connect with*  
7       *other people who you have never met before, speaking with the same language, which*  
8       *you have [...] in common. [...] that is how I meet new people at school sometimes,*  
9       *some Tongans I just talk Tongan and they talk back "hey."*

(11:10)

This excerpt shows Samisoni recalling an interaction he had with two little girls while out shopping. These two girls identified Samisoni as somebody who potentially 'belonged' to their 'own' ethnic identity as Tongan, perhaps keen to connect with him as they saw somebody who might have something in common with them. To make contact, they used English, to inquire as to whether he was Tongan or not. Replying in English Samisoni said "yeah, I'm Tongan" (line 2). However, "they won't believe you unless you talk the language" (lines 5-6). Samisoni had to prove his Tongan identity to the girls by speaking lea faka-Tonga. As Samisoni mentions, speaking in a shared language is a way "to connect with other people who you have never met before." This is how he has made some friends at school.

#### 5.4.2 Leilani and Kate - Knowing your roots

Language as an indicator of authentic identity is also discussed by Leilani and Kate, Aotearoa-born Year 12 Samoan and Tongan students in Samisoni's Pasifika Studies class. Leilani discusses her view and experience of why she believes language is necessary for authentic identity as a person of colour in Excerpt 5.16.

##### Excerpt 5.16

(22:14)

- 1     **Leilani:** [...] *you need to know your roots, [...] if you are born brown and then you*
- 2     *start wondering why you are brown, and where did you come from and stuff? And*
- 3     *your parents start speaking English and you are not actually English [...]*
- 4     **Juliet:** *So do you guys associate English with White?*
- 5     **Leilani:** *Mostly, sometimes [...]* (( lots of laughing from Leilani and her
- 6     *classmates)) *that sounds so racist! But if you know you are Samoan and you keep on**
- 7     *hiding it, [...] it is going to be harder for them, you know [...] that quote in Samoan:*
- 8     *e lele le toloa ai ma'au i le vai- wherever you go, you still go back to your roots, so*
- 9     *that is pretty much what the Samoan language revolves around.*

(23:06)

For Leilani, “to know your roots,” to know where you come from requires knowing your heritage language. Leilani's statement about language and skin colour (lines 1-3) raises interesting points. Firstly, her comment indicates that language and skin colour matter, and are points of discussion for young people. ‘Being Brown’ features regularly in the discourse, be it humorous or serious conversations, music, and media in which young people of Pacific heritage engage. Skin colour, being Samoan, and racism feature in the second part of Leilani's contribution to the focus group conversation. On being asked whether Leilani and her classmates associate English with being White, Leilani replies “*mostly, sometimes*” and laughs, adding “*that sounds so racist.*” Leilani returns to the point that as a Samoan you cannot hide your identity and she quotes a Samoan proverb which embodies the idea that as a Samoan, wherever you go, you will always go back to your roots and language is a means to take you back to your roots.



Leilani and I had not met prior to this focus group discussion, and due to geographical, constraints, we have not met since. However, the fact that Leilani could so articulately discuss her views of language, culture and identity without knowing that I was going to come to class this day to have this conversation indicates that these are clearly points she has considered, and discussed with peers and her family before. Her comment you might “*start wondering why you are brown, and where did you come from and stuff*” implies she considers that wanting to know where you come from is a normal occupation for people of her age group. Leilani’s viewpoint is similar to Kate.

Kate is a Year 12, Aotearoa-born Tongan student in the Pasifika Studies class. Kate’s view on language and authentic identity is presented in Excerpt 5.17.

Excerpt 5.17

(27:24)

- 1       **Kate:** *I think it is important. My little sister at the moment, she doesn't really know*
- 2       *how to speak in Tongan, [...] which is a bad ((emphasis)) thing coz she needs to*
- 3       *learn, that is why my mom is planning to take her to Tonga because it is important*
- 4       *because it shows where you are truly from, and it is your heritage, it shows you are*
- 5       *part of a group in our culture, which you should be proud of.*

(27:51)

As indicated in lines 2-3, Kate views her sister not being able to speak lea faka-Tonga negatively. For Kate’s mother this is such a serious issue that she needs to take her daughter back to Tonga she can learn lea faka-Tonga. Like Leilani, Kate indicates she believes language is an indicator of identity and belonging to an ethnic group.

From Samisoni, Leilani, and Kate’s contributions to the focus group discussion it is clear that knowledge of and ability to use heritage language are helpful to connection and negotiation of cultural identity and sense of authentic identity. Furthermore, their discourse has made it clear that critical issues of power, race, language and culture are points that they regularly think and talk about as young people. Thus, adding to the body of research which emphasises the need for school programmes to apply a critical culturally sustaining lens to enable young people to address these issues within the curriculum as they negotiate cultural identity within the school environment during adolescence (Milne, 2017; Paris & Alim, 2017). In

the following excerpts from the focus group discussion at the Tongan language cluster, I further explore this need for a critical and culturally sustaining lens on educational opportunities through the discourse and experience of students who do not consider themselves or are not considered by others as ‘fluent’ speakers of lea faka-Tonga.

#### 5.4.3 David, Vai, Langi, Toniseni, and Mele - Being ‘plastic’

Student data commonly revealed that if you cannot speak Tongan ‘fluently,’ you are a ‘plastic’ Tongan, implying you are not authentic and real in your Tongan identity. The following excerpts from various students at the Tongan language cluster and my retelling of the conversation unpack how students use the phrase ‘plastic’, what it means, and how it makes you feel.

David is a Year 12 student born in Aotearoa. He discusses his views on why learning Tongan is important to him and describes his experience with using Tongan in Excerpt 5.18.

Excerpt 5.18

(00:20)

- 1       **David:** *just like the importance of [...] if you are like going to [...] talk with another*  
2       *Tongan, you might want to know what they are saying and [then] they call yourself*  
3       *“plastic”, so that is a pretty important thing to [...] understand what other people are*  
4       *saying.*

(00:38)

David’s experience of being called “*plastic*” occurred when inquiring about translation of what another Tongan person has said in lea faka-Tonga. When he asks for a translation, “*they call yourself plastic.*” In response to this comment, I asked David what being ‘plastic’ means. He responded: “*Plastic means, its [...] when you can’t understand or know your own language.*” To find out who uses the term ‘plastic,’ I asked the group who uses this term. It is important to note that although only four students were actively talking at this stage of the discussion, there was a much bigger group of around fifteen students listening and responding to the conversation. Students Vai and Langi answer my question.

Like David, Vai and Langi are also Year 12 students who attend the Tongan language cluster. Both students were born in Aotearoa

Excerpt 5.19

(00:50)

- 1       **Juliet:** *So who uses the term 'plastic'?*
- 2       **Most students:** *((laughing)) everyone ((simultaneous response)) [...]*
- 3       **Vai:** *from all different countries,*
- 4       **Langi:** *even Samoans, like "ah you're plastic, you don't much about being Samoan"*

(01:05)

Students unanimously chorused “*everyone*” in response to my question who uses the term plastic. By “*everyone*”, the inference to “*even Samoans*” using the term plastic with each other, implies one can safely assume this refers to all peers of the same age and who come from a Pacific background and possibly other heritage backgrounds where English is not the home language. Since attending the Tongan language cluster, in my teaching context, attending community meetings, and in the media, I have regularly heard the term ‘plastic’ being used amongst secondary students and adults of Māori Pacific heritage in the same way as the Tongan students at the Tongan language cluster. This term is used in similar ways to other terms applied to question authentic identity of young people born or raised in an English-speaking country adopted by their family. One example is ‘banana - yellow on the outside, white on the inside’ which describe people of Asian heritage who are unable to speak their heritage language and behave in a more Western manner.

I asked the students how they felt when somebody called them “plastic.” One student responded “*embarrassed*,” another student said they found it motivated them “*to learn more*,” perhaps partly so that they could speak and act more Tongan and not be called ‘plastic’ in the future. Students agreed that they were teased about being ‘plastic’ by peers and people at church or in the community. For the six students who actively participated in the Tongan language cluster, a large part of their motivation to attend the language cluster was:

*instead of something traditional happen and you can't just sit back and let it happen, and then motivation is to try to understand what it is about, rather than just letting it happen [and not being aware of it] - Toniseni, Year 12*

*To be able to have conversations with like families and stuff and just not like give them one-word answers [...] because you know you can't like explain more - David, Year 12*

These two comments both relate back to the observations made by Kaimakoi and Longo in section 5.2, whereby they noticed that children, friends or peers who were not able to speak their heritage language or connected to culture had “*something missing*” (Kaimakoi) or seemed “*sad [...] ashamed*” (Longo) at gatherings when they could not understand. Toniseni said he thought the term plastic “*is more of a fun joke thing*,” however, analysing the various excerpts though humour is present, it appears that being called ‘plastic’ is not just funny. It can cause embarrassment and lead young people to feel inadequate only being able to provide “*one-word answers*” in conversations taking place in lea faka-Tonga or being a passive bystander at a Tongan event because you cannot understand “*letting it happen*”, rather than actively being a part of a community event.

I asked the students if learning Tongan had encouraged them to speak more in Tongan with their younger siblings at home. Excerpt 5.20 below captures the group response.

Excerpt 5.20

(06:56)

1     **Juliet:** *Does coming to the Tongan language cluster help you to speak more Tongan*  
2     *at home with your siblings?*

3     **Toniseni:** *No! ((lots of laughter from whole group))*

4     **Juliet:** *So you still would speak English with them?*

5     **Mele:** *Yup, because they are plastic! ((laughter from whole group))*

(07:19)

The entire group of around 20 students (not only the six students who actively took part in the recorded discussion) laughed a lot at my question and its response from Toniseni: “*No!*” (line 3). Both Toniseni’s answer and the laughter show the humorous side of being labelled ‘plastic’ when one is not able to fluently speak Tongan. Looking at both this excerpt and previous discussions about the term ‘plastic’ and how it makes people feel, also suggest that such terms have very complex and layered meanings which are dependent on context and relationships of the people using such terms. The collective response of laughter implies that

the whole situation of being Tongan but not completely proficient in the language and culture and therefore having people call each other ‘plastic’ or not authentically Tongan, is an experience the whole group can relate to, perhaps with mixed feelings, as well as something that occurs regularly. Mele appeared to speak on behalf of the group when justifying why learning lea faka-Tonga had not increased the amount of Tongan used with younger siblings by saying “*because they are plastic.*” This comment was reinforced by the laughter from the whole group who are likely to share the experiences and feelings of Mele.

There many considerations pertaining to issues of language and authentic identity emerging from the data presented in this section. The implications for curriculum and pedagogy in our schools relevant to these findings will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.

## 5.5 - Theme 4: Transgenerational language acquisition

Nearly all speakers in both community and school settings spoke in some way about their experience of acquiring, maintaining, and/or revitalising heritage languages in the Aotearoa Tokelau and Tongan contexts and how this connected with identity and/ or wellbeing. In analysing this data, the interconnected and interdependent nature of the above-mentioned processes became clear, for example language acquisition, maintenance, or revitalisation cannot take place without some form of language learning. Subsequently the process of language acquisition, maintenance, or revitalisation led to enhanced sense of identity and wellbeing. Here I focus mainly on language acquisition outside of school. Experience and discourse of formal language learning in school settings in connection with language maintenance and revitalisation will be analysed and discussed in full detail in Chapters 6 and 7 but alluded to in this section when relevant.

Data from talanoa-style interviews with community members and focus group discussions with students highlight how language input, language output, and explicit focus on form and contribute to acquisition of heritage languages gagana Tokelau and lea faka-Tonga in the Aotearoa context. These data also highlight the challenges in acquiring a heritage language growing up in Aotearoa in an English-speaking dominant environment.

### 5.5.1 Immersion and language input

Kaimakoi, Peta, and Pulēleti are all the first generation of Aotearoa-born Tokelauan- Tongan- Tuvaluan children in their families. They are both confident speakers of their heritage languages and English. Throughout each of their narratives there is a shared experience of how they acquired language. Returning to Excerpts 5.1 (Kaimakoi) and 5.7 (Peta) it is clear that being immersed in language from birth and having many different family and community members around speaking the language(s) have provided Kaimakoi and Peta with a strong linguistic foundation to which were able to come back to or draw on to build their confidence using language as they grew older. For Kaimakoi “*the language has always been around where I was brought up*” (Excerpt 5.1, p. 102). Peta was entirely surrounded by gagana Tokelau from birth and “*didn’t have any English until I was five*” (Excerpt 5.7, p. 112). Pulēleti describes his context similarly, saying “*so I’ve grown up with my Mum speaking Tokelau and my Dad speaking Tuvaluan.*” Before attending school at age five Pulēleti also “*spoke a bit of English*” that he picked up from his father who grew up in Fiji where more English was spoken than in Tokelau or Tuvalu. Even though both Kaimakoi and Peta felt they were not confident speakers as they were growing up (in the case of Peta sometimes still as an adult), throughout their childhood, even when they predominantly spoke English, they were constantly surrounded by multiple sources of language input in cultural contexts through attending church services, singing, praying, listening to stories, and hearing their parents speak to them in gagana Tokelau and lea faka-Tonga.

### 5.5.2 Language output

As well as the multiple sources of input, Kaimakoi, Peta, and Pulēleti have opportunities to output language. Opportunity to output language has reinforced aural language comprehension which they gained through immersion in the home and community as children, helping them to maintain and continue developing their spoken heritage language proficiency.

For example, in Excerpt 5.1, Kaimakoi discusses the opportunity she had to output spoken lea faka-Tonga when she connected with a circle of Tongan friends at university. Wanting to interact with her friends who were speaking in lea faka-Tonga motivated Kaimakoi to draw on her language foundation to have “*the confidence to speak it.*” Presumably Kaimakoi had many opportunities to speak in lea faka-Tonga with her peers as well as her family meaning the repetition or ongoing nature of these opportunities to output spoken language

developed her fluency as well as her confidence. Kaimakoi's experience with developing her spoken proficiency in gagana Tokelau is similar, in the fact that as a child she was immersed in the language but did not necessarily speak in gagana Tokelau a lot through "*fear of not getting it right*" (Excerpt 5.1, p. 103). However, as is the case for Kaimakoi with lea faka-Tonga, her immersion in the language as a child provided her with a linguistic foundation to draw on when opportunities to speak gagana Tokelau presented themselves in her community work with Tokelau communities in Aotearoa. Similarly, Pulēleti and Peta now as adults, regularly have to opportunity to output written and spoken language by speaking with elders and parents in the community (Pulēleti and Peta), by teaching gagana Tokelau as part of participating in community life (Peta), and in ongoing translation work between gagana Samoa, gagana Tokelau, and English in the church (Pulēleti).

### 5.5.3 Language acquisition challenges

Data representing the experiences of the younger generation from the Tongan language cluster and Pasifika studies suggest that in today's world with the increased presence of media and influences of globalisation, being immersed in language in the home and church community, with multiple sources of language input such as songs, prayers, bible readings and spoken language, do not guarantee that heritage language skills will be acquired. Students in the Tongan language cluster are in many cases also first-generation Aotearoa-born Tongans. Their parents and grandparents speak lea faka-Tonga in the home, and they hear it spoken at church and within the community setting. However, students from the Tongan language cluster and Pasifika Studies both felt that immersion was not enough to help them understand well and speak. This is described in the following excerpts.

Excerpt 5.21

(04:14)

- 1       **Langi:** *And understand more, I understand more from coming here, coz like I can*
- 2       *speak it but only a little bit but I can't understand much, but I can understand more*
- 3       *from what they are saying, I still can't speak much but I can understand.*

(04:29)

Prior to this excerpt, I asked David, Vai, Langi, and Mele if they thought that attending the Tongan language cluster had helped them to speak more Tongan. The four students agreed

that attending Tongan language classes had helped them improve their language skills and this will be a focus point discussed later in Chapter 5. Here however, embedded in her statement we can see how Langi describes her own current language proficiency: *“I can speak it but only a little bit but I can’t understand much.”* Later, in discussing the students’ goals for their Tongan language skills, David responds he would like to be *“real fluent”* and that *“real fluent”* meant you are *“able to have conversations with like families and stuff and just not like give them one-word answers.”* Currently he feels she cannot yet *“explain more”* when she is speaking lea-faka Tonga. The experiences described by Tongan students here are similar to those of students in Pasifika studies.

Earlier in Excerpt 5.17 (p. 129) Kate, a Tongan student in Pasifika Studies described how she viewed language and identity. From this same Excerpt, we can also see her experiences pertaining to language acquisition and immersion environment. Kate’s parents speak lea faka-Tonga to her and her sister at home, and that they expect her to also speak lea faka-Tonga in the home. However, Kate describes her own knowledge of the language by saying: *“I don’t really know that much.”* In addition, Kate describes her sister’s ability to use lea faka-Tonga: *“My little sister at the moment, she doesn’t really know how to speak in Tongan”* (Excerpt 5.17, lines 1-3). For Kate’s mother the fact that her younger daughter is not able to speak her heritage language growing up in Aotearoa means that she is taking action to ensure that she can in the future: *“planning to take her [Kates’s sister] to Tonga,”* presumably to be immersed in Tongan language and culture.

I asked both the students in the Tongan Language Cluster and in Pasifika studies what stopped them from speaking and understanding lea faka-Tonga. The following data capture the unanimous response which emerged from both groups.

Excerpt 5.22

(03:30)

- 1     **Juliet:** *Does coming to the Tongan language cluster help you to speak Tongan more*
- 2     *with your Tongan friends*
- 3     **Vai:** *Yes, because we are usually just speaking English a lot*
- 4     *...*
- 5     **Juliet:** *What stops Tongan kids born in New Zealand from speaking in Tongan?*
- 6     **All students:** *English! ((laughter from group))*



7      **Vai:** *Growing up speaking English with our teachers at school and stuff*  
(04:46)

The Tongan Language Cluster students were very quick to answer that English language is the main language that they use with their friends and at school and the main hindrance they believed to stop them from using more lea faka-Tonga. Their ‘immersion’ in English at school and with their peers transfers into the home environment and although parents, grandparents, and church leaders or elders speak in lea faka-Tonga as Viola, a first-generation Aotearoa-born Tongan student in Pasifika studies states: “*my parents speak in Tongan to me, but I mostly reply in English*” (18:53). English immersion has even been problematic for Kate from Pasifika Studies when she attended school in Tonga. She describes her experience: “*in Tonga I went to a school but they spoke in English, that was the problem! I only had [...] two Tongan classes so I couldn’t learn it [...] it is normal [...] most of the high schools now they speak in English [in Tonga]*” (26:00). Kates’s experience in Tongan schools taught in English is the same as the experiences of two Aotearoa-born Samoan teachers interviewed as part of the overall data set but not included in the in-depth final data analysis. These teachers described how they took part in a teacher exchange to Samoa for six months with the aim of being immersed in Samoan language and culture but found that many Samoan high schools were entirely taught in English. In Samoa they found themselves in the same teaching context as their home schools in Aotearoa whereby they were teaching gagana Samoa to some students as a second language.

In Excerpt 5.23, Kaimakoi offers insight as to why her experience of heritage language acquisition during childhood in the 1970s and 80s in Aotearoa might differ to that of the younger Tongan students growing up now.

Excerpt 5.23

(07:37)

1      **Kaimakoi:** *I was quite lucky, I’m quite rare, my generation were a lot more exposed*  
2      *to language and culture but I find that when I’m looking at the generations below me,*  
3      *it diminishes for whatever reason, whether it is that the parents have chosen that*  
4      *English is the way go at the cost of your heritage languages, but you are just seeing*  
5      *the revival of languages now, with the generations coming through now*

(08:08)

In lines 1-2, we see that Kaimakoi believes her generation had more exposure to language culture and that this exposure seems to have diminished for younger generations. Her parents and their peers were part of the first and biggest wave of Pacific migration to Aotearoa in the 1960s and 1970s. At this time there were large communities of Tokelau and Tongan speakers who could not speak English and therefore there were vibrant speech communities in both languages. Peta also discussed how her generation saw their parents struggle because they could not speak English. Perhaps for this reason, Kaimakoi suggests in this excerpt that language loss is occurring because parents may “*have chosen that English is the way to go at the cost of your heritage languages.*” Other participants (Peta, Longo, and Samisoni) also discussed how many parents wanting the best for their children encourage their children to speak English more because they think it will lead to being smarter or getting better jobs.

In addition, an interview with a Samoan teacher in the Pasifika studies class (interviewed as part of the overall data set but not included in the in-depth final data analysis) reiterates how busy parents are, sometimes working more than two jobs and language reinforcement is something that requires much energy and a concerted effort. Busy homes and pressures of modern life are well attributed to language shift or decline by researchers.

In reviewing the excerpts presented here it is clear that for people of Tokelauan and Tongan heritage growing up in Aotearoa heritage language acquisition is a relational process. Speaker discourse and experience from this study support findings from cross-disciplinary literature (Fishman, 2013; Holmes & Harlow, 1991) and show that for language acquisition to happen in the home and community setting it requires:

- exposure to language input with family and community members using the language regularly,
- ongoing opportunities for speakers to output language in a safe space,
- ongoing opportunities for speakers to interact in the heritage language,
- exposure to the message that using the heritage language is as valuable as being able to use English.

Current Tongan and Samoan student experience represented in this data reinforce Peta’s view that heritage language acquisition “*cannot be left to chance.*” Although the data capture how these students describe their experiences and feelings of being unable to proficiently or fluently understand and speak lea faka-Tonga, it also captures how community members and

students view and experience opportunities to learn gagana Tokelau lea and faka-Tonga through formal language education at school as a chance to maintain, develop, and revitalise heritage languages. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 6 and 8.

## 5.6 - Theme 5: Multilingualism as the norm in Pacific communities

Data from this study revealed that for all participants of Pacific heritage, living in a multilingual environment is the norm, with most speakers fluidly and dynamically moving across at least two languages throughout a normal day. This supports local Aotearoa-based (Salesa, 2017) and international literature in critical sociolinguistics who, in highlighting the ubiquity of plurilingual societies, argue for a multilingual turn in applied linguistics research and education. As discussed in Chapter 2, this ‘multilingual turn’ calls for the ‘normalness’ of multilingualism to be recognised and leveraged in education, as currently education in the Western world promotes monolingualism and standardised language use (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; García, 2009; García & Li, 2014; Heller, 2007; May, 2014; Seals & Olsen-Reeder, 2019).

Rather than treating languages as two or more separate “autonomous systems” (García & Li, 2014, p.14), a growing number of critical applied- and sociolinguists view discursive practices of multilingual speakers as fluidly and dynamically drawing on the speaker’s whole linguistic repertoire depending on context, societal constructions and practices, as the speaker makes sense of their multilingual world (García, 2009; García & Li, 2014; Seals & Olsen-Reeder, 2019). This fluid practice of drawing on the whole linguistic repertoire according to context has been termed ‘translanguaging’ (García, 2009).

As presented in the literature review in section 2.5.6 (p. 45), translanguaging is viewed through a theoretical, practical and pedagogical lens. Analysis of the following excerpts allows us to see how translanguaging theory is evidenced in practice in participants daily lives. Translanguaging as a pedagogical tool will be further discussed in Chapters 6 and 8.

### 5.6.1 Translanguaging theory in practice

In Excerpt 5.24 Pulēleti describes multilingualism and translanguaging as a normal feature of his everyday life.

Excerpt 5.24

(03:23)

- 1       **Pulēleti:** *So I've grown up with my mum speaking Tokelau and my Dad speaking*  
2       *Tuvaluan with each other, they understand each other. So I've grown up with a mix*  
3       *of the two languages and English of course. I've grown up in a household where we*  
4       *have switched, floated between one language and another [...] it is confusing!*  
5       *However, I've found studying Samoan has helped me in that area by strengthening my*  
6       *understanding of Samoan grammar and that has had a flow on effect of my*  
7       *understanding of Tokelau grammar and Tuvaluan grammar as well as vocabulary*

(04:05)

In this excerpt we learn that Pulēleti has grown up with his mother speaking gagana Tokelau and his father speaking Tuvaluan. The shared linguistic features of Polynesian languages and perhaps from years of practice, his parents are able to “*understand each other*” when they speak gagana Tokelau and Tuvaluan respectively. Pulēleti describes the language practices of his household, saying “*we have switched, floated between one language and another.*” His fluid use of languages in the home floating and switching between one language is an example of translanguaging - “the multiple discursive practices in which [multi]linguals engage in order to make sense of their everyday worlds” (García, 2009, p. 45). Further evidence of García and Li’s (2014) translanguaging theory is evidenced here in the following ways. As Pulēleti’s family “*understand each other*” drawing on the whole linguistic repertoire of the household, they are doing more than code-switching or shuttling between languages. Rather, they are going beyond the “use of state endorsed named language categories” (García & Li, 2014, p. 42, Seals & Olsen-Reeder, 2019) by making the “complexity of language exchanges among people with different histories” visibly into something new where “difference and sameness” occur together (García & Li, 2014, p. 21). The mutual linguistic understanding between his Tokelauan mother and Tuvaluan further supports Makoni and Pennycook’s (2007, p. 2) claim that named languages are “a European invention” and a “product of colonialism” and nationalist ideologies rather than “inventions of social, cultural and political movements” (García & Li, 2014, p. 21). Furthermore, this switching and floating between languages can happen in the home environment as there are no societal expectations as there are in schools or the workplace for using certain languages for certain purposes.

As an aside, in response to my commenting on how “cool” I found his description of growing up in a multilingual environment, Pulēleti responds “*it is confusing!*” Though not explicitly stated, this comment does not need to be taken at face value and seemed more of a joke. Living in an entirely multilingual world, using at least four languages, having studied linguistics and several languages at university and now working as a translator, we can assume Pulēleti clearly loves languages and thrives on multilingualism.

There is also evidence of multilingualism and translanguaging as the norm in Peta’s household. Although Peta feels more confident using English in formal contexts, now as an adult, in her community and in her job teaching at a multicultural school, she uses up to four different languages interspersed throughout the day. In community meetings, for example she moves fluidly between gagana Tokelau and English, not outwardly adhering to “socially and politically defined boundaries of named ... languages” (Otheguy et al, 2015, p. 381). The fact that Peta is relaxed and in the very familiar environment of her community where she has grown up and been a member all her life perhaps takes away the societal and political constraints she might feel is expected elsewhere in society. When she feels safe, she can move fluidly between her two main languages. This fluid practice of moving between languages is also very commonly observed in Peta’s community showing that this safe and familiar environment enables people to use language naturally rather than to use English or gagana Tokelau as “two separate autonomous languages” (García & Li, 2014, p. 15) which is the expectation at school or in the workplace.

In contrast to her current way of using and doing language in the community, Peta’s narrative surrounding her experience of language at school illustrates the institutional restrictions placed on multilingual speakers at school. Peta recalls her language practices as a child and adolescent in Excerpt 5.7 (p. 112). Peta describes how although she still heard and spoke gagana Tokelau in the home and community once she had started school, she:

*never spoke it again until I had gone through college when I took Maori language and that is when I began to think Tokelau again. [...] it wasn’t my language of choice, I just spoke English all the time and I think back in those days, we were discouraged from speaking Tokelau because it would hinder our education.*

Peta's experience demonstrates Gracia and Li's (2014) theoretical construct of translanguaging. According to García and Li (2014, p. 15), although multilingual speakers have one integrated dynamic linguistic system which can be used to support the development of the whole linguistic repertoire, translanguaging acknowledges and challenges the ways in which speakers are forced to conform to societal norms and constructions of 'a language.' For Peta, the societal constructions of gagana Tokelau said that "*it would hinder our education*" and therefore Peta "*just spoke English all the time*" until she tapped into her linguistic repertoire by learning te reo Māori at school.

### 5.6.2 Full linguistic repertoire

In Excerpt 5.7 (p. 112), Peta discusses how learning te reo at school awakened her knowledge and ability to actively use gagana Tokelau. Perhaps the similarities in vocabulary and grammar triggered her gagana Tokelau and subconsciously showed Peta that if Māori, a language which shares vocabulary and syntax with gagana Tokelau was valued enough to teach at school then perhaps gagana Tokelau also had some value. We can also see how Pulēleti is able to draw on his whole linguistic repertoire to develop fluency, confidence, and proficiency across all languages in Excerpt 5.24 (p. 140): "*I've found studying Samoan has helped me in that area by strengthening my understanding of Samoan grammar and that has had a flow on effect of my understanding of Tokelau grammar and Tuvaluan grammar as well as vocabulary.*" Kaimakoi's narrative highlights the power of being able to draw on a full linguistic repertoire. As a speaker of gagana Tokelau, lea faka-Tonga and English, she appreciates differences and similarities and also understands other languages. In another part of the interview, Kaimakoi discusses how she can "*understand Niuean because Niuean and Tongan are very similar*" and gagana Samoa as "*Samoan and Tokelauan are probably more closely aligned.*" As discussed earlier, Kaimakoi's confidence in drawing on her full linguistic repertoire enhances her sense of confidence and connectedness as an Indigenous person of the Pacific realm, part of something bigger linked by the 'Great Sea of Islands' (Hau'ofa, 1993). This multilingualism which empowers Kaimakoi is liberating and opens opportunities for exciting and new experiences. Kaimakoi's experience of multilingualism contrasts with the dominant monolingual approach to education (Major, 2018), whereby speaking English is dictated as the norm and according to student participants prevents young Aotearoa-born Tongans from using lea faka-Tonga more (Excerpt 5.22, p. 137). International cross-disciplinary literature argues that the many advantages of multilingualism must be

recognised, valued, and leveraged in mainstream education, where currently multilingualism is neither valued nor understood despite many students bringing to school rich cultural and linguistic knowledge (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Seals & Olsen-Reeder, 2019).

In this sub-chapter we have seen how multilingualism is the norm for Pulēleti, Peta, and Kaimakoi's supporting literature which shows that Pacific peoples in Aotearoa live multilingually. Analysing the experiences of these three participants we see how fluid translanguaging practices and ability to draw on a full multilingual linguistic repertoire supports different areas of their lives. These fluid multilingual practices that many Pacific learners come to school with have educational and pedagogical implications to be discussed in further detail Chapters 6 and 8.

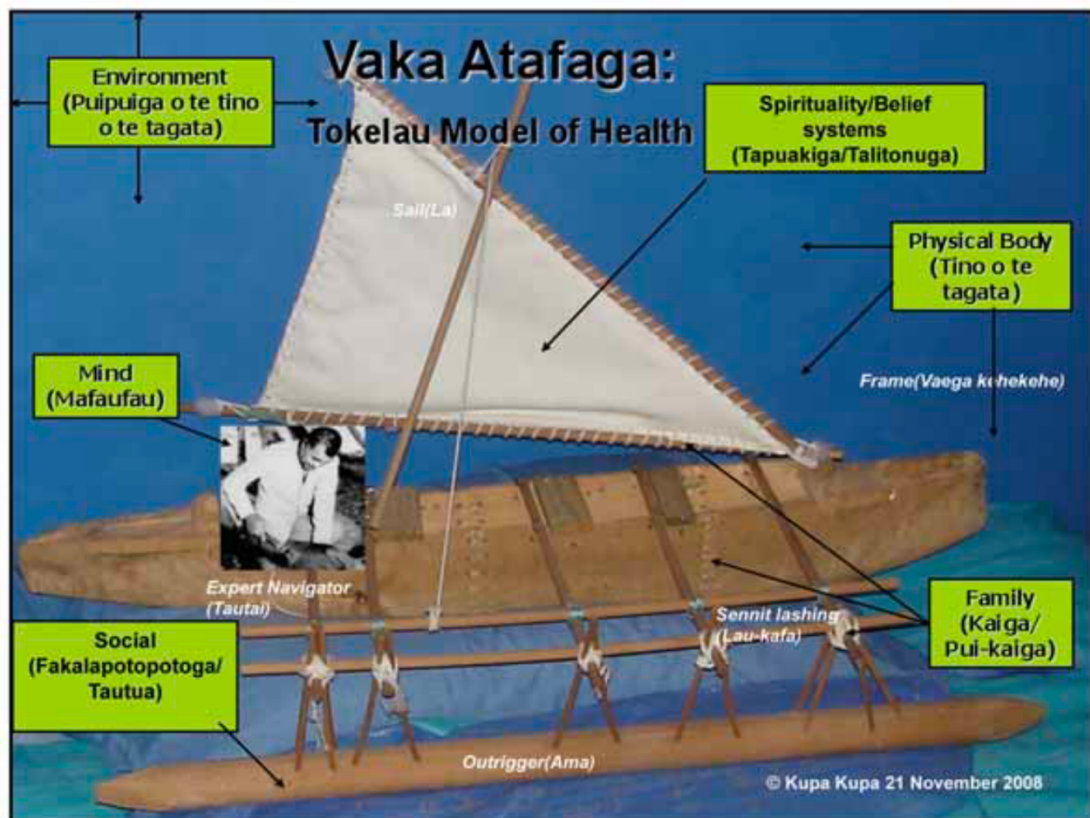
### 5.7 - Reflection: Working towards community wellbeing

Given this discussion of wellbeing, it is significant that the five community leaders who contributed data are all active members in their respective communities and work tirelessly in different ways across different domains to support the overall wellbeing. All participants are active in using their HLs in the home and participate in many leadership roles within their communities. Peta, Maia, and Longo teach language and culture in various community, church, and school settings. Pulēleti uses his skills as a linguist to translate Tokelauan, Samoan, and Tuvaluan texts into English in his church making Indigenous knowledge accessible to all church members. Kaimakoi is involved in many community and professional activities such as being a key agent in establishing the national Pacific language weeks. Some of the students who contributed data also show agency in relation to caring for wellbeing through language and culture. They choose to attend Tongan language classes on Friday nights or to take Pasifika Studies as an option course in order to develop knowledge of their culture and history and to improve their language ability in communicating with family and to hold onto their Tongan (and wider Pacific) identity. Conversely, participant narratives discussed how wellbeing can be harmed if language, culture, and identity are not able to thrive (see excerpts 5.4, p.106 & 5.5, pp. 108-9).

The Tokelauan model *Te Vaka Atafaga* (Kupa, 2009) and Tongan *Fonua* model (Tu'itahi, 2009) presented in Chapter 1, use Indigenous ways of life to symbolise the interconnections and equal and reciprocal care across physical, environmental, cultural spiritual, mental, and

material realms required for holistic wellbeing. The holistic and woven nature of the relationships between language, culture, identity, and wellbeing, can be further appreciated by reference to these existing models of health and wellbeing: Te Vaka Atafaga (Image 5A) and Fonua (Image 5B).

Image 5A

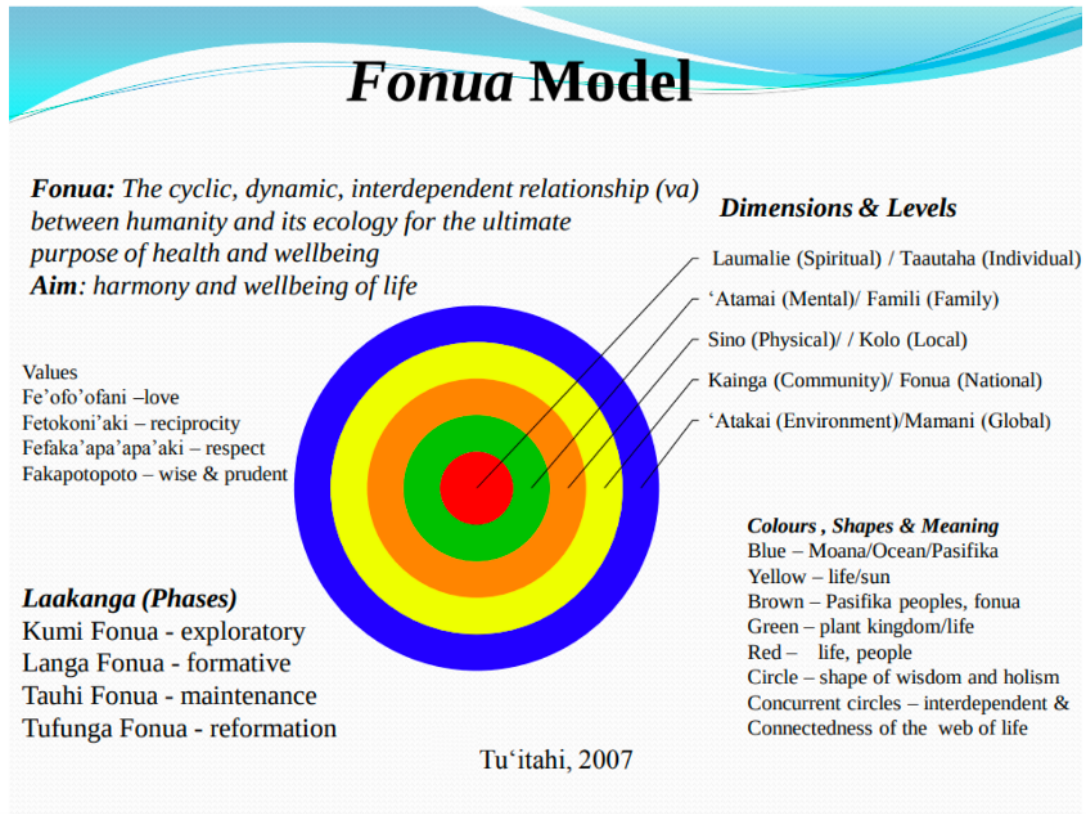


Kupa's (2009, personal communication, 2021) model of holistic Tokelauan wellbeing uses the symbolism of the Tokelauan Vaka. The model requires all parts to work together for the vaka to sail well and support the village with the inati process (Chapter 1, 1.6.7, pp. 20-21). This ritual of gathering fish and distributing each member of the community their due portion supports wellbeing. The model illustrates how wellbeing needs: social support, family, the mind, the physical body, spirituality and/or belief systems to work together for people and their communities to be well. Analysing the narratives of Kaimakoi, Peta, and Pulēti, we see how each of these six interlocking components involve Tokelauan language and cultural understanding. How these components work together in a secondary education setting will be discussed in Chapter 8.



I was not able to contact Tu‘itahi, the author of the Fonua model. However, I believe this image of the Fonua (Tu‘itahi, 2007) model of health and wellbeing adds further depth to the analysis of Tongan narratives presented in this chapter.

Image 5B



## 5.8 - Chapter summary

Chapter 5 presented analysis from multiple complex data sets to examine how concepts of language, culture, identity, and wellbeing emerge in speakers' discourse and experience. Connections made between language, culture, identity, and wellbeing in Tokelauan and Tongan settings in this chapter illustrate how Pacific and sociolinguistic theories of identity are complementary. Both theories position identity as relational, multiple and changing across time and space. The spatiotemporal nature of identity moves across the past, present, future, physical and spiritual worlds. The ongoing process of negotiating identity in Aotearoa for Tokelauan and Tongan people can be a site of struggle as it involves issues of power and race. This journey requires tricky navigation of different cultural and linguistic boundaries encapsulated in the concept of edgewalking. The edgewalking journey, for which language and culture are important tools, however, can lead to new creative and empowering places.

Relational connections between language, culture, identity and wellbeing complement the Tokelaun holistic model of wellbeing Te Vaka Atafaga (Kupa, 2009) in its holistic construction. These connections should be central to thought and practice in the education of young people of Tokelauan and Tongan heritage in Aotearoa. In Chapters 6, 7, and 8, I examine further how language education can play a role in these processes.

## Chapter 6 - Pacific language education and imagined future identities

### 6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explored connections between language, culture, identity, and wellbeing in Aotearoa-based Tokelau and Tongan contexts. Analysis of narratives from community members and students showed how these constructs are interconnected and work together and can enhance or diminish one's sense of identity and wellbeing. As these constructs are so closely connected with individual and community wellbeing, I argue their importance being central the education of young people of Tokelauan and Tongan heritage in Aotearoa in the education of young Tokelauan and Tongan peoples growing up in Aotearoa.

In my research context Tokelauan and Tongan bilingual or immersion education<sup>35</sup> is not currently available. Yet, findings from Chapter 5 show how language, culture, identity enhance or hinder the wellbeing of young people and are therefore significant to education. If students cannot study in a bilingual environment to sustain heritage languages, other options for access to learning about language and culture need to be explored. A strengths-based approach (Mila, 2014) (see p. 9), is an appropriate lens to look at current positive language education opportunities in schools and communities to how they might be a foundation for development in the future. Therefore, in this chapter I examine how ongoing access to Pacific language education in schools and communities contributes to educational experiences, as well as its wider effect on students and communities and their current and future imagined identities.

In this Chapter, I first present the rationale in focusing on the role of language education in heritage language maintenance. The second research question and relevant theoretical concepts I re-present significant details of participants who feature in the discourse, before presenting findings in connection with relative literature and theory. The chapter concludes with a summary of findings.

#### 6.1.1 Education and language maintenance

The value of focusing on the role of education in provision of ongoing access to Pacific language education (specifically gagana Tokelau and lea faka-Tonga) is twofold. Firstly,

---

<sup>35</sup> Please see Chapter 2, section 2.6 for discussion of bilingual and/or immersion education.

linguistic and cultural maintenance and revitalisation are linked to collective and individual wellbeing, and require multiple systems within a society (such as family, communities, education, and media) to work together in support of language and culture (Hirsch, 1987; Holmes & Harlow, 1991; Hornberger & Wang, 2008; May, 2014). Of these, education has been one of most influential systems for maintenance and revitalisation of other indigenous languages such as te reo Māori and Welsh (May, 2001; Williams, 1996). Secondly, as a teacher-researcher working within a social justice framework, the secondary school system is where I observe and experience inequity of opportunities for students to learn and maintain languages other than English. In critically exploring education and its role in providing ongoing access to gagana Tokelau and lea faka-Tonga, I can inform both my own praxis as a teacher and a more wide-reaching praxis of other teachers, schools and policy to ‘do’ change, therein leading to more equitable opportunities in language education (Phipps, 2019).

### 6.1.2 Research question

Pacific theory of identity (Anae, 2016; Mila-Schaaf, 2011; Vaai & Nabobo-Baba; 2017), Norton’s (1995, 2013) theory of identity, and edgewalking (Krebs, 1999) are used as conceptual tools for analysis to explore the second research question:

*How do (secondary school) experiences of Pacific language education connect with students and communities? Specifically, how do these connect with current and future imagined identities and investment in language learning?*

### 6.1.3 Conceptualising analytical tools

In this section I operationalise the analytical tools; Pacific and sociolinguistic theories of identity, with a focus on how language learning connects with identity and imagined futures, and edgewalking.

#### Language learning, identity, and imagined futures

In Chapters 3 and 4, I discussed theoretical crossovers between Indigenous Pacific scholarship and critical applied sociolinguistics with regard to negotiation of identity through language. Pacific scholars describe negotiation of identity amongst Pacific peoples as relational, whereby individual, and collective identities are produced around multiple vā - “relational spaces which are interdependent, constructed, mediated and negotiated in multiple

ways” (Mila-Schaaf, 2011, p. 9). The *vā* around which identity is negotiated are fluid spatiotemporal, physical, historical, and spiritual domains that stretch beyond human relationships. *Vā* extend to relational interaction with the environment, spirituality, and language (Kennedy, 2019; Tokelau community member, personal communication, February 2019). Relational connections are dependent on different positionings of people, places, and spiritual realms. In some contexts, as Indigenous identity is interwoven with past, present, and future understandings it can be a “site of struggle” (Norton, 2013) because of colonial cultural violence inflicted on its peoples. With regard to language in negotiation of Pacific identities, Mila-Schaaf (2011) discusses the role of *talanoa* and oral history in the telling and realising of identity stories. Furthermore, language is necessary in caring for the *vā*: *vā feāloaki-tauhi vā-teu le va* (Kennedy, 2019).

In applied sociolinguistics, Norton (2013) theorises identity in a spatiotemporal manner that resonates with Pacific understandings of *vā*. She defines identity as “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time or space, and how that person understands possibilities for the future” (ibid, p. 45). As part of this definition, Norton (2013) stresses the importance of considering how social structures such as ethnicity and gender produces inequity and impact how people understand their relationship to the world, as they continuously negotiate their identity. Within these social structures, through language, social interactions take place. Because identity is constructed “*in and through narrative*” (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 658) and social interaction, it is through language “that a person gains access to - or is denied access to - powerful social networks that give learners the opportunity to speak” (Norton, 2013, p. 45, Heller, 1987). Drawing on post-structuralism, Norton (2013, p. 162) claims that identity is “diverse, contradictory and changing over historical time and space” and therefore can be “a site of struggle” (ibid, p. 164) depending on how the speaker positions themselves and is positioned by others in a particular setting.

“Inequitable relations of power” are at play in negotiation of identity through language. Thus, Norton’s theory of identity (2013, p. 45) includes the term ‘investment’ in relation to the varying degrees of engagement in “social interactions and community practices” of language users (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 420). Traditionally language learners and users have been attributed with more binary, fixed, and ‘ahistorical’ descriptions of behaviours with terms such as motivated or unmotivated, introverted or extroverted (Norton, 2013, Norton &

Toohy, 2011). In contrast, the construct of investment allows language learners and users to have “complex identities” which fluidly change over space and time (Norton & Toohy, 2011, p. 420).

In terms of language and identity, “investment indexes issues of identity and imagined futures” (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 39). This means the investment in learning or using a language or being part of a speech community are often part of one’s future imagined identities (Barkhuizen, 2016). Norton (2013, p. 8) explains that imagined futures, imagined communities and identities refer to “groups of people” or situations “not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we can connect through the power of imagination.” This can include schools, communities, and workplaces (ibid). Imagined futures and future identities can affect how students learn by impacting one’s “current actions and investment” in relation to their future hopes for themselves and their communities (ibid, p. 8). Barkhuizen (2016), who terms Norton’s (2013) work as a “classic definition” of identity, explains that “investing means imagining the future and imaging our identity in relation to that future world” (Barkhuizen, 2016. p. 658).

These concepts of language learning, identity, and imagined futures provide a powerful and relevant conceptual tool for in-depth exploring of how opportunities for continued access to heritage language education connects with the future hopes of young Tokelauans and Tongans in Aotearoa. For young people who are part of the Pacific diaspora, access to being or not being a Pacific language speaker has allowed or denied access to “powerful social networks” that give young people “the opportunity to speak” (Norton, 2013, p. 45; Mila-Schaaf, 2011; Tupuola, 2004). Thus, by exploring how language education is connected with future identities, we can see in which ways education might open up more access to continued heritage language education.

### Edgewalking

For Pacific peoples growing up in Aotearoa, the multifaceted struggle and ongoing process of negotiating one’s identity conceptualised in both Pacific and Sociolinguistic scholarship can be described through edgewalking, being able to walk “the edge between ... cultures in the same persona” (Krebs, 1999, p. 9). An intercultural walk where one must negotiate and care for spiritual, temporal, physical, and interpersonal *vā*, is complex and challenging. However,

if edgewalking can be navigated successfully, the act can open up space for something new, creative, and previously unimagined (Steward-Withers, 2016). Furthermore, a successful edgewalk “affirm[s] the enlightened values by which our world must go forwards” (Krebs, 1999, p. 13) and honours difference in our society in a new light (Krebs, 2000). Edgewalking serves as a metaphor for how language education can support the future identities of young people.

Now the theoretical tools for discourse analysis in this chapter have been operationalised (Pacific and critical applied sociolinguistic understandings of identity, and edgewalking), I present the school contexts and findings from these contexts to illustrate how access to Pacific language education in schools contributes to what happens currently and in the future lives of students and communities.

#### 6.1.4 Educational settings: The Tongan Language and Pasifika Studies

As the majority of the data in this chapter come from school settings, Pasifika Studies and the Tongan Language Cluster, it is important to understand the two different secondary school contexts in focus (refer to Chapter, 4, section 4.2, pp. 80-9) for detailed description of The Tongan Language Cluster and Pasifika Studies). Outside of the Auckland area it is rare to find secondary school level access to Pacific languages other than gagana Samoa (with one or two exceptions such as the Cook Island Community in Tokoroa). Consequently, each setting takes a different approach. These two different approaches to providing access to Pacific language education in secondary schools which do not have large Pacific student populations offer important models through which to know and understand context in this research. Discussion of these programmes and their application to different contexts has implications for future imagined identities for Pacific language education in Aotearoa.

Pasifika Studies and the Tongan language cluster both take place in the same city. The facilitating teachers are friends and collaborate with other stakeholders and teachers across the city to provide a number of events for Pacific students. Some students from the Pasifika Studies class are part of both Pasifika Studies and the Tongan language cluster.

#### 6.1.5 Data sources and findings

The data analysed and presented in this chapter come from:

- two talanoa-informed focus group discussions with Tongan students from the Pasifika Studies class and the Tongan language cluster,
- one talanoa-informed interview with a Samoan-Fijian student from Anita's EAP class,
- one talanoa-informed interview with the Tongan teacher (Longo) of the Tongan language cluster,
- participant classroom observations in the Pasifika Studies class and the Tongan language cluster,
- two semi-structured interviews with Palagi teachers who facilitate the teaching of Pacific languages (Anita and Maria),
- three talanoa-informed interviews with three Tokelauan community members and participant observations in the Tokelau community where relevant.

The five themes for this chapter emerged from salient “rich points” during the data analysis process (Conteh, 2018, see 4.4, p. 98 of this thesis). These themes look at how Pacific language education in schools connects to future imagined identities of participants through:

1. Increased cultural, social and material capital
2. Explicit language learning supports language maintenance
3. Valuing of language and culture and academic success
4. A safe space for critically exploring issues of language, culture, and identity
5. Community and school partnerships for sustainable speech communities

These themes will be discussed in relation to relevant excerpts from the data and supporting literature.

## 6.2 - Theme 1: Increased cultural, social and material capital

For Tongan students interviewed, the opportunity to learn lea faka-Tonga in a school context enables student participants to imagine their future selves as better communicators with an increased sense of community belonging and valuable skills for the work force. This is illustrated in the following series of excerpts in which Tongan students David, Vai, Langi, Toniseni, and Tevita (Tongan language cluster) and Samisoni (Pasifika Studies) discuss (1)



what they enjoy about learning Tongan language at school, (2) why they believe learning Tongan is important, and (3) what motivates them to keep learning.

Excerpt 6.1

(00:18)

- 1       **Juliet:** *Why do you enjoy coming along to the Tongan language cluster?*
- 2       **David:** *just like the importance of [...] if you are like going to [...] talk with another*
- 3       *Tongan, you might want to know what they are saying and they call yourself*
- 4       *“plastic”((laughs)), so that is a pretty important thing to [...] understand what other*
- 5       *people are saying*

(00:39)

In this excerpt, David identifies he enjoys coming to the Tongan language cluster because he thinks it is “*a pretty important thing*” to understand “*what other people are saying*” when they speak Tongan. David implies he has not yet reached this ideal of understanding everything when spoken to in Tongan because others call him ‘plastic’ (line 3). As discussed in detail in Chapter 5, plastic is a term used frequently by young Aotearoa-born Pacific peoples who are not positioned as being authentically of their cultural heritage because they cannot speak their heritage language fluently. As he laughs, we can gather that the opportunity to attend Tongan classes through school enables David to imagine his future identity differently. In investing his time in learning lea faka-Tonga, he imagines this may lead to being able to understand and communicate in lea faka-Tonga more proficiently and therefore no longer considered ‘plastic’ by others.

David’s discussion in this excerpt surrounding how learning Tongan can lead to improved understanding and communication with people in the community and gaining a more ‘authentic’ sense of cultural identity relate to literature surrounding cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1990) and Polycultural capital (Mila-Schaaf & Robinson, 2010). Mila-Schaaf and Robinson (2010, p.12) discuss how Pacific language-English bilingualism and biculturalism is seen by many young Pacific peoples as a form of cultural and social capital which enables people to use their “agency and ability to efficiently reference more than one knowledge tradition; to choose selectively or respond effectively - dependent on context and purpose” and thus maximising and seizing “potential opportunities theoretically available to all”

(Bourdieu, 1990, p. 64). The following four excerpts show further detail of what this social and cultural Polycapital might look like in the future imaged identities of the students.

#### Excerpt 6.2

(09:50)

- 1       **Juliet:** *What are your dreams for your own Tongan language skills[...]?*
  - 2       **David:** *to be real fluent,*
  - 3       **Juliet:** *What are the signs are of a 'real fluent person'?*
  - 4       **Vai:** *To be able to have conversations with like families and stuff and just not like*
  - 5       *give them one-word answers ((laughter from whole group))*
  - 6       **David:** *yeah ((laughs))*
  - 7       **Langi:** *because you know you can't like explain more, so yeah that would be fun*
- (10:18)

David states he would like to be “*real fluent*” and Vai explains that as a “*real fluent person*” you can “*have conversations*” that go beyond “*one-word answers.*” Langi adds that this means you can “*explain more.*” It seems for all three students, being able to communicate more fluently and in depth with Tongan-speaking family is part of their dream or imagined future identities. As they laugh in agreement with each other, their discourse “*yeah*” shows they do not yet see themselves as fluent speakers. However, in attending the Tongan language cluster they are investing in their future identities as Tongan speakers. Being “*real fluent*” and able to “*have conversations*” and “*explain more*” in lea faka-Tonga would be “*fun*” (Langi). Here we see that this future imagined increased cultural and social capital involves more in-depth conversations with Tongan speaking family and not feeling like one can only give short answers in social settings.

Developing enhanced communication in lea faka-Tonga also motivates Toniseni to come to the Tongan language cluster. In excerpt 6.3, Toniseni talks about how he envisages learning lea faka-Tonga will enhance his communication and understanding at home and in the community.

#### Excerpt 6.3

(12:29)

- 1       **Toniseni:** *Motivation [for coming] would probably be [...] trying to understand [...]*

2      *Tongan instead of something traditional happen and you can't just sit back and let it*  
 3      *happen, and then motivation is to try to understand what it is about, rather than just*  
 4      *letting it happen [and not being aware of it] [...] sometimes I don't speak back when*  
 5      *they [his parents] speak Tongan back to me*  
 (13.28)

Toniseni's narrative here implies that in the past, he or perhaps his friends has/ have been more passive participants at cultural traditional events where lea faka-Tonga is the dominant language. He might have sat "*back and let it happen*" without understanding or perhaps caring what it is happening and why it is significant to him. In relation to this he adds that sometimes he does not reply to his parents when they speak to him in Tongan. Access to Tongan language education at school opens up opportunity for Toniseni to improve his communication skills in lea faka-Tonga in the future.

Tevita's reasons for enjoying the Tongan language cluster and reasons for investing his time in attending are similar to those of his peers.

Excerpt 6.4  
 (17:34)

1      **Tevita:** *Mostly because I get like teased about it ((lots of laughter)), [...] plastic, but*  
 2      *also to talk to my grandparents, to talk to [...] my elders, [...] my church leaders, you*  
 3      *know that communication is really key at church and stuff in order to understand*  
 4      *topics that are in the Bible and how they interpret it and it is easier if you learn, if we*  
 5      *learn our language then it is easier for us to understand really hard words for us to*  
 6      *understand and it is easier for us to communicate [...] communication is key,*  
 7      *especially if you are going to return to the Islands that is one thing you do [...]*  
 8      *communicating and then getting laughed at ((all students laugh))*  
 (18:30)

In this excerpt, Tevita joined in the conversation a bit later than the rest of the group and had missed our prior conversation about being 'plastic.' Without knowing we had just been discussing what 'plastic' entailed, he begins with describing how being teased about being plastic as one of the biggest motivations for attending the classes (line 1). This section of dialogue also ends with reference to being "*teased [...] getting laughed at*" when he tries to

communicate in Tongan when visiting Tonga (lines 7 to 8). Once again, the opportunity to learn lea-faka Tonga through school opens up Tevita's future imagined identity to be positioned as authentic or not plastic in the future. I note here that being teased and laughed at for "*being plastic*" is not always seen as negative by students. In this data set it is often surrounded with laughter and joking. However, this notion of only having the status of authentic cultural identity by right of being a fluent speaker is very common amongst Pacific students in this research (see Chapter 5). In the research of Mila-Schaaf (2011), Tupuola (2004), and in the discourse of students I teach, being positioned as plastic is not always a laughing matter in terms of negotiating identity. In these discussions, though not the focus of this chapter, it is important to note again the presence and impact of linguistic purism in these narratives (see Chapters 2 & 5) to be discussed further in connection with implications in Chapter 8.

Tevita's discourse in excerpt 6.4 reveals other imagined future identities, like his peers he is investing in learning lea faka-Tonga through school because he wants to be able to communicate well with his "*grandparents*," "*elders*" and church leaders. In the future he sees that learning lea-faka Tonga will enhance his communication on trips to Tonga and improve his understanding of "*hard words*" in the Tongan Bible.

This sense of investing in language now for the future is apparent in Samisoni's (Pasifika studies) narrative below. Here he discusses why he enjoys Pasifika studies and why he thinks maintaining and developing his proficiency in lea faka-Tonga is important.

#### Excerpt 6.5

(08:20)

- 1      **Samisoni:** *it is just a way to learn more of your language than learning English, so*
- 2      *you have that as well which will help a lot in your future jobs, and stuff where*
- 3      *you have to understand other people where you can understand because you can*
- 4      *understand languages and stuff like that [...] but it is always just good to have as you*
- 5      *are moving on.*

(08:50)

Like Tevita, Samisoni's discourse in this excerpt shows he is aware of how strong skills in lea faka-Tonga may be an important part of his identity in the future. Samisoni's narrative

adds the notion that he is investing in developing his language skills to help in his future workplace (lines 1-4). Seeing language as a valuable skill for the workplace adds not only to cultural and social capital but also increases material capital (Bourdieu, 2007).

For all six students here, access to ongoing access to Tongan language education at school opens up a future imagined identity with increased cultural, social, and material capital. The students have invested in learning Tongan because they and their families see that they can gain something useful for the future. This cultural and social capital they might gain can be connected with participants in Mila-Schaaf and Robinson (2010, p. 11) who were older, and identified and described their cultural and social capital as enabling them to “dip in and out of things easily” and therefore have “more choices.”

Applying Pacific and sociolinguistic theories of identity to these narratives, we can see how each of these students exist as “part of something bigger” (Barkhuizen, 2016), they construct who they are in relation to the *vā* between their family and their friends through language. Learning *lea-faka-Tonga* at school seems to open up positive imagined identities of being able to communicate better and *tauhi vā* with their families in the future. Learning Tongan opens up possibilities for changing identity overtime as someone who goes from not being able to speak to someone with increased social capital able to communicate in Tongan communities. Being teased about being plastic for not speaking Tongan illustrates how language and struggle are implicated in negotiation of identity (Norton, 2013). Furthermore, applying an edgewalking theoretical lens to the process of identity negotiation for young Tongans growing up in Aotearoa, we see the vulnerability and risk taking involved in learning and using a heritage language. However, linking the experiences of these six Tongan students to the experiences of participants identified as “high achieving” second generation Pacific professionals in Mila-Schaaf and Robinson (2010, p.11) we see the potential of the edgewalk as they describe being able to have “the advantage of both cultures” when one can “fit into and navigate multiple spaces.”

These findings have many implications for communities, schools, and policies in supporting Pacific language literacy which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.

### 6.3 - Theme 2: Explicit language learning supports language maintenance

Student, community, and teacher participants identified that for speech communities to thrive in the future, young people of Tokelauan and Tongan heritage need to have explicit learning of language as well as exposure in the home and community. Participants independently agreed that school is an ideal place for explicit language learning to take place. In this sub-chapter, the analysis of narratives explain why explicit HL learning at school is important for future imagined identities in which language is maintained.

Tongan students, Vai and Langi, from the Tongan language cluster capture the overarching need for instructed learning of Tongan succinctly in the following excerpt.

#### Excerpt 6.6

(05:01)

- 1       **Juliet:** *Why do you think it is important to learn Tongan language skills?*
- 2       **Langi:** *so our language doesn't die*
- 3       **Vai:** *yeah, so our language doesn't die ((laughter from group))*

(05:10)

In this brief but succinct interaction, Langi and Vai identify that as Tongans growing up in Aotearoa, they need to learn lea faka-Tonga for the language to survive. In saying “*our language*” there is some recognition that language maintenance but a collective effort. Both the bringing up of the topic language survival and the laughter that follows from the rest of the group indicates this group of students are aware that languages can die and that in the future this could be a possibility without a concerted effort.

The discourse shows that Tongan and Tokelauan community teachers and leaders also recognise the necessity of explicit language learning for sustainable language maintenance in the future and see education as the most suitable institution able to provide access to explicit learning of language.

#### Excerpt 6.7

(08:20)

- 1       **Longo:** *because if they didn't have this [the Tongan language cluster for teaching*
- 2       *and learning lea faka-Tonga], our language will be lost, no truly, it will be lost,*
- 3       *because if parents at home don't enforce this, definitely, we'll lose not only the*

4        *language, we will lose our culture at the same time. So, the school has a big*  
5        *((emphasis)) role in this.*  
(08:38)

Without having heard what Vai and Langi (Excerpt 6.6, p. 158) has said, Longo also states that she believes explicit learning of Tongan at school plays a big role in ensuring the survival of lea faka-Tonga. Evident here and frequently throughout her narrative, Longo discusses why she believes school is an important place for language education. According to Longo, Tongan “*will be lost*” if not learnt at school as she has observed that many “*parents at home don’t enforce*” the speaking and learning of Tongan in the family and therefore children are increasingly no longer able to speak and understand lea faka-Tonga. Longo’s observation of language shift in her community matches language shift described the literature (Fishman, 2013; Holmes & Harlow, 1991). Longo’s comments above show hints of some evidence in the literature that some Pacific communities are seeing language shift happen more rapidly than Fishman’s (1980) three generation model of language shift (Parsons, 2020). Longo explains that to counteract this trend, learning lea faka-Tonga at school is essential because children do not pick up a language unless there is some sort of explicit effort.

Like Longo, Peta (Tokelau Community leader) discusses the need for explicit language education for sustaining gagana Tokelau as a speech community in the future, and how education is implicated in this.

Excerpt 6.8  
(13:19)

1        **Peta:** *I think for my kids we need to have a sustainable programme up at [our*  
2        *community] where we are consciously and intentionally teaching the language, not*  
3        *leaving it to chance that they will pick it up by being around it. [...] I think it would*  
4        *be nice if we could get some Tokelau language nests that are purely Tokelau in [our*  
5        *city] and then be able to have those nests feed into one primary school. We just need*  
6        *one primary school in the area that will invest [...] in Tokelau language coming*  
7        *through and then if it can be accessible at college, that would be great, there*  
8        *would be a flow.*  
(15:03)

Peta states that for a thriving speech community in the future, sustainable teaching and learning of gagana Tokelau needs to be done “*consciously and intentionally*” and not leaving language acquisition “*to chance*.” What is not mentioned in excerpt 6.8 is that Peta believes this initiative must be Tokelau community-led. However, within community-led language education, she still believes the education system at all levels is essential (ECE -language nests, primary schools, and the local college). Kaimaikoi (Tokelau and Tongan community leader) describes school as “*the most influential system where our children could have access*” to gagana Tokelau and “*where we need to have gagana Tokelau in order for it to survive*.”

The discourse of Longo, Peta, and Kaimaikoi will be further discussed later in this chapter in relation to other themes arising from the data. I now turn to Anita’s experience to further illustrate how Pacific language education opens up the opportunity to learn explicitly about how heritage language works to support future language maintenance.

### 6.3.1 Anita

Anita is the facilitating teacher of Pasifika Studies (p.85 & p. 151). Throughout her career, Anita has observed and identified the issues surrounding subtractive bilingualism (May, 2014) amongst her students. These observations motivated Anita to create an opportunity for students to reconnect with their languages and cultures as part of their formal education.

Pasifika Studies was born as a result of Anita’s imagined future identities for her students - futures where they are connected and strong in both their heritage languages and in English and profit from all of the emotional, cognitive, and material benefits they gain from bilingualism (Franken et al, 2008, Li, 2000; May, 2014). We have already heard how Pasifika studies has had a positive knock-on effect in the lives of several students in Chapter 5. The following excerpts show how explicitly focusing on learning form (Ellis, 2005) in one’s heritage language can supports language maintenance and how this process allows for new imagined future identities.

#### Excerpt 6.9

(39:43)

- 1       **Anita:** *At the end of the day, for these kids I find, structured language instruction*
- 2       *needs to happen, despite what people think, it doesn’t happen via osmosis and*



3        *not at this stage.*

(40:01)

In this short excerpt, Anita's discourse ties in with what Tongan and Tokelau community leaders and students have said in this section. Namely, that heritage language maintenance does not happen "*via osmosis*" without "*structured language instruction*." She also refers to the age of her students. In saying "*at this stage*," Anita is implying secondary school-aged students and possibly hinting at the level of language acquisition. Anita, however, believes Pacific language education can support heritage language maintenance. She outlines how she plans for this in her Pasifika Studies classes.

Excerpt 6.10

(05:14)

1        **Anita:** *there is very much a focus on language. [...] At the beginning of each class*  
2        *there is a 'do-now' activity [...] I do know the students and where their holes are,*  
3        *surprisingly. It sounds odd when I don't actually know the languages myself, but you*  
4        *know enough [...] through family connections and talking to them that some of them*  
5        *have one leg in one leg out. Some of them have perhaps a receptive knowledge but*  
6        *haven't have a chance to produce or they've never had really explicit instruction in*  
7        *putting sentences together, so 'do-nows' are really [...] very much differentiated, so*  
8        *for example at the moment with my students, I have been making them aware of how*  
9        *do they say something in the past and also adding in adjectives. And we talk about*  
10       *"ok, this is an adjective in English so where does it go in Samoan" and so what*  
11       *happens is the discussion becomes a linguistic discussion between different groups.*  
12       *So for example, one of the Tongans with go "oh that is where it goes in Samoan,*  
13       *actually that is the same in Tongan." And what happens is that when we do a 'do-*  
14       *now' we get three languages or four languages up on the board, so the kids are*  
15       *[...] analysing not only their own language, they are actually analysing the*  
16       *languages of the other students as well. Now that happens incidentally out there, they*  
17       *talk about this themselves [...] someone says: "oh you say this in Tongan" and "you*  
18       *can say that in Samoan." But my job is actually to make them aware of [...] the*  
19       *similarities between the languages but also raise their consciousness of where it*  
20       *relates to English as well. So, you are trying to build that bilingualism and raise their*  
21       *awareness of two languages or three languages [...] this is Pacific studies. [...] so*

22     *we are analysing the languages but what [...] often happens now is that the Tongan*  
 23     *student will say: “oh Miss, can I read the Fijian?” or the Fijian student “Oh can I*  
 24     *read the Samoan” [...] they are very aware of the Pacific realm, they are very aware*  
 25     *that they are part of something bigger, and that is where their strength is [...] so that*  
 26     *is one aspect of it.*  
 (08:43)

Anita begins by describing how the language focus in Pasifika studies works. Classes begin with a “*do-now*” activity. In a classroom observation (August, 2018) I observed an example of this activity. Students came into class and worked in language groups (with support of language tutors employed by the school) to write up a translation of an English sentence on the white board. As Anita says, this do-now activity serves to “*differentiate*.” It gives students a chance to tap into their “*receptive knowledge*” as some have “*never had really explicit instruction in putting sentences together*” and at the same time students who are more fluent can bring their expertise to help with this activity. The “*do-now*” activities provide the opportunity for students to look at how tenses are formed and how adjectives are used in their heritage languages. This supports language acquisition theory which posits that knowledge of language form supports further development to use language proficiently (Ellis, 2005). Linking this activity to what Tongan (Longo, Excerpt 6.7, p. 158) and Tokelauan community teachers and leaders (Peta, Excerpt 6.8, p. 159) say in relation to language maintenance, the process of “*putting sentences together*” in the do-now activity builds student awareness of how language works, therefore not leaving heritage language acquisition “*to chance*” (Peta 6.8) and assuming “*they can just pick it up*” (Longo 6.7). This is related to Ellis’s (2005) work which discusses the importance of both developing explicit and implicit language knowledge in successful instructed language acquisition.

This explicit focus on language form helps students to develop their language awareness which has a flow on effect when students are exposed to and using language in the home and community. This flow on effect was evident in Samisoni’s discourse presented in Chapter 5 (Excerpt 5.11, p. 122). Samisoni found that in having to focus on writing in lea faka-Tonga in Pasifika Studies, he became aware of his linguistic knowledge gaps. This led him to go home to ask his grandma for help with vocabulary. Building up language awareness by working explicitly on language form in class also increases student awareness of who their language resources are, for example they can ask another classmate or family member. Anita’s

comments in this excerpt also show how teachers do not always need to be native speakers of a language to raise awareness of language and to draw on the positive resources students bring to school.

For Anita, one unexpected outcome from explicitly focusing on several Pacific languages together in Pasifika studies is how students begin to realise a collective Pacific identity through looking at similarities in each others' languages. As Anita's students analyse grammar in their own languages during the do-now translation activity, they notice the similarities between other Pacific languages and enjoy understanding and using each others' languages: "*the Tongan student will say 'oh Miss, can I read the Fijian?' "*" In doing this activity not only becoming more aware of grammar features inherent in their HLs, but as Anita comments this activity also helps students to become "*very aware that they are part of something bigger*" within the Pacific realm. This is powerful learning for their current and future imagined identities and possibilities as this understanding of being part of something bigger "*is where their strength is.*" Here again, we see how language and identity are linked as students become aware of being part of the wider Pacific identity through translating sentences into different Pacific languages with each other in class. This highlights the crossover in Pacific and sociolinguistic theories of identity and language as relational, multiple, and changing. With the edgewalking theoretical lens, students are using language to cross cultural boundaries to discover "*where their strength is.*" They can use this knowledge to empower their lives in the current moment and as part of their future imagined identities.

As Anita facilitates this course in partnership with community language tutors supporting with linguistic and cultural knowledge, the students take part in many other explicit language learning activities in Pasifika Studies (described later in this interview and observed in August, 2018). These language learning activities involve the students learning how to converse in their heritage languages, vocabulary learning, listening and reading comprehension, and essay and speech writing. Using the Learning Languages set of NCEA Achievement Standards, the Tongan and Samoan students can gain NCEA credits in their work. For students whose languages are not represented in the New Zealand Curriculum (for example Fijian and Kiribati), Anita still enables them to be involved in language learning activities and uses another suite of NCEA Pacific Studies assessments to assess their work. Together with some other teachers and local MoE representatives, Anita organises an annual Pacific language speech celebration for students from around the area. The process of writing

and learning a speech for this celebration opens up opportunities for many students to connect more with heritage languages as described in the next excerpt.

### 6.3.2 Roberti

Roberti is of Samoan and Fijian heritage but was raised in Aotearoa. At the time he was in Year 12 (16 years old) and attended Mountain View High (see 4.6.2, p. 87). At the time his school did not have an option for him to learn his heritage languages (this is discussed further in Chapter 7), however his ESL teacher, Maria worked closely with Anita and was very supportive of students maintaining their heritage languages. Maria encouraged Roberti to participate in the Pacific language speech celebration for students around the area. In the following excerpt, Roberti discusses how the explicit focus on language helped him to improve his Fijian language competency and connection to his father.

#### Excerpt 6.11

(06:01)

- 1     **Roberti:** *because I'm not really the best with Fijian, Samoan I am fine. I'm pretty*  
2     *much fluent. But Fijian, I wasn't really brought up with the language so it is kind of*  
3     *hard having to write it, so I got a lot of help with Dad [...] But [...] I kind of got to*  
4     *recognise some of the words through my speech and it just felt like I understood it*  
5     *properly, just by reading it, just by going over and over it, it just made it easier [...]*  
6     **Juliet:** *Did you hear other kids do speeches in Fijian as well? [...] Could you*  
7     *understand them? [...]*  
8     **Roberti:** *Yeah [...] to the point that I could understand what their topic was about,*  
9     *and their different take on it, [...] just like with numbers, I'm pretty good with*  
10    *numbers, when they were talking about a different year, because we were doing*  
11    *Indigenous, [...] when they were talking about a different year, I just straight away*  
12    *know what they were talking about, but there were points where I was just going "I*  
13    *have no idea what is going on"*

(23:17)

Roberti clarifies that of his two heritage languages he is much less confident in using Fijian, the language of his father, especially in writing Fijian. His father helped him to write his speech and through the explicit process of repeatedly reading over the speech, his

understanding of Fijian improved. Listening to other students presenting speeches in Fijian gave him a chance to practise his listening comprehension. He could identify that he could understand the topic and stance of the topic and number-related statements, but he was also able to see where his gaps were, giving him the opportunity to find out answers and develop his language skills. Roberti mentioned later that he can now participate in conversations with his Fijian aunty when she visits as he has gained confidence in using Fijian. In terms of his connection to his father, Maria, his teacher, mentioned that after this speech celebration, Roberti's father had said to Maria he was inspired to speak more with Roberti in Fijian in the future. The chance to write and present a speech as part of a school event and assessment enabled Roberti to see how his Fijian heritage might be part of future identities connecting with his aunt and father through language.

In this sub-chapter we see that Pacific language education in schools supports language maintenance by providing explicit language learning opportunities. These opportunities are considered crucial by student and community participants for future imagined identities with thriving Tokelauan and Tongan speech communities. Explicit language learning in schools provides opportunities for students to access and build on language knowledge they have. Class activities such as translation, essay and speech writing, conversation practice, vocabulary learning, and comprehension affirm students of what they know already, making them aware of where their gaps are, and how they can develop their proficiency. Explicit language learning builds language awareness when students hear language used in home and community settings and strengthens relationships in the home as students draw on their parents and elder's language knowledge to help with schoolwork. Having the chance to develop HL proficiency heightens students future dreams of gaining cultural and social capital through language as discussed in 6.6. Furthermore, explicit focus on different Pacific languages together in class reinforces relational collective Pacific identity from which students can gain strength in present and future imagined identities.

I now examine how opportunities for explicit HL learning in school illustrates how languages and cultures are valued and the flow-on effects this has for academic success, and positive future imagined identities.

#### 6.4 - Theme 3: Valuing of language and culture and academic success

For sustainable and thriving Pacific speech communities in the future, both teachers and community members in this study recognise the importance of institutional value given to Pacific languages. In showing that Pacific languages are valued, they can be linked to the future successes of the students.

#### 6.4.1 Anita

Anita recognises how important the valuing of language and cultural background is to learning and how it needs to be linked to successful learning. In Excerpt 6.12 she describes how she shows students how valued and valuable their heritage languages and cultures are as part of the Pasifika Studies course.

#### Excerpt 6.12

(09:04)

- 1     **Anita:** *the other part [of Pasifika Studies] fits with social sciences.[...] it is [...]*  
2     *developing research questions, on aspects of the Pacific realm. [...] a level 3 topic*  
3     *might be “What were the impacts of the dawn raids?”, “what are the similarities and*  
4     *differences between [...] comparing Tongan dance and Samoan dance.” [...] I’ve*  
5     *had students do “look at the independence of Fiji” all that kind of stuff. So there are*  
6     *really quite rich research questions, [...] we visit the [university Indigenous research*  
7     *library three times, maybe four times this year [...] what they come to realise is “oh,*  
8     *ok this is an academic subject, it is actually researchable, and people want to*  
9     *research it and the people at the [university Indigenous research] library are*  
10    *very[...] passionate about [...] supporting the students [...], in September we have a*  
11    *big evening of [research] presentations and they are usually about ten to fifteen*  
12    *minutes [...] so this is actually research the students have done, [...] for some of them*  
13    *it is an opportunity to go: “oh, I know this is something I’ve wanted to know about”*  
14    *[...] I give them seven research question frameworks, you might look at evaluative*  
15    *questions or similarity and differences, or cause and effect, or processes and stages*  
16    *[...] I [...] bring in guest speakers, [...] the other day I had [name of speaker] who*  
17    *is a the [name of government organisation] and he talked about his[...] very difficult*  
18    *journey and where it has gone and he has now got several Matai titles. So it is also*  
19    *providing models of students and people who have achieved and people who are*  
20    *studying the culture and languages for people and who they are, to show them that*  
21    *“hey, I can actually take this further”[...] So it opens up their eyes and they go “oh, I*

As Anita talks through the different teaching and learning which happens as part of the social sciences component of Pasifika Studies, she describes the multiple ways in which she shows students the value and relevance of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds for their own future success and for the whole of society. Providing the opportunity to research an aspect of history, society or change in the Pacific or connected to students’ experiences shows students there is an academic framework which values this knowledge. Furthermore, undertaking research supports students to more deeply understand and connect with family history and culture as interviewing family members is a part of this process.

Anita shows the students that this research knowledge is valued by wider and more powerful institutions beyond school by taking them to the university library which specialises in Indigenous scholarship. Here they meet more adults who are “*passionate*” and interested in the students’ research projects. In visiting a whole library dedicated to Indigeneity in the Pacific realm they can experience how deep and rich their cultural heritage.

The student research is celebrated within the school when students share their presentations. Family and staff are invited to listen to the presentations which are given in the students’ own languages or a mixture of the heritage language and English (classroom observation and personal communication with Anita, May 2019). Meeting different Pacific role models (from researchers, to MPs and policemen who come from similar cultural backgrounds to the students) also brings value to the course. Together with these different layers of the course, Anita hopes that the students will “*open their eyes*” and see the ways in which their cultural identities can open up new imagined futures and say: “*hey, I can actually take this further [...] I can do that.*”

Only longitudinal research can fully evaluate empirically how Pasifika Studies impacts the futures of students. However, in the short term, narratives from focus groups in this study show how students perceive participation and learning in Pasifika Studies connects to future imagined identities as seen in the discourse of Samisoni (Chapter 5), and Samisoni’s Samoan classmate Leilani who says:

*The other classes, they are all like English orientated where we just feel out of place, kind of. This class really does help us because it gives us good grades as well, and we can use our language here as well as home.*

As evidenced in Leilani's comment, Anita's Pasifika studies course builds on the knowledge the students and their families bring to their learning, providing an example of linguistically culturally sustaining pedagogy in practice (see Chapter 2, section 2.3) (Paris & Alim, 2017). This example of a course with CSP in practice shows how languages and cultures of the students are valued through activities including: Pacific dance, relevant research projects connecting to the lives of students and their families, visiting university libraries where students can see Indigenous knowledge valued by powerful institutions, inviting guest speakers, and celebrating this learning by presenting multilingually to family. Consequently, students can use this linguistic and cultural learning to inform their future imagined identities in positive ways, supporting a successful edgewalk. The implications of these findings for communities and educational practice and policy will be further discussed in Chapter 8.

This example of a culturally sustaining course is further discussed in the following sub-chapter looking at how critical language education can influence future imagined identities in Pasifika Studies and the Tongan Language Cluster.

#### 6.5 - Theme 4: A Safe space for critically exploring issues of language, culture, and identity

In Chapter 5, we saw evidence of how Aotearoa-born Pacific young people can experience shame in relation to heritage language use, how this shame is linked to hegemonic forces such as colonialism, and how this can make negotiation of identity a site of struggle (5.2.3 pp. 112-5, 5.4.1-3 pp. 127-34). If the imagined future identities of Tongan and Tokelauan communities are to involve thriving speech communities, these young people need to have safe spaces where they can make mistakes, practise their language skills, and openly discuss all of the issues at play as they negotiate their identities through language. Data from the Tongan language cluster and Pasifika Studies provide evidence that such educational models are safe spaces for this to happen.



### 6.5.1 A place where it is okay to make mistakes

In Excerpt 6.13, Maria discusses how the majority of students that attend the Tongan language cluster already do speak a certain level of lea faka-Tonga and that it is more challenging trying to support the “*afakasi*<sup>36</sup> students, who really want to learn the language, fairly much from scratch.” Although Maria felt the Tongan language cluster was not yet well set up to teach students how to speak Tongan “*from scratch*,” she described the other benefits of attending the language classes for these students and pedagogies which were used to support all learners feel safe in their language learning.

#### Excerpt 6.13

(26:04)

- 1     **Maria:** *But last year a couple of those [afakasi] students came along, and they just*  
2     *came to the classes, they didn't do the assessment in the end, but because there is a*  
3     *whole lot of cultural stuff going on as well, and just being immersed in the language,*  
4     *that is kind of a cool thing to do, and it is social too*  
5     **Juliet:** *Did you find those kids in that situation, [...] did you notice they felt any sense*  
6     *of embarrassment speaking in Tongan [...]?*  
7     **Maria:** *They weren't forced to speak in Tongan, and we say quite deliberately that*  
8     *there is a whole range of students here, you know, with different amounts, different*  
9     *experiences, so it doesn't matter[...] so I suppose I'm going on that [...]underlying*  
10    *principle for me is [...] that languaging, translanguaging idea, that we are not talking*  
11    *about a language where you start at a certain point where you learn progressively up,*  
12    *because there is such a range. So you actually have to think differently,[...] and also*  
13    *if you are talking about something to do with church, you might find the students*  
14    *really fluent in their home languages but if you are talking about*  
15    *something to do with science at school, they might not be really fluent in their home*  
16    *languages, so it is sort of fluency is really different depending on the context, then*  
17    *there will be lots of talk that is half Tongan and half English. I don't think that in that*  
18    *kind of learning environment, stamping on that is a good thing, because actually that*  
19    *is an opportunity for students to build their Tongan, and then the kids have also said*  
20    *it has been good for their English, being at the classes as well, so depending on who*  
21    *you are [...]*

---

<sup>36</sup> Half Tongan, half Palangi

(38:33)

Maria describes how the afakasi students who were exposed to less Tongan in the home and community attended the classes but did not sit the examinations as they did not have enough language. Although Maria felt they were not able to build the language proficiency enough for the students to complete the assessment, Maria still saw multiple benefits for these students. She felt that being around “*a whole lot of cultural stuff [...] immersed in the language*” and the social aspect of the classes is “*a kind of cool thing to do*” (lines 2-4). I was interested to know if not being as proficient as the other students made the “*afakasi*” students feel embarrassed. Obviously, here we only have Maria’s experience of the situation, we do not know how these students felt. However, Maria then discusses strategies the teaching team tried to use in supporting everyone to feel safe in the language learning environment.

These strategies included: explicitly explaining that the Tongan language cluster was a space for people with “*a whole range*” of language experience to learn, not forcing people to speak *lea faka-Tonga* when they were not comfortable, and modelling translinguaging as a way of learning and exploring language (lines 7-11). Maria’s explanation of how translinguaging works in the Tongan language cluster provides good examples of translinguaging as theory and pedagogical practice. Elements of translinguaging theory are evident in Maria’s description of the fluid language practices of her multilingual students in (lines 13-17). As students use Tongan more in church or home contexts, and English more in school contexts we see the “multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds” (García, 2009, p. 45). Maria’s description of there being “*lots of talk that is half Tongan and half English*” shows fluid language use of the students and teachers’ full linguistic repertoire to communicate and make sense of the situation (Otheguy et al, 2015). Shortly after this excerpt, Maria adds that the lead Tongan teacher who is “*quite into educational language ideas [...] will flip between the two languages quite happily*” suggesting that he is deploying his “full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually state) languages” (Otheguy et al, 2015, p. 283).

Looking at how this translates to translinguaging as pedagogy, Maria explains how the range of language experience is so varying, that the traditional approach to language education where you “*learn progressively up*” is inappropriate and that “*you have to think differently*”

(lines 11-13) in terms of how language is taught. Teachers model translanguaging as acceptable and fluid practice at varying levels with the lead teacher highly fluent in both English and lea faka-Tonga and Maria trying to use little bits of Tongan whilst describing herself as “*completely incompetent in lea faka-Tonga*” (later on in interview, 29:45). In modelling translanguaging as a practice in which there is room for all levels of fluency, the teachers are providing a safe translanguaging space for language learning. Maria expresses this concept in a comment later on: “*so that kind of means those students who are not confident in Tongan kind of almost shelter under my Palangi umbrella, [...] everybody is different, so it kind of works.*”

Translanguaging as a pedagogy in the Tongan language cluster is not discussed in much more detail in the transcript, however, during my classroom observation, I observed translanguaging pedagogy in action in the following ways. Students informally moved between English and Tongan in their interactions before the class begun. The class began formally with prayers and singing in Tongan, followed by notices in English (given by Maria) and English and Tongan. During the teaching sessions students and teachers moved fluidly between the two languages. As Maria comments at the end of this excerpt, she believes the students have benefitted from allowing and using deliberate and natural translanguaging practices. Translanguaging seems to build a bridge. It is “*an opportunity for students to build their Tongan, and then the kids have also said it has been good for their English [...] so depending on who you are.*”

In Pasifika Studies a translanguaging approach also appears to provide safe spaces for language learning. The do-now activities in Pasifika Studies (Excerpt 6.10, p. 161) involve translation from English to Pacific languages and then comparison across languages are a deliberate translanguaging pedagogy. Students collectively draw on their full linguistic repertoire in working out translations and sharing them with the class. It seems that in regularly participating in this multilingual activity students feel safe to use and experiment with languages. This is illustrated in Anita’s narrative: “*the Tongan student will say “oh Miss, can I read the Fijian?” or the Fijian student: “Oh can I read the Samoan”* (p. 161). Furthermore, in Pasifika Studies students do spend time focusing on their own heritage language learning with community tutors, however they do this in the same classroom space with all of the languages. Students are constantly exposed to multiple language and able to learn and try all languages should they choose.

### 6.5.2 A place to tackle critical issues of race and power

In Pasifika Studies students undertake research. Anita encourages students to choose topics of relevance and interest to their own lives. Student research topics are discussed, shared, and presented as part of the course. Anita and I did not discuss this in further detail, however, this classroom forum could and may already act as a safe space for students to discuss issues of racism, inequality, and how they impact language and identity. One example of a relevant starting point for such discussion is found in Excerpt 6.12 (p. 166, line 3), where Anita briefly alludes to students choosing the impact of the Dawn Raids (police raids at dawn on Pacific overstayers in Aotearoa during the the mid 1970s, see Chapter 2, p. 28) as one of the research topics. Similarly, throughout student narratives in Chapter 5 (5.4, pp. 127-134), students in Pasifika Studies openly discuss language, race, and skin colour. These critical conversations are key in naming the White Spaces (Milne, 2017) which support students to develop consciousness of their presence in the world (Freire, 1973). According to Freire (1973), this process of conscientisation informs and enables students to develop their full potential. When these critical conversations take place in a safe environment involving reflection students are empowered to take transformative political action with the aim of dismantling social injustice (Macedo & Araújo Freire, 2005, p.xvii; O'Shea & O'Brian, 2011).

Outside of the Kura Kaupapa Māori immersion environment, language education in Aotearoa has not been a platform for critical reflection and action and change for social justice (May, 2014). Its potential for empowering future imagined identities of Pacific students will be discussed in Chapter 8.

Again applying theoretical underpinnings to this sub-chapter we see the relational, complex, and changing nature of negotiating identity through language and culture. In this process, having a safe place to develop language proficiency and critical awareness can equip young people with skills to undertake a successful edgewalk across cultural and linguistic boundaries in their lives. Successfully navigating this edgewalk opens up further positive future imagined identities.

## 6.6 - Theme 5: Community and school partnerships for sustainable speech communities

Community and teacher participants see the establishment of strong partnerships between communities, schools, and other stakeholders as essential for future imagined identities of sustainable Tokelauan and Tongan speech communities. Kaimakoi views the education system as “*the most influential system where our children could have access*” to gagana Tokelau (Excerpt 7.1, p. 178). However, at the same time she sees “*saving the language*” an issue that must be addressed and lead by the community. Pulēleti suggests that models such as the weekend language schools held by Chinese and German communities might also support language maintenance.

In Excerpt 6.14, Anita describes how Pasifika Studies can serve as a model for community-school partnerships in providing access to language education.

Excerpt 6.14  
(35:35)

1     **Anita:** *And that is where I see it as a community project, it is not a “I’m delivering*  
2     *maths and I know all the knowledge, and I’m going to give you all the knowledge”,*  
3     *this is very much a facilitator role where you utilise the community and the people*  
4     *around you to deliver the course.*  
(35:53)

Anita describes how she works with the community to facilitate a programme that can deliver Pacific language education. She explains that her role as a teacher is not to own and pass on the knowledge to students. Rather as the facilitator she establishes connections with community contacts, negotiates with school leadership to contract and pay community members for their time and tutoring, and makes and maintains connections with families and communities to involve whanau in the learning of the students. In relation to this research context, it is important to remember that Anita’s school role has around 50 students who identify as Pacific peoples. Like my teaching context, it is not feasible for Anita’s school to provide immersion or bilingual options. Yet, Anita has found a model that provides regular time within the curriculum to support the language learning and maintenance of Pacific students from multiple linguistic and cultural backgrounds within the same space through community-school partnership. Student data (Chapter 5, 5.3 & 5.4) show students feel this

model shows that their languages and cultures are valued as part of their formal education and supports collective efforts for language maintenance in the home, church and community.

Similarly, the Tongan language cluster brings together Tongan students from around the city to study lea faka-Tonga and gain NCEA certification for their learning. This provides another model for community-school partnership in delivering Pacific language education for students who do not attend schools where immersion or bilingual options are possible.

Community leaders deliver the linguistic and cultural content and the teacher-facilitator is there to support communication between schools and oversee official processes and systems to ensure NCEA accreditation. As Maria explains in Excerpt 6.13, the once a week afterschool slot is not enough to teach language from scratch but it does provide exposure to language and culture and support those students with some Tongan proficiency to sit NCEA. Student data show that students believe their Tongan is improving from attending. Langi says *“I understand more from coming here”* and students report that their understanding and appreciation of cultural concepts and participation at community events have grown as a result of attending the classes (Chapter 5, Excerpts 5.11-14 pp. 122-5, Excerpts 5.21,p. 133, lines 1-3). In this way language and culture are valued and the cluster model can contribute to community and home language maintenance. Although, classes held once a week are far from immersion education, student data show students enjoy coming together as a community:

- *meeting other Tongan kids (Vai),*
- *grow[ing] tighter as a community (Toniseni)*
- *to hang out with my family, my mates, especially from church, like we don't really see - them much during the weekends so it is good to catch up with them (Tevita)*

Analysis of these narratives shows that future imagined identities of thriving Tokelauan and Tongan speech communities involve community-school partnership. Data from school programmes Pasifika Studies and the Tongan language cluster show that language education programmes to support home and community language maintenance efforts are possible and successful for students who attend schools where bilingual and immersion education are not feasible. How these future imagined identities for thriving speech communities can be further shared, developed, and supported will be discussed in Chapter 8.

## 6.7 - Chapter summary

In this Chapter we saw how the application of Pacific and sociolinguistic theories of identity as conceptual tools for analysis revealed how Pacific language education opens up positive future imagined identities providing opportunities for students to:

- increase cultural, social and material capital
- explicitly learn HLs to support HL maintenance in homes
- have linguistic and cultural knowledge valued and contribute to formal education
- have safe space for critically exploring issues of language, culture, and identity
- develop community and school partnerships for sustainable speech communities

These findings and their implications for all stakeholders will be discussed in Chapter 8. In the following Chapter, I examine experiences and beliefs about challenges to provision of Pacific language education in secondary schools.

## Chapter 7 - School-based experiences of challenges for Pacific language education

### 7.1 - Introduction

A critical strengths-based approach focuses on positive happenings in the community, whilst not ignoring struggle. Therefore, in this chapter, I address the challenges in providing school-based access to Pacific language education which emerged very clearly from all data collected. Exploring challenges enables one to identify areas that need attention to improve outcomes in the future. Research Question 3 (below) guides this part of the inquiry:

*What are people's reported beliefs about and experiences of the challenges related to school-based continued access to Pacific language education?*

#### 7.1.1 Definitions of 'belief' and 'experience'

My understanding of the terms 'belief' and 'experience' used in this research question references Borg (2011). Drawing on psychological and philosophical perspectives, Borg (2011, pp. 370-1) suggests that "beliefs are propositions individuals consider to be true ... often tacit." Beliefs "have a strong evaluative and affective component, provide a basis for action, and are resistant to change" (Borg, 2011, p. 371). Beliefs are thought to include values and assumptions (Evans et al, 2004; Schachter, 2016). In relation to (language) education, beliefs are seen to be an essential part and measurement of teacher professional growth (Borg, 2011; Kagan, 1992). Similarly, pertaining to students, beliefs have been broadly defined to be "conceptions students hold to be true ... that influence their learning" (Eynde et al, 2003, p. 16). Research in education and applied linguistics often explore teacher and student beliefs and experiences together with the understanding that they contribute to each other (Schachter, 2016). This definition is broad, not intended to serve as a comparative measure. In my research context I extend this definition to include student, teacher, and community member beliefs and experiences as three of five community members are also teachers. The remaining two community members have close ties with education and their narratives contain many recollections of their experiences as students within the education system.

#### 7.1.2 Summary of data collection and relevant themes in this chapter



The data analysed and presented in this chapter come from:

- talanoa-informed interviews with five community members,
- semi-structured interviews with four school principals,
- three semi-structured interviews with Palagi teachers who teach or facilitate the teaching of Pacific languages (one of these interviews was conducted via email),
- focus group discussions with students from the Pasifika Studies class and the Tongan language cluster,
- participant classroom observations in the Pasifika Studies class and the Tongan language cluster,
- ongoing involvement in Tokelau and Tongan community projects,
- my own experience of facilitating Pacific language programmes in secondary schools.

In exploring challenges, rich points emerging through the data analysis process (see 4.4, p. 98) highlight the different perspectives presented by communities, teachers, students, and school leaders. There is an absence of Tokelauan student voice because at the time of data collection there were no secondary schools in Aotearoa offering school programmes with access to gagana Tokelau and agānuku Tokelau. The lack of provision for gagana Tokelau within the New Zealand education system came through very strongly in the data analysis and therefore this Tokelau perspective forms the basis of the first section on findings for RQ3. The following three sections present generic challenges emerging from data through:

- Teacher perspectives
- Student perspectives
- School leader perspectives

The many crossover threads interwoven across these three groups will be connected in the concluding chapters of the thesis.

## 7.2 - Tokelau perspectives

Tokelau community members, Kaimakoi and Pulēleti discussed their beliefs and experiences pertaining to the challenges for access to gagana Tokelau within the New Zealand education system during their talanoa-informed interviews. Kaimakoi and Pulēleti's excerpts have been

chosen to illustrate these experiences as their narratives contained very clear descriptions of their beliefs and experiences of hindrances in accessing gagana Tokelau within education.

Before presenting analysis of their narratives, I restate three relevant points from Chapter 2 in relation to why Aotearoa is a key present and future site for the maintenance and care of gagana Tokelau. Firstly, Tokelau is a dependent colony in the Realm of New Zealand, therefore part of Aotearoa. Therefore, gagana Tokelau is one of the Indigenous languages of the Realm of New Zealand. Many more Tokelauans live in Aotearoa as a result of New Zealand Government initiatives to bring Tokelauan people to work and live in New Zealand beginning in the 1950s. It is logistically and financially difficult for Tokelauans to return to Tokelau to ‘regenerate language.’ Lastly, as a series of low-lying atolls, Tokelau is increasingly impacted by climate change and as a result, more Tokelauans as New Zealand citizens will look to make Aotearoa their home in the future. Therefore, education, as an essential institution with huge influence on young people, has a role to play in ensuring Tokelau language and culture thrives in the future.

### 7.2.1 Kaimakoi

In the following excerpt Kaimakoi (Tokelau-Tongan community leader) discusses the current lack of access to gagana Tokelau in formal education in relation to language loss and revival.

#### Excerpt 7.1

(08:08)

- 1     **Kaimakoi:** *The reasons for the decline, I think for Tokelau [is], unfortunately the*
- 2     *gagana cannot be taught anywhere outside of these three or four early childhood*
- 3     *centres. It is not taught anywhere else, so in terms of its value, in the education*
- 4     *system, is probably the largest issue and challenge we have. It’s the most influential*
- 5     *system where our children could have access, however, it is not valued in that system*
- 6     *and I [...] feel that is where we need to have gagana Tokelau in order for it to*
- 7     *survive, because what we are finding now is 70% are New Zealand-born, who are*
- 8     *now grandparents and parents. So the state of urgency is now in order to try and*
- 9     *ensure, well I look at it in terms of I need to actively involve myself in things where*
- 10    *gagana Tokelau can be preserved or revived, in order for my grandchildren to have*
- 11    *access to the language. It may not be the case for my children, but for my*

12     *grandchildren, my sort of hope that I could allow that for them, so that when they are*  
13     *in school, primary school, or secondary school, or tertiary, gagana Tokelau is an*  
14     *option for them.*  
(09:46)

Kaimakoi mentions “*the decline*” in reference to the decline in Aotearoa-born Tokelauans who can speak gagana Tokelau as mentioned in the literature review (see Chapter 2, section 2.2.1). She states that the only sector of the formal education system proving access for young people to learn gagana Tokelau is in “*three or four early childhood centres*” (line 2). These are centres similar to Kohanga Reo<sup>37</sup> where children are immersed to some degree in gagana Tokelau from ages zero to five. Kaimakoi sees the lack of access to gagana Tokelau beyond ECE as unfortunate because education, “*the most influential system where our children could have access,*” does not place value on Tokelau language and culture (lines 2 to 7). Kaimakoi’s discourse supports Glasgow’s (2019) work. Glasgow (2019) illustrates how Cook Islands Maori, Tokelauan, and Niuean language nests play a key role in supporting and developing Pacific languages and communities. Given the huge importance of these language nests in language revitalisation and general community wellbeing, Glasgow (2019) argues that language nests must receive more robust support from within the whole education sector as well as the community.

Kaimakoi discusses her experience in terms of her response and personal implications to this lack of access (lines 7 to 14). She feels there is a “*state of urgency*”, and she feels she needs to be actively involved in language revitalisation to ensure her grandchildren still “*have access to the language.*” This sense of needing to use her agency to take things into her own hands to make positive change is apparent throughout her narrative and in my ongoing interactions with Kaimakoi.

Kaimakoi’s experiences and beliefs of the challenges for accessing gagana Tokelau in the formal education are similar to those of Pulēleti.

### 7.2.2 Pulēleti

---

<sup>37</sup> Chapter 2, pp. 33-4

With regard to tertiary education Pulēleti, a Tokelau-Tuvalu community leader, linguist and translator, has a very explicit and interesting experience of the challenges to accessing gagana Tokelau education at tertiary level. The excerpts below come from the beginning of my first conversation with Pulēleti. Without being prompted by a question he straight away described his questions, experiences, and beliefs about why gagana Tokelau is not being taught at tertiary level in Aotearoa and how he had to travel to Norway to formally study gagana Tokelau.

#### Excerpt 7.2

(00:05)

1      **Pulēleti:** *this [...] takes me back to the Tokelauan students' association when I was*  
 2      *here at [university name], so I was there with Peta, and we invited [name of*  
 3      *linguist], a linguist from Norway was visiting, and this question was asked, "Why*  
 4      *isn't it being taught in, why isn't Tokelauan being taught here at [...] university level*  
 5      *at [university name] or at universities here in New Zealand?" [...] His answer was*  
 6      *very simple. He says: "it is a very difficult question but it just goes back to, it is an*  
 7      *imperial situation, we've got Tokelau as a colony in New Zealand and so [...] it is*  
 8      *because of that attitude, it is reflected in what they are doing or not doing as far as*  
 9      *supporting maintenance of the Tokelau language in New Zealand". So that was a*  
 10     *really powerful comment he made and then when I look at what is happening even*  
 11     *today, nothing much has changed [...] and that was back in '94.*

(01:25)

In this excerpt Pulēleti refers back to his involvement with the Tokelauan student association at the university where he studied linguistics, gagana Samoa and Cook Islands Maori. The Tokelauan student association was active at the time. This group included Pulēleti and Peta, part of the first-generation Aotearoa-born Tokelauans from the first wave of Tokelauan migration to Aotearoa in the 1950s-70s described in Chapter 2. Pulēleti's narrative discusses how this group of students wanted to know why gagana Tokelau was not taught at universities in Aotearoa. A visiting guest linguist from Norway, who specialised in gagana Tokelau, spoke to the Tokelauan student group. When asked by the Tokelauan students why gagana Tokelau was not taught in universities in Aotearoa, the Norwegian linguist proposed this educational hindrance to language access as being bound to imperial or colonial attitudes

towards gagana Tokelau. As Pulēleti's reflects "*nothing much has changed*" since the 1990s as far as efforts made to support Tokelau language and culture in Aotearoa.

Pulēleti was offered a scholarship to study gagana Tokelau at the Norwegian university where the Norwegian linguist taught gagana Tokelau every four years as part of a degree in linguistics. This was the first time Pulēleti was able to study gagana Tokelau. He now uses the skills he learnt in Norway in his work as a translator. Pulēleti raises more challenges he believes exist for gagana Tokelau in relation to his experience of studying gagana Tokelau in Norway in the next excerpt.

### Excerpt 7.3

(25:08)

- 1     **Pulēleti:** *we have been asking since '94 [...]the situation hasn't changed. Do we still*  
2     *need to have Scandinavians come teaching the language? [...] I have noticed over the*  
3     *years that there have been a number of theses looking at Tokelau communities with*  
4     *regards to drugs and health, I haven't really done any digging around the latest thesis*  
5     *around language [...] I am grateful for [...] the experience of going to Norway, it has*  
6     *really opened my eyes as to how important it is to have the support from academia*  
7     *and asking that question what can academia do in supporting language maintenance*  
8     *for the Tokelau language and other minor languages that are under New Zealand.*

(26:24)

Pulēleti again mentions the lack of access to gagana Tokelau in [tertiary] education and that this has been something the Tokelau community has been wanting to see since at least 1994 (line 1). He refers to and questions the absurdity of the situation that to study gagana Tokelau in Aotearoa, a Pacific nation "*under New Zealand*" we invited Scandinavian teachers.

Pulēleti's time spent studying in Norway showed him how academia can support language maintenance for Tokelau and "*other minor languages*" for example by teaching them on courses in linguistics. However, he sees this has not happened in Aotearoa. His discourse further highlights the lack of research focus given to Tokelau language and culture in the fields of Pacific education and applied and sociolinguistics (lines 6-8). This supports and connects to the call discussed in the literature review for more specific empirical Pacific educational research which focuses on specific groups such as Tokelauan or Niuean rather than Pacific research with an umbrella 'Pacific' focus (Chu et al, 2013; Coxon et al, 2002).

Throughout the narrative Pulēleti shows his considerable depth of knowledge and experience of what is going on for gagana Tokelau in Aotearoa and abroad as well as other language groups. He mentions language projects that are being run by the Tokelau community in Hawai‘i (see Chapter 2, 2.5.6, p. 45) and suggests that Tokelau communities in Aotearoa could learn from these projects and other community language initiatives such as the Chinese and German Saturday or after school classes. In mentioning these classes, he again identifies perhaps the underpinning reason for the successful models of Chinese and German community-run schools in saying:

*I am just thinking of the Chinese community where they have their weekend language class, why can't we do the same thing as our Chinese neighbours? And the Germans, and looking at the models that they are using in maintaining their languages, and these are communities that are not colonised*

For Pulēleti, one way to address this challenge is stated in his discussion of his dreams and hopes for Gagana Tokelau below.

#### Excerpt 7.4

(28:17)

- 1      **Pulēleti:** *I hope that one day Tokelau would be taught here at [university name], on a*
- 2      *similar level to what I saw in Norway where it is taught not every year, but every five*
- 3      *years as part of a linguistics third year paper, that could open the opportunity too for*
- 4      *these other minor languages that we are talking about, like Cook Islands Maori, and*
- 5      *Niuean. Can it be done like that here at [university name]? That is my dream, to me*
- 6      *that is more possible than my ultimate dream of it being taught right through like*
- 7      *Samoan, I could never see that happening but if it was taught every five years, I think*
- 8      *that could be doable. If we have a professor of linguistics here, that is keen to*
- 9      *research other Polynesian languages, other than Tokelau, that would be just*
- 10     *wonderful.*

(29:20)

Pulēleti states that his “ultimate dream” is to see gagana Tokelau taught “right through” as a proper university course “like Samoan” which has undergraduate and postgraduate degree

options. Pulēleti, however “*could never see that happening*” and therefore his “*possible*” dream for gagana Tokelau is to have it taught at university every five years as part of linguistics degree as he experienced in Norway.

For Tokelau community members it is clear that formal education is essential for the maintenance and revitalisation of gagana Tokelau for Aotearoa-born Tokelauans or people of Tokelauan heritage. Returning to Kaimakoi’s narrative in Excerpt 7.1, lines 3-7, she is very clear in her belief that formal education has a role to play in the teaching, learning, and sustainability of gagana Tokelau for Tokelauan peoples living in Aotearoa. Kaimakoi believes that formal education is the “*most influential*” system in which Tokelauan children could “*have access*” to learning, maintaining, and developing their ability to use gagana Tokelau. She believes the “*largest issue and challenge*” Aotearoa-based Tokelauans have is that the education system does not value gagana Tokelau. In discourse presented here, we also get a glimpse of the depth of Kaimakoi’s concern for the future of gagana Tokelau. Pulēleti also discusses the role of formal education in the language maintenance “*minor languages*,” notably the languages of the New Zealand Realm, gagana Tokelau, Cook Islands Maori, and vagahau Niue. His time studying gagana Tokelau in Norway, showed him the important role of opportunity to study his language in an academic tertiary setting. Though not discussed in this section, Peta (the third Tokelau community member interviewed) voiced her belief that having a “*flow*” for Tokelau language education in primary schools and secondary schools with larger numbers of Tokelau students would hugely support the sustainability and maintenance of Tokelau language in Aotearoa.

This section has looked specifically at Tokelau community beliefs and experiences surrounding challenges in providing ongoing access to Tokelau language education.

I now generically explore beliefs and experiences pertaining to challenges in providing ongoing access to lea faka-Tonga and Pacific languages in secondary education from teacher, student, and school leader perspectives.

### 7.3 - Teacher perspectives

As the starting point for my doctoral research stems from my own experience of challenges in providing ongoing access to Pacific language education in secondary schools, I begin this section with my own experience.

My own experience has much in common with the narratives of teacher participants, Maria, Julia and Anita. In my past and present schools, I have always looked for ways to support students to learn and maintain heritage languages wherever possible. Prior to and during the data collection period of this thesis, I taught at schools where below five percent of students identified as being of Pacific heritage. In these schools, I supported Tongan and Samoan students proficient in their languages to sit NCEA examinations during. This happened during lunchtimes and before or after school as there were no courses with a 'Pacific' focus available. Initially I experienced reluctance from school leadership in various ways to support this endeavour. The support increased somewhat overtime but these schools still have no timetabled courses for learning Pacific languages. These students were very happy to have the chance to sit NCEA national Tongan or Samoan examinations. In sitting these examinations, they received high NCEA grades and their bilingualism or emergent bilingualism and cultural capital, which otherwise went unnoticed, were noticed, acknowledged and celebrated by the school.

Whilst I celebrated the success with these students, I was very aware that sitting these examinations did not really enable them to further develop and grow their heritage language skills. To do this a proper teacher, curriculum, and programme for heritage languages would be required. Furthermore, what saddened and frustrated me is that I could only offer this opportunity to those students who already spoke their heritage languages at home. There were many Aotearoa-born students of Tongan and Samoan heritage, such as the student mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, who really wanted to learn their heritage languages at school but this was not possible without a teacher, and dedicated regular class time within the school day.

Now, post data collection, I am teaching in a school where around 70% of the students are of Pacific heritage. Despite the majority of our school population identifying as Pacific peoples, it is still very difficult to provide ongoing access to Pacific language education. Challenges reported by teachers, students and school leaders discussed in the following sections very



much support my own current teaching experience which I will reflect on in the concluding chapters of this thesis.

I interviewed Palagi teachers who do not teach a Pacific language but facilitate the learning of a Pacific language in some way in their schools. All of these teachers are either English Language (EL) teachers or foreign language teachers who believe strongly in the importance of students maintaining and developing their heritage languages as they grow up in Aotearoa. Before presenting teacher experiences and beliefs, I note that in relation to gagana Tokelau, lea faka-Tonga does have more equity with regard to ongoing language access within the New Zealand education system. Lea faka-Tonga has an NCEA pathway and counts as a subject, which students can take for a university entrance qualification (UE). However, teacher interview data reveal that despite this affordance, there are still many challenges in accessing Tongan language education. This is discussed in detail in relation to the following extracts.

### 7.3.1 Maria - Pacific language education is “at the margins” of the school system

Maria is a highly experienced English Language (EL) teacher who has also worked in teacher education, professional development, and advisory roles. She is an advocate for Pacific and community languages education locally and at a national level. At the time of the interview Maria was Head of the EL programme at Mountainview High. As mentioned previously, she is also the facilitating teacher of the Tongan Language cluster. In the following excerpt she describes the challenges she experiences supporting and facilitating Tongan language education.

Excerpt 7.5

(06:56)

- 1 **Maria:** *it is not like anybody has got a resistance to it [Pacific language education],*
- 2 *it is just so hard to do, because [...] it is at the margins. [...] One thing is that*
- 3 *Samoan is the [...] only one that has got the fully-fledged externals, [...] even if there*
- 4 *were enough Tongan students in one school to do a Tongan class, they are still*
- 5 *verified achievement standards [...] it is changing because now NZQA are creating*
- 6 *the standards, the assessments, the externals but they haven't taken on board yet the*
- 7 *marking of them. So you still have to do this negotiating with [name of Tongan*

8     *teacher in Auckland] at her school to say “will you be the assessing school?” and say*  
9     *“let’s write a memorandum of understanding of the schools” and “let’s think how do*  
10    *we recompense [Tongan teacher in Auckland]’s school for doing this?” And you*  
11    *know it is A LOT of extra work [...] and so it either takes somebody who is*  
12    *ridiculously passionate or you just don’t do it*  
13    **Juliet:** *there is no safety net*  
14    **Maria:** *No! and [...]in most schools [...] even [...] at Riverview, where you’ve got a*  
15    *school that has a class [Pasifika Studies], but they still have to do this [...]*  
16    *“tu-tuing”around to get that assessed. [...] So that is with the verified standards and*  
17    *I’ve got a Cook Islands boy in my class who would love to do the Cook Islands*  
18    *Standards, but now I have to fish around and think “now where is a school that does*  
19    *Cook Islands Maori? How do I make contact with them?”*  
(09:01)

Maria describes apathetic attitudes she has experienced when trying to support, advocate, and enable access to Pacific language education for her students (lines 1-2). Her experience shows that people (presumably meaning school leaders, students, other teachers, and parents) are not averse to Pacific language education, however, as she says, it is “*just so hard to do [...] because it is at the margins.*” Maria then explains why it is hard and how it happens at the margins (lines 2 -12). Firstly, she describes the hierarchy in NCEA pathways for Pacific languages. At the time, Samoan was the only “*fully-fledged*” NCEA Pacific language. “*Fully-fledged externals*” refers to national examinations. “*Fully-fledged*” external examinations have a paid contracted examination team whereby examination writers, critiquers, independent and subject expert checkers, markers, and overall supervisors are paid for the whole process of examination setting and marking by NZQA. When a subject is “*fully fledged,*” it is in theory easily accessed by students as the enrolment system is straight forward and only requires a teacher to enter the student for this assessment in the school system linked with NZQA. Data from other interviews and my own teaching experience show how there are in fact many other challenges for students and teachers to access Samoan language education. However what Maria is describing here is still an example of how Gagana Samoa sits at the top of the Pacific language hierarchy within education (De Bres, 2015).

Maria goes on to describe that for Tongan students to sit NCEA, the process is more complicated than for Samoan because at the time of the interview in August 2018, lea faka-Tonga NCEA (and Cook Islands Maori) assessments were still “*verified standards*.” “*Verified standards*” means that teachers were not paid to write or mark the examinations as was the case for other subjects, generally due to smaller numbers of students sitting these examinations (NZQA, personal communication, June, 2020). Unlike “*fully fledged*” external examinations, the marking process, for which teachers were not paid, was subject to a long verification process with NZQA. Maria alluded to positive change in NZQA processes which began to happen in 2018 in lines 5 to 7, whereby the Tongan teaching community were contracted to write the examinations but not paid to mark the examinations. It is important to note that in 2019, NZQA made further positive changes and employed a team of markers for the lea faka-Tonga, Cook Islands Maori (and Korean) examinations. Now in 2021 these three language examinations are “*fully fledged*” and have more equitable access within the system (NZQA, personal communication, June, 2020, December, 2020).

Nonetheless, for schools in areas outside of Auckland with growing numbers of Tongan students but without Tongan teachers able to teach NCEA Tongan, access to learning lea faka-Tonga at school is still limited. Maria and her other teaching colleagues spend a lot of time outside of their normal teaching roles and responsibilities to make this happen. She describes this process as “*tu-tuing*” (line 15) whereby she and her colleagues first need to find local teachers or tutors of lea faka-Tonga to support language learning, then develop relationships and negotiate with the qualified New Zealand secondary school teachers of lea faka-Tonga who are all based in Auckland to mark and assess student work (lines 7 to 10). For this marking to happen a Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) needs to be drawn up and signed between schools. It must be noted here that the Tongan teachers working in South Auckland schools where there are fully fledged programmes for lea faka-Tonga from Years 9 to 13 are very supportive of this work. These Auckland based teachers give up many unpaid hours after work and at weekends to support Tongan students in other parts of the country to maintain and develop their heritage language. The “*hard to do*” part of this work is further highlighted in Maria’s mention of “*Riverview*” (line 14). At the time<sup>38</sup>, Riverview High was the only school in the city and perhaps in the whole country (with the exception of Auckland schools) where students have timetabled hours to study lea faka-Tonga and other Pacific

---

<sup>38</sup> A group of Wellington-based teachers has recently started a Tongan language cluster based on this model.

languages (apart from Gagana Samoa which, relatively speaking, has many schools with programmes) within the school day. In mentioning “*Riverview*,” Maria is alluding to the fact that even a very supportive school of Pacific language education has extreme difficulty in providing access. She adds that she faces the same challenges if she is wanting to enable students to access learning Cook Islands Maori (lines 16 to 18). Providing ongoing access to Pacific language education is summed up in lines 9 to 12 “*it is A LOT of extra work [...] and so it either takes somebody who is ridiculously passionate or you just don’t do it.*”

Maria is not alone in experiencing these barriers to provide access to lea faka-Tonga education at school for her students. The experiences of the following two teachers further unpack Maria’s experience of Pacific language education being “*just so hard to do [...] because it is at the margins*” (Excerpt 7.5, pp.185-6).

### 7.3.2 Julia

Julia is a highly experienced specialist foreign language teacher and Head of Department at a school in a different part of Aotearoa outside of Auckland. Her town has a growing Tongan community. Like Maria, she believes in showing how heritage languages are valued within the school setting. There is no formal platform available for Tongan students to access lea faka-Tonga education within the school day. However, in the next excerpt from an email interview, Julia describes what she is doing to support Tongan students to maintain their heritage languages and cultures as part of NCEA.

#### Excerpt 7.6

1     **Julia:** *Tongan language is not timetabled as a class. As a language specialist, I just*  
2     *offer tutorials in how to approach the language standards, how to answer the*  
3     *questions and give full, relevant answers, deduce information etc. I cannot speak*  
4     *Tongan, so use the skills of the senior students in their own language to help the Yr 11*  
5     *and 12 students if they need help with the language. In 2016, we had the support of a*  
6     *combined group with the other two secondary schools and a Tongan teacher, but last*  
7     *year, we just worked on our own [...] Support for the exams was done voluntarily*  
8     *during the lunch hour by myself as I am a specialist language teacher. Support for the*  
9     *students in other ways is provided by a Maori/Pasifika Dean who supports the*

Julia's experience provides further evidence of challenges teachers face in enabling students to learn lea faka-Tonga (and other Pacific and community languages) within the school system. Julia's statement, lea faka-Tonga is "*not a timetabled class*," reflects the reality that for Tongan students outside of the Auckland region there are very few opportunities available to access to their language and culture within the school system. Julia, however, sees value in trying to enable student access to lea faka-Tonga as part of their NCEA qualification. She uses her knowledge and experience of the system to "*offer tutorials in how to approach the language standards, how to answer the questions and give full, relevant answers, deduce information*," in order for the students to sit the national lea faka-Tonga examinations which test listening and reading comprehension skills. It should be noted that at the time of the interview, for students to sit these examinations, Julia's school would have required an MoU with a school in Auckland in order for these papers to be marked. When Julia runs these tutorials she uses "*the skills of the senior students in their own language to help the Yr 11 and 12 students if they need help with the language*" as she "*cannot speak lea faka-Tonga*." Whilst there are affordances made at the school in terms of the "*Pasifika Dean*" and "*Pasifika performance group*," there is no allocated time scheduled for language.

Julia's experience of supporting students to sit lea faka-Tonga NCEA examinations shows how dependent this process is on teacher agency and willingness to volunteer free time. Julia provides these tutorials "*voluntarily*" during lunchtime. Julia has been able to work with a team of teachers and students from other schools making this process more collegial and supportive but this is not a guarantee as it depends on the time and energy people can volunteer to this process.

### 7.3.3 Anita (Pasifika Studies)

In Chapter 6, we saw how Anita, the facilitating teacher of Pasifika Studies at Riverview High used her agency to invest in a programme which enabled student from any Pacific background to have access to language education at school. This programme provided many affordances within school. However, Anita continues to experience many challenges in delivering her programme which she discusses in Excerpt 7.7.

Excerpt 7.7  
(44:15)

1     **Anita:** *we need to make Fijian a recognised language and we need that as an NCEA*  
2     *subject. In Te Kura<sup>39</sup>, we have Asian and European languages which are offered and*  
3     *no other Pasifika languages, so we need to have that in place as well, so that in those*  
4     *pockets of schools, students can have access to doing NCEA Samoan<sup>40</sup>, [...] we need*  
5     *more Pacific teachers who have their teaching qualifications recognised by the*  
6     *government [...] there are not enough [Pacific teacher] role models. [...]*  
7     *There needs to be the development of a national languages policy, whereby*  
8     *[...] allowing community languages, and they very much are community languages, to*  
9     *[...] get that status and to have them part of the proper externally examinable*  
10    *subjects. But there are a whole lot of holes, too many holes, that you are*  
11    *[...] constantly working against what is not there.*  
12    *[...] the other side of things is the parents not seeing the value of language and that is*  
13    *really hard to see. [...] I've interviewed parents and they say 'Oh yeah, we speak half*  
14    *English, and half [...] Samoan,' or whatever, and I say "well that means you are not*  
15    *secure in this, and you are not secure in this" but they don't understand that. [...]*  
16    *[name of university lecturer] was telling me that Sweden has, if a family is not*  
17    *supporting the bilingualism of their respective languages, the government*  
18    *intervenes [...] to make schools obligated to support the Pasifika languages within the*  
19    *schools. [...] You can't leave it up to home [...]*  
20    *And once schools show that it [heritage languages] is important,*  
21    *it is still is that education of parents as well [...] you almost need to create generic*  
22    *language curriculum which is able to support any language [...] That your level of*  
23    *language is acknowledged in our system and you are [...] given credit towards*  
24    *knowing that language. You know we go "oh, how fantastic that you are learning*  
25    *French," [...] we seem to put kids who are learning French or Japanese, that are*  
26    *Pakeha, on a pedestal, and say "oh, you are amazing!" But the Hindi student who is*  
27    *stuck in an ESOL class "oh!" [...] and that happens a lot with Pacific students. [...]*  
28    *it is really quite [...] awful to watch [...] there is a lot to be done government wise.*  
(52:43)

---

<sup>39</sup> Te Kura o te Pounamu - The Correspondence School of New Zealand

<sup>40</sup> Te Kura began offering NCEA Level 1 Samoan Courses in 2019, NCEA Level 2 Samoan courses in 2020, and will begin NCEA Level 3 Samoan in 2021.

Here Anita frames the many challenges she experiences as “*a whole lot of holes, too many*” that are not in the system to support multilingualism. She lists “*holes*” :

- existence of some but not all Pacific languages with NCEA pathways (lines 1-2),
- no Pacific languages able to be studied via distance learning at the time (lines 2-3),
- teachers from Pacific nations not able to have their qualifications recognised in Aotearoa and therefore not enough Pacific teachers in the workforce (lines 4-6),
- lack of a national languages policy and government support in Aotearoa to reinforce the value of including community languages in formal education (lines 7-10, 20-29)
- parents not understanding the value of maintaining bilingualism in the home (lines 13-16)
- presence of language hierarchies which values status languages and not community languages (lines 25-29).

Anita’s list supports shows how the school system in which she works does not support multilingualism. She provides examples how policies supporting Pacific languages, cultures, and identities and relevant pedagogy (see Chapter 2, 2.6 ) do not match educational reality. Anita states her belief that the government has some responsibility to ensure Pacific languages are maintained in schools. She suggests that a generic languages curriculum framework for all HLs would provide an opportunity for all languages to have value in the system.

The challenges Anita, Julia, and Maria experience in trying to support Pacific bilingualism and HLE in secondary schools highlight the many gaps between narratives in educational policy supporting Pacific languages, cultures, and identities (see Chapter 2, pp. 48-56) and the reality and availability of resourcing to ensure these policies enacted. This will be discussed in connection with current policies Tapasā, the NCEA review, and culturally sustaining programmes in Chapter 8.

#### 7.4 - Student perspectives - Polyfest, curriculum, and multilingualism

As well as interviewing Tongan and Samoan students who did have access to Tongan language education, I interviewed five students of varying Pacific heritage who did not have access to Pacific language education at their secondary school (see Chapter 4, 4.2.6-7, p. 87, for participant details). In all five cases, they would have studied a Pacific language if they

had had the opportunity at school. I add here that there is only one student voice here with a Tokelau connection. As mentioned earlier, the lack of Tokelauan student voice in these two chapters is indicative of the gap in opportunity for students of Tokelauan heritage to access their language and culture at school.

#### 7.4.1 Roberti (Mountainview High)

We met Roberti in Chapter 6, a Year 12 student in Maria's EL class at the time of data collection. In Chapter 6, we saw how a school-based Pacific speech celebration enabled Roberti to develop his Fijian language skills. Although at the time of the interview Roberti received much support and encouragement to develop his proficiency in his heritage languages from Maria, his school did not offer a timetabled opportunity for students to learn a Pacific language or other opportunities to continued access to heritage language and culture. Roberti told me "*there is no subject for Samoan and Fijian, but I am learning French.*" There is however a Polyclub at his school. The year of this interview, Roberti was an active Polyclub leader. According to Maria, his EAP teacher, Roberti was a "*bit of a star*" because of his ability to perform so well in the local Polyfest. The week before this interview took place, Roberti's school Polyclub group was very successful at the local festival of Polynesian performing arts for secondary school students. Acknowledging this work in Polyclub, in the week of this interview the school had gifted the Polyclub with ie<sup>41</sup> which they are now able to wear as part of the official school uniform. Roberti was wearing his ia when I met him at school. In schools with large Pacific student populations, it is common for students to wear an ia as part of school uniform for some time. However, I have observed this practice has taken off gradually in schools with smaller Pacific student populations over the course of my doctoral studies.

Although Roberti's talent and effort were recognised by the school and he gained mana within the student body, a later communication with his Maria explained that Roberti did not gain NCEA Dance credits that he could have been awarded for his work in Polyfest. Maria also confirmed that this changed for students the following year. Whether Roberti did or did not gain the small number of credits for a dance performance, this small number of credits he might have received does not reflect the considerable amount of work and learning that goes

---

<sup>41</sup> an ie is a lava lava or piece of cloth which both men and women wrap around their waist



on through Polyclub. Polyclub and Polyfest offer schools the opportunity to integrate Pacific languages and cultures across the curriculum and student NCEA qualifications. Some aspects of the curriculum that could be leveraged are Pacific languages, leadership and management skills, design, creation, and budgeting of costumes, dance, music, mathematics, history, and literacy. Polyfest's potential for learning to be harnessed has been discussed in recent research (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2010; Mackley-Crump, 2013, see Chapter 2, 2.6.5). In a few South Auckland schools with predominantly Pacific school populations where the ASB Polyfest is a huge event, the whole of the teaching, learning, and assessment during Term 1 of the school year centres around Polyfest. This is very much the exception Gaugatau (2018) for schools in Aotearoa. Roberti does not discuss any of these opportunities in his narrative, but they exist within the context of his experience, in the experience of students, teachers, and principals in this study and in my wider experience of education in Aotearoa which I will discuss in the following sections.

I now turn to two students at the same school where there is no access to Pacific language education within the curriculum but there is a Polyclub. Unlike Roberti, however, these students feel they lack the cultural capital to be a part of the Polyclub although they are Pacific peoples.

#### 7.4.2 Euan and Melanie (Fox High)

Euan and Melanie are good friends in the same year group at Fox High, a large multicultural school in a major New Zealand city. On their school role there is around five percent of students who identify as being of Pacific heritage. Euan and Melanie were both born in Aotearoa. Euan jokes he is a white Samoan as his family heritage is predominantly European, but he has a grandfather from Samoa he would like to know more about. Melanie's mother is Māori, and her father is Samoan-Tokelau. She identifies more with her Māori side of the family but would like to know about her father's side. She describes her linguistic competence in Māori, Samoan, Tokelauan as knowing "*how to pronounce*" but not understand or speak.

In terms of accessing Pacific languages and cultures at school, in the following excerpt Euan and Melanie discuss why it is difficult to belong to the Polyclub and thus why they no longer participate in this opportunity to learn more about their cultural heritage.

Excerpt 7.9

(06:50)

- 1      **Euan:** *I did Polyclub in year 9 and I think there was probably about 30 of us and then*  
2      *next year 6 of us! So I sort of gave up that year, I haven't really [...] gone back into it*  
3      **Melanie:** *but it has gone better, like this year, it is sort of like, it is only people that*  
4      *already know each other, it is not like*  
5      **Euan:** *It is not like new people going in, it is people that*  
6      **Together:** *They've just like [...] grown up together*  
7      **Melanie:** *or like their families know each other*  
8      **Juliet:** *Do you think it would be good if Polyclub was made very accessible to*  
9      *students who aren't in a Pacific community?*  
10     **Euan:** *Yeah, well they've got that thing Polyfest and like it is not, like I didn't even*  
11     *know that our school did it. Like I know that our school is really big, like they don't*  
12     *have much time.*  
13     **Melanie** *like they don't really wanna teach they just wanna do it. So they don't*  
14     *wanna teach new people the words or the actions [...]*  
15     **Euan:** *Yeah that is the thing when I was there, they already knew all of the songs, so I*  
16     *just had to learn them.*

(07:57)

Prior to this Excerpt, Euan had explained that when he started Fox High he was highly motivated to learn Samoan and join the Polyclub as he had a Samoan teacher at primary school and he knew he had Samoan heritage. This excerpt begins with Euan explaining that he was previously a member of the Polyclub in Year 9, but he left when the numbers decreased. When Melanie turns the conversation to the current state of the Polyclub three years on, although Euan and Melanie say it has grown, they hint that they do not feel comfortable joining the group as they are outsiders. They describe the current members as being made up of “*people that already know each other*,” “*have grown up together*,” and whose “*families know each other*” (lines 6 to 8). Their description is correct, the Polyclub at their school is made up of predominantly Samoan and Tongan students who all belong to the same church communities and speak gagana Samoa or lea faka-Tonga at home and in their communities (participant observation). From the perspective of the students in Polyclub, it is a fantastic place for these students to spend time with like-minded friends and have their

otherwise unrecognised cultural capital recognised in some way at school. However, Euan and Melanie experience this differently to Polyclub members as they both identify as having Pacific heritage and would like to connect with this part of their identity by joining Polyclub but do not already speak a Pacific language or actively belong to a community. Lines 14 to 17 suggest Euan and Melanie feel excluded and not confident in joining Polyclub as they do not possess the cultural capital of already knowing “*all of the songs.*” This discourse carries the sense of “*them*” and “*us*” which heightens their feelings that the group “*don’t really wanna teach they just wanna do it. So they don’t wanna teach new people the words or the actions*” (lines 14 to 15). In Euan’s statement in lines 11 to 12: “*I didn’t even know that our school did it*” - “*it*” referring to “*that thing Polyfest,*” we get the sense that in this large multicultural school unless you authentically belong to a cultural group because you ‘know language and culture’ issues of identity can be swallowed up in the “*really big*” nature of the school. These discussions point to the systemic link between community and formal education for cultural and linguistic maintenance to be discussed in further detail in Chapter 8.

These genuine experiences and feelings of Euan and Melanie are similar to the discussion of plastic identity we saw in the discourse of Aotearoa-born Tongan students in Chapters 5 and 6. The students in the Tongan language cluster are much ‘closer’ to Tongan language and community than Euan and Melanie are to their Samoan and Tokelauan heritage. Yet, these Tongan students still experience challenges in relation to their authentic Tongan cultural identity because they are not fluent speakers of lea faka-Tonga. Therefore, we can better understand through this experience of Euan and Melanie, how gaining access to language and culture to better understand and negotiate cultural identity when you are further removed from heritage community life might be equally or more challenging. The experiences of Euan and Melanie reflect the work of Manuela and Anae (2017), Mila-Schaaf and Robinson (2010), Mila-Schaaf (2011), and Tupuola (2004) which highlight the challenges faced by New-Zealand born generations of Pacific migrants in negotiating identity. To emphasise the contrast of student experience, the excerpts from the following student present a different perspective and illustrate challenges faced by the students from the same school who do actively belong to a Pacific community and have grown up speaking their heritage language.

#### 7.4.3 Lina (Fox High)

The final student in this section Lina. Lina was born in Samoa and moved to Aotearoa with some of her family around the age of eleven or twelve. She lives in an intergenerational home in which her grandmother makes sure all adults and children speak in gagana Samoa. Her grandmother is one of the lead teachers at a local Aoga Amata.<sup>42</sup> Lina attends Fox High, the same school as Euan and Melanie. Her group of friends are mainly Samoan and Tongan, and they all speak their HLs at home and in their church communities. She is an active member of the Polyclub at school. Lina would like to have more opportunity to use and develop her gagana Samoa at school. She describes why in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 7.10

(03:27)

- 1     **Juliet:** *Would you take Samoan if it were offered at school?*
- 2     **Lina:** *Yes, [...] I would because we gotta do what we think is good for us. Especially*
- 3     *for us Pacifics, we don't get much chances, for example Maoris, they get to have their*
- 4     *own programme, but for us here, like Pasifikas, like I don't know but not everyone*
- 5     *here mostly understands English, because I know one [Samoan] girl from my class*
- 6     *she is struggling right now, but she is still going for it, even though she [...] knows*
- 7     *that English is hard but she is still going for it.*
- 8     *[...]*
- 9     **Juliet:** *Do you feel like the school values the fact that you are bilingual?*
- 10    **Lina:** *Yeah, because for me, it's sometimes, it's hard for me when it is reading the*
- 11    *question that I don't understand and so I ask so many questions. But I guess like*
- 12    *having a programme for people who, but not just for Samoans, but like for people*
- 13    *who are bilingual [...] that helps them improve more English, and keep their culture*
- 14    *going, I reckon that would be a good way of doing it.*
- 15    *[...]*
- 16    **Lina:** *Yeah, I'm actually glad I've got two languages, and I'm learning a third one so*
- that is good.*

(09:01)

Lina would opt into a Samoan course if it were offered, saying “we gotta do what is good for us” (line 2). Lina then compares what is on offer for Māori students in relation to “us

---

<sup>42</sup> An Aoga Amata is an immersion Samoan preschool.

*Pacific*.” From Lina’s perspective, she sees Māori students as having more opportunities to learn and develop their skills in te reo Māori as they “*get to have their own programme*” (lines 3 to 4). This is compared with Lina’s experience as part of the “*Pasifikas*” group which she describes as not getting “*much chances*” (line 3). In her discussion of “*us Pacific*” and “*they*,” “*their own programme*” in relation to her own group “*Pasifikas*” and her Māori peers, we get the sense that Lina has experienced a sense of segregation and hierarchy in terms of which languages and cultures have more value within the school. In referring to recent improvements (made the school term this interview took place) for students to access language and culture at school<sup>43</sup>, Lina says:

*when my sister went to this school [...] they never had this opportunity [...] and I guess having this opportunity for us it is ... good, it feels like the school has noticed us now and they are actually supporting us Pacific students.*

The reintroduction of Polyclub this school year and the opportunity outside of the school curriculum to enter a Samoan speech competition have made Lina notice how “*it feels good*” to have the school notice and support “*us Pacific students*.” Lina’s sense of them and us or segregated groups based on language and culture at school perhaps reflects her everyday experience of “*having two lives*.” In the following excerpt she describes how she experiences life at school and life at home.

Excerpt 7.11

(10:15)

- 1     **Lina:** *you’ve just got to believe in yourself to be honest, and be proud of your culture*
- 2     *because I’m proud of my culture and having to speak two languages that is like*
- 3     *something I wouldn’t have done if I hadn’t come here, and [...] having two lives can*
- 4     *be quite hard but [...] it helps you become more stronger, to make you a better person*
- 5     *[...] I feel like I have two lives because at home [...] I feel like I’m in my own culture,*
- 6     *like my own country, my own language, and then when I come here it is like another*
- 7     *world, where students are like speaking another language that [...] I have to go*
- 8     *through to learn.*

(11:23)

---

<sup>43</sup> re-instating the Polyclub and participating in the local Samoan language speech competition as part of a school-based activity

The experiences of Lina, Melanie, and Euan discussed here illustrate points made in the literature review in relation to the importance of critical and culturally sustaining learning opportunities. All three students experienced challenges in relation to language, culture, and identity. Melanie and Euan felt they did not and could not belong to Pacific student group because they did not speak a Pacific language or grow up in a Pacific community even though they identify culturally as having Pacific heritage in their whakapapa. Lina and her peers, on the other hand, experienced the sense that the school did not always value the cultural capital they brought to the school as bilingual speakers of Samoan - making Lina feel she led two separate lives - one at home and one at school. Lina also felt that “*us Pacifics*” were not offered equitable opportunities to access language and culture within the curriculum in comparison with her Māori peers.

From these conversations, it appears opportunities to critically understand and negotiate issues of language, culture, and identity are missing from the school experience of Lina, Melanie, and Euan. Potential educational solutions and considerations based on these conversations will be further discussed in Chapter 8.

## 7.5 - School leader perspectives - Numbers and resourcing

I interviewed six school leaders<sup>44</sup> from schools in major cities outside of the greater Auckland region (refer to p. 89 and the following section for more detail of schools). All these schools have a vibrant and visible group of students from different Pacific backgrounds, Pacific parent groups, and active polyclubs. Four of six schools of these schools offer gagana Samoa as a formal option course within the curriculum, and the other two schools have no formal option to study a Pacific language. Four of these interviews have been included in the final data analysis here. From all interviews, I took away the impression that all school leaders cared genuinely about the wellbeing of their students, supporting and engaging in many different initiatives in the school and the community to do their best for all students to get the most out of their secondary education. However, emerging from the data, we also see beliefs and experiences which challenge access to Pacific language education in secondary school. These challenges include:

---

<sup>44</sup> None of the Principals I interviewed are from, or associated with the same schools as the teachers, students, and community members who feature in this thesis.

- student numbers and resourcing,
- curriculum hierarchy,
- school and community perceptions of what is valuable in education and career pathways,
- teacher and school leader assumptions about Pacific students, Pacific families and language use in the home.

Discussion of these challenges form the focus of the following sections.

As leaders of a school, school principals and deputy principals are required to think about the numbers of students which make a course financially viable and the resourcing of teachers accordingly. When a Pacific language (gagana Samoa in the schools discussed here, and in most schools offering a Pacific language study option) is offered as a course, there are often issues around student numbers and staffing. From discourse analysed in this section, it was very clear that the financing, availability of staff, and student numbers were a challenge in providing access to Pacific language education in schools. This is discussed in detail in reference to the following excerpts from Principals 1,2, 3, and 4.

## 7.5 - School leader perspectives

### 7.5.1 Principal 1 (High School 4)

Principal 1 is the head of High School 4, a large multicultural school of around 1,500 students in a major Aotearoa city. Around 20 percent of students attending this school identify as being of Pacific heritage. In Excerpt 7.12, Principal 1 describes the reason his school was not able to implement Pacific language programmes at the time.

Excerpt 7.12

(10:29)

- 1     **Principal 1:** *There is a problem with language. I'd love to be able to introduce*
- 2     *Samoan language [...] but they are so costly in terms of staffing at the moment and*
- 3     *we are [...] quite severely overstaffed and if we didn't have international students*
- 4     *we'd be in a difficult financial situation. We made a calculated effort to make Māori a*
- 5     *big part of it, seeing it is Indigenous people and we do French and that is more just*
- 6     *because we've got staff here and who've been here and I am not prepared to just lay*
- 7     *them off [...] we've got Japanese, we've got sister schools that are coming next week*
- 8     *and that as just been a lovely relationship with them and I do believe Asian languages*

9        *are important [...] so it is just the sheer pragmatism of that. I just cannot afford to*  
 10       *introduce more languages at the moment because we don't get the numbers*  
 11       *particularly at senior level [...] so I think you need to collaborate it across colleges to*  
 12       *get it going.*

(11:40)

Throughout the narrative, Principal 1 makes it is very clear that costs and numbers, in terms of staffing and students taking language courses are the “*problem*” currently hindering him from “*introduc[ing] more languages at the moment*” (line 10). Being “*overstaffed*” is not an uncommon problem for school principals around Aotearoa and for Principal 1 pragmatism has to rule decisions about curriculum. I return to other aspects of Principal 1’s discourse in this excerpt shortly.

At the schools of Principals 2 and 3, gagana Samoa is offered as a subject option, however providing this opportunity within the curriculum has not been straightforward. In following excerpts, these principals discuss challenges they have experienced or perceived in relation to maintaining gagana Samoa as a subject choice at their schools.

### 7.5.2 Principal 2 (High School 5)

At the time of the interview, Principal 2 was the leader of, High School 5, a multicultural school in a major New Zealand city with a multicultural population of just under 1000 students. The school has around 20 percent of students who identify as being of Pacific heritage and has many initiatives supporting students and families from Pacific backgrounds. It is considered a very successful and desirable school by many Pacific parents. Offering gagana Samoa as a study option for students has been a priority for the school for some time, but as the principal discusses in this excerpt, staffing has been an issue.

Excerpt 7.13

(03:32)

1        **Principal 2:** *it was around the time that [name] was the [school leader] which was*  
 2        *about the early 2000s mid 2000s. He went through quite a process with the*  
 3        *community to get Samoan language started and then we've had ongoing challenges of*



4     *finding teachers. I think they had one that they had to get an LAT<sup>45</sup> for, he wasn't a*  
5     *qualified teacher, one they had to sack, [...]. [Samoan teacher name] has been here*  
6     *since I've been here, we've now made her job full-time, it wasn't full-time [...] she*  
7     *also had a half-year [...] language intensive, where she went back to Samoa for that*  
8     *half-year. We had real trouble finding a replacement and we actually employed a*  
9     *graduate non-trained teacher, who was good but didn't have teacher training, we had*  
10    *to get a LAT for her, for that two terms. [...] you know she is a good teacher [Samoan*  
11    *teacher name], she has got good numbers now doing Samoan, quite strong senior*  
12    *numbers, but it could all sort of fall over if she left and you couldn't get a*  
13    *replacement. So that is one of the challenges in that language teaching world, [...]*  
14    *finding the expert [...]*  
(05:05)

In this excerpt we hear that establishing a Samoan language programme at the school involved “*quite a process with the community*” and then “*ongoing challenges of finding teachers.*” Before the current teacher, the school had to employ an unqualified teacher on a LAT agreement who then turned out to be not suitable to teach at the school. Since then, they have a “*good teacher,*” but this teacher did not start out with a full-time job, she was only able to be employed in a full-time position once there were “*good numbers*” of students studying gagana Samoa. When this teacher went on study leave to Samoa, they had “*real trouble finding a replacement.*” Principal 2 is aware that if this teacher were to leave the school Samoan language education at the school “*could [...] fall over*” if they are not able to find another suitable teacher. As Principal 2 reiterates “*finding the expert*” is one of the biggest challenges. Although the focus in Principal 2’s discourse here is the difficulty in finding good and qualified teachers of gagana Samoa, like Principal 1, we get a sense of the importance of numbers for course viability. In mentioning that the current teacher has “*good numbers*” and especially of “*senior*” students in Years 11 to 13, it can be inferred that without these “*good numbers*” the courses may not be able to go ahead. These challenges are similar in the discourse of Principal 3.

---

<sup>45</sup> Limited authority to teach - A Limited Authority to Teach (LAT) enables schools / employers to employ someone for a specific timeframe and/or role only when a suitable registered teacher cannot be found.

### 7.5.3 Principal 3 (High School 6)

At the time of the interview, Principal 3 was the leader of, High School 6, another multicultural school in a major city. This school had a school role of just over 1000 students of which around 15 percent identify as coming from a Pacific background. In this excerpt, Principal describes the issues which gagana Samoa faces as an option subject.

Excerpt 7.14

(00:49)

- 1      **Principal 3:** *They are smaller, the numbers are small and sometimes we need to*  
2      *combine them. It is, sometimes it is surprising for us that the numbers are so low,*  
3      *what we know is that many of our Samoan parents feel that their [children] are*  
4      *bilingual and that they want school to add things that they don't already have*  
5      *[...] This is the only school that I've been part of where Samoan is being taught.*  
6      *[...] For us, it is small and if we were applying the same lens that we apply to other*  
7      *subjects, we wouldn't run it. So we run it because we think it is important and we*  
8      *think it is important as a part of cultural identity and part of a place to stand. So we*  
9      *know it allows us to employ a Samoan staff to start with, but it also produces a strong*  
10     *connect.*

(05:56)

In line 1, “*They*” refers to Samoan classes. Principal 3 explains that because the numbers of students opting to study gagana Samoa are “*small*”, the classes have to be combined. She finds this “*surprising*” as she mentions elsewhere in the interview that the vast majority of the students from Pacific backgrounds are Samoan. In lines 6 to 7, Principal 3 explains that although the numbers of students studying gagana Samoa are low in relation to other subjects, the school applies a different “*lens*” because they “*think it is important*” to reflect the “*cultural identity*” of the school and students. Having a Samoan teacher on the staff also helps the school to build bridges or a “*strong connect*” with Samoan families and students. In Line 5, Principal 3 also mentions this is the only school she has been a part of where gagana Samoa is taught. This is an important statement to highlight as it reflects the reality of most Aotearoa secondary schools. Gagana Samoa the third most commonly spoken language in Aotearoa, yet it is only taught at 36 of around 600 secondary schools, and 52 students from

other schools learn via two different online school providers (Education Counts, 2021a; S.Gaugatau, personal communication, June 2020)

Thus far, the experience and beliefs of principals with school Pacific populations between 15 to 20 percent have been examined. In all three cases, the provision of gagana Samoa within the curriculum is hindered because of small numbers of students and resourcing of staff. Interestingly, the experience and beliefs of hindrances to Pacific language education of a school principal working at a school where around 70% of the students identify as Pacific peoples are not dissimilar despite a much higher Pacific student population.

#### 7.5.4 Principal 4 (High School 7)

Principal 4 is the leader of High School 7, a smaller school of around 560 students in a major city. This school has had a history of teaching several different Pacific languages in the past including gagana Samoa, gagana Tokelau, and Cook Islands Maori. At the time of the interview, however, only gagana Samoa was able to be offered. In Excerpt 7.15, Principal 5 discusses challenges she has experienced in trying to offer students the opportunity to study Pacific languages and cultures.

#### Excerpt 7.15

(04:33)

- 1     **Principal 4:** *within the curriculum we've got Samoan as a Yr 9 option, a yr 10 option*  
2     *and in the senior school the numbers have declined steadily over a number of years*  
3     *and [...] We've got down to the point where we have one class for Level 1, Level 2,*  
4     *and Level 3 Samoan.[...] it tends to be taken by people who are fluent Samoan*  
5     *speakers, but many fluent Samoan speakers choose not to take it. Having talked with*  
6     *students and parents about why that is they say: "We are fluent already. We speak the*  
7     *language at home. We need to actually learn something." [...]but we are not offering*  
8     *any of the other languages due to small numbers of kids who would be taking them*  
9     *and total (emphasis) inability to find teachers. I have enquired about Tokelauan as*  
10    *well. [...] Ah so that has been a real (emphasis) frustration for me. Because for me*  
11    *that stuff should be quite central to our curriculum time.*

(09:50)

In Principal 4's discourse the narrative around "*small numbers*" and declining numbers of students in relation to challenges in providing access to Pacific language education is very similar to the narrative of principals from schools with much smaller Pacific populations. Like Principal 2, who discussed the difficulty he had in finding an appropriate Samoan teacher, Principal 4 has experienced the same challenge in trying to find teachers for other Pacific languages such as Cook Islands Maori (mentioned elsewhere in this interview and) gagana Tokelau (lines 11 to 12). Principal 4 describes her experience of trying to find teachers for Pacific languages as a "*real frustration*" (line 12). Further analysis of this excerpt will be presented in the next two sub-sections.

From the reported experiences and beliefs about the challenges to provision of Pacific language education, it is clear from these four principals that low student numbers and finding teachers are real issues within the education system. In further analysis we begin to see the deeper issues at play as to why Pacific language education is so hard to access in schools in the following sections.

#### 7.5.5 Curriculum hierarchy and perceived educational value of Pacific languages

Principal 1 (Excerpt 7.12, pp. 200-1) *would "love to introduce Samoan language,"* but cannot as he has to prioritise the teaching of te reo Māori, followed by French and Japanese as there are already teachers employed to teach these languages, and existing connections with sister schools in Japan. With these barriers, though most likely unintentional, a hierarchy of languages and cultures, which matter at school and in the wider world is established. As Principal 1 said "*I do believe Asian languages are important.*" Therefore, even though "*there are over 100*" Samoan students at his school, the resourcing and framework in which New Zealand secondary schools operate do not make it easy to implement a Samoan programme, let alone a programme for other Pacific languages. Learning Languages is a compulsory area of the NZC, but only mandatory from Years 7 to 10. This means languages other than English are often considered a 'nice extra' rather than key learning area, leading to very few students studying a language beyond their Year 9 or 10 and room only for one or two different languages to be staffed and taught at a school. Principal 1's discourse in this excerpt adds another layer of understanding to Maria's<sup>46</sup> experience of finding enabling access to

---

<sup>46</sup> Maria is the EL teacher who facilitates the Tongan language cluster in this study and an advocate for access to Pacific language education in schools.

Pacific language education “*just so hard to do because it is at the margins*” (Excerpt 7.5, Maria, p. 185). Principal 1 makes a comment about a possible way to combat these barriers in lines 11 to 12 “*so I think you need to collaborate it across colleges to get it going.*” I will return to this idea later on.

Principal 4’s (excerpt 7.15) reported experiences also point to language hierarchy in schools and in society. The only Pacific language available for study at this school with over 70 percent of students from Pacific backgrounds was Samoan. The school is home to some of the biggest Tuvaluan and Tokelau student populations in Aotearoa, and in the world, yet finding teachers for these languages has not been possible. Principal 4 points out earlier in her interview that Te Kura<sup>47</sup> offers “*French, [...] German*” but not “*Samoan, Tongan, Tuvaluan, Tokelauan you know languages that our kids speak.*” I note here that in 2019, after this interview took place Te Kura now offers courses in gagana Samoa. Principal 4’s comment nonetheless reflects the language hierarchy within the New Zealand curriculum.

In terms of languages within the New Zealand education system, students in Aotearoa are not required to study a language as part of their NCEA qualification, unlike many education systems abroad. Numbers of students studying a language as part of NCEA throughout Aotearoa are declining as languages other than English are not perceived or promoted widely as important or useful subjects (Tait et al, 2020). When students do study a language as part of NCEA it is likely to be a status language such as French, Japanese, Spanish, or Mandarin as these languages are perceived as useful and more widely taught. These languages are more easily staffed as there are well established bodies of teachers, resources, and full academic pathways through NCEA and tertiary level.

This language hierarchy in the curriculum reinforces what people view as valuable in education and in the workplace as is demonstrated in the next section.

The discourse of Principals 1, 2, 3, and 4 illustrates wider challenges in providing access to Pacific language education and implementing Pacific culturally sustaining programmes.

---

<sup>47</sup> Te Kura o te Pounamu is the Correspondence School of New Zealand.

Principal 3's narrative (Excerpt. 7.14) touches briefly on how what is perceived as valuable within the school system and as useful for the future can be a hindrance to access to Pacific language education. In lines 2 to 4, excerpt 7.14, Principal 3 explains why there are very few students who opt to study gagana Samoa by saying "*we know [...] many of our Samoan parents feel that their [children] are bilingual and that they want school to add things that they don't already have.*" She adds: "*Parents want to add things [to their children's education] that they don't already have.*" In excerpt 7.15 (lines 5 to 8), Principal 4 reports a similar experience:

*but many fluent Samoan speakers choose not to take it (Samoan as a school subject). Having talked with students and parents about why that is they say: We are fluent already. We speak the language at home. We need to actually learn something.*

Though the focus here is school leader perspectives I re-introduce community voices to add to the narratives of school leaders (Principals 3 and 4). Longo (Tongan language cluster) and Peta (Tokelau Community) report similar attitudes to the learning and maintenance of the home language to the Samoan parents at the schools of Principals 3 and 4. In Excerpt 7.16 Longo, discusses what she has seen in Tongan communities.

Excerpt 7.16

(02:02)

1      **Longo:** *I have seen A LOT of homes that the language has completely faded away, is*  
 2      *not part of their identity at home, so it is mostly they are using their English language*  
 3      *at home to have conversation and the children [...] And the other thing too is because*  
 4      *they [parents] think, this is from my experience, they think it is not necessary for our*  
 5      *children to learn the Tongan language because when they go to school their classes*  
 6      *are run and taught in English, so they felt like there is no need.*

(06:29)

Here, Longo reports that what she has seen is many Tongan families not using lea faka-Tonga to communicate at home and that English has become the language used to converse with children. According to her experience, this is because the Tongan parents perceive that English is the language of school and therefore the children do not need to have Tongan language competence to succeed at school. This links directly with the discourse of the

principals in excerpts 7.14 and 7.15. I have also experienced what Longo is describing in my community language advocacy role with NZALT. At Tongan community meetings held to discuss how Tongan communities can access lea faka-Tonga education at school and as part of NCEA pathways, parents have stood up and said they brought their children to New Zealand to learn English for a better future and that they were not convinced that lea faka-Tonga had any role in supporting their children's education.

From an Aotearoa-Tokelau perspective, Peta discusses her own experience with questioning the value of Gagana Tokelau in her children's education in Excerpt 7.17.

Excerpt 7.17

(21:00)

1       **Peta:** *so I think that my generation have bought into that idea and myself included to*  
 2       *some extent, that you've got to do all the subjects that your kids need to take, they*  
 3       *need to take the ones that are going to get them jobs later on and I don't think that*  
 4       *they think that language learning is part of that process. So, I think that mindsets have*  
 5       *to shift, for that buy-in and that push to come.*

(21:33)

Here Peta talks about how her “*generation have bought into that idea [...] that your kids [...] need to take [school subjects] that [...] get them jobs later on and I don't think that they think that language learning is part of that process*” (lines 3 to 4). Even though Peta is an active advocate and teacher of gagana Tokelau in her community, she feels she too has “*bought into*” this ideology “*to some extent.*” In making this comment we again see similarities with the principals' discussion of why there are not many Samoan students opting to study gagana Samoa at school and Longo's discussion of her experience in Tongan homes. Peta believes for change to happen or “*buy-in*” that gagana Tokelau has a valuable place in the education of Aotearoa-born Tokelauan children “*mindsets have to shift.*” In shifting mindsets, Peta is referring to the mindsets of the community. In shifting mindsets in communities and in education, it is important to explore how these mindsets or ideologies of what is important in education came to be. Linking Tokelauan experience of education discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.2.1), with Peta's narrative of shame surrounding Tokelau language growing up in Aotearoa in Chapter 5, we can see how hegemonic approaches and narratives of what is important and valuable in education support an ideology of English and Western knowledge

as most valuable and important to educational and vocational success. The potential of language education as a platform to support the shifting of these ideologies and reinforce the value of Indigenous languages and knowledge systems in secondary schools will be discussed in Chapter 8.

In this section, I have presented an analysis of discourse from four secondary school principals with additional excerpts from Tongan and Tokelauan community narratives. Discourse presented highlights institutional barriers to providing access for Pacific language education in secondary schools, namely operational and pragmatic barriers such as the financing and staffing of Pacific language courses and more deeply entrenched ideological barriers of the educational value of Pacific language education.

In the next sections, drawing on interview data with school principals, I examine how assumptions stemming from lack of linguistic awareness also create barriers to the provision of access to Pacific language education in secondary schools.

#### 7.5.6 Assumptions and the ‘Pacific’ umbrella

Data analysis suggest that school awareness of language acquisition and issues relating to multilingualism of Pacific students is low, especially so in students who have Pacific heritage other than Samoan. In keeping with the interest of this research, I asked school principals about the languages backgrounds of Pacific heritage who came from other Pacific language backgrounds such as Tokelauan or Tongan. This is illustrated in the next excerpt.

Excerpt 7.18

(02:35)

- 1     **Principal 3:** *Most of the [students] are New Zealand-born [...] occasionally we do*
- 2     *have students that come from the Islands and they are often in ESOL. So most of our*
- 3     *[students] are taught at home.*
- 4     **Juliet:** *What other different Pacific heritages are represented at the school apart*
- 5     *from Samoan?*
- 6     **Principal 3:** *Tongan and Rarotongan and Fijian and tiny amount of Niue.*
- 7     **Juliet:** *Have you ever had conversations with parents from other Pacific backgrounds*
- 8     *about language and culture?*



9      **Principal 3:** No, *interesting, no never.*

10     **Juliet:** *Are you aware if [students] from other Pacific backgrounds have any*

11     *language proficiency?*

12     **Principal 3:** *I assume they do, but I don't know they do, I assume that in Pacific*

13     *households the handing down of language is core business and is partly because*

14     *many of the adults in Pacific families are bilingual. And so the younger people learnt*

15     *to, so it is closer. It is more like Māori families in the forties and fifties.*

16     *[...] I don't think I can remember ever meeting a Samoan adult who wasn't fluent.*

(09:14)

In line 1, we learn that the majority of Pacific students at Principal 3's school are Aotearoa-born as it is only “occasionally” that students “*come from the Islands.*” In lines 2 to 3, Principal 3 states an assumption “*so most of our [students] are taught [their home language] at home.*” Whilst I did not interview students from Principal 3's school, student and community data from this thesis and other research (McCaffery & McFall, 2010) reveal a different reality in terms of Pacific students being “*taught*” their languages “*at home.*” Data presented in Chapter 5, for example, showed that students might hear the languages spoken at home or in the community but that did not mean young people were taught, spoke or felt confident speaking their heritage languages.

In lines 12 to 13, Principal 3 states assumptions about students' home language acquisition saying: “*I assume they do [...] I assume that in Pacific households the handing down of language is core business.*” This assumption is based on an understanding that Pacific parents are mainly bilingual and therefore the language “*is closer*” to the students. Principal 3 compares this “*closer*” connection to language being spoke at home to the situation of te reo Māori in the “*forties and fifties*” implying that this is no longer the case for te reo Māori. This comparison of the language ‘health’ of Māori and Pacific families is not supported by the facts. In the 1940s and 1950s, Māori urbanisation had already begun and around 25 percent of Māori children spoke te reo Māori, with this percentage declining rapidly over the next two decades (see Chapter 2, section 2.4).

Principal 3's assumption of home language acquisition is also based on reported experience of not being able to “*remember ever meeting a Samoan adult who wasn't fluent*” (line 15). Again, bringing the community voice from this research to the analysis of Principal 3's

assumptions about home language acquisition in Pacific families, this statement does not reflect the reality of the reported experiences of Kaimakoi, Longo, Peta, Maia, and Pulēleti. These community narratives presented in Chapter 5 highlight that even when Aotearoa born Pacific peoples are brought up in an immersion environment, they only remain “*fluent*” bilingual speakers if they actively keep up their languages acquired during childhood through community involvement. Peta’s narrative for example showed her as a fluent speaker of gagana Tokelau as a pre-schooler who lost some proficiency, and only regaining her language through the study of te reo Māori at school (and gagana Samoa at university). Her engagement with her community has led her to reclaim her language but this does not mean she always feels confident or “*fluent*” in using it.

In response to my asking about which other Pacific communities attend Principal 3’s school, Principal 3 reports that apart from Samoan students, there are students from Tongan, Cook Islands, Fijian and Niuean communities. When I ask Principal 3 if they had ever had a conversation with non-Samoan Pacific parents about maintenance and learning of home languages and culture, the reply was: “*No, interesting, no never.*” She also assumes that these students are proficient speakers of their home languages. Our conversation appears to have awoken an awareness of the “*other*” Pacific languages and represented at her school. Near the end of our conversation, she comments: “*But it is really clear that there is another piece of work to do [...] that hasn’t been on our radar in terms of the other languages, so there may be a piece of work to do there.*”

In interviews with the other school principals, I was not able to ascertain the level of knowledge of student language proficiency and background information of Pacific languages other than Samoan. However, Principal 2 did comment: “*I wouldn’t know the proportion of [...] our [students] that do speak Samoan at home. I wouldn’t know in our Samoan community for how many it is the first language and for how many it isn’t.*” On the other hand, the discourse of Principal 4, principal of a school with over 70 percent of Pacific students, showed a much higher awareness of the many different Pacific languages and cultures represented in the student community. As we saw in Excerpt 7.15, she would like all students to have access to learning their heritage languages if possible and is frustrated at the lack of provision within the system, for example via using distance learning. Principal 4’s narrative also showed an awareness of the language-related issues Pacific students face such as shame of not being a fluent speaker. These varying responses of Principals 2, 3, and 4

show how much knowledge of linguistic and cultural literacy depends on individual principals. Ensuring how this important shared understanding between Pacific communities and schools can be built into educational protocols and not left to chance will be discussed in Chapter 8.

In the principals' narratives it seemed that because of the much higher numbers of students from Samoan backgrounds, generally discussion of Pacific-related things in the school defaulted to Samoan rather than a term able to encompass all of the different cultural and linguistic heritages of Pacific students. This is discussed in the following excerpts.

Excerpt 7.19

(03:32)

1     **Principal 3:** *I think it is probably true to say that, and our Pacific parents do joke*  
2     *about this [...] the Samoans dominate everything and there is certainly a fair bit of*  
3     *joshing about that. I think that there are probably fewer opportunities in the*  
4     *curriculum for non-Samoan Pacific Island identities to be seen and certainly that*  
5     *could happen and it is possible that it happens in social science [...] we made a*  
6     *change a few years ago from the Samoan parents association to the Pacific parents*  
7     *association [...] it was quite big! But its good it is much more inclusive and it allows*  
8     *even for that acknowledgement and conversation.*

(04:23)

Throughout this excerpt, Principal 3 refers to her experience of “*Samoans dominat[ing] everything*” Pacific at the school. Principal 3 describes the situation with humour, that the parents “*josh*” around about the truth of this issue. Principal 3 also reflects that within the curriculum “*there are probably fewer opportunities in the curriculum for non-Samoan Pacific Island identities to be seen.*” This “*dominating*” of Pacific school curriculum and events by Samoan students and families is also evident in the following excerpt from Principal 1 in his description of ‘Pacific’ school events related to Polyfest.

Excerpt 7.20

(03:10)

1     **Principal 1:** *Coming up to the Polyfest [...] they performed last night and we had a*  
2     *special ceremony where I had to give a blessing, we had a prayer from the minister*

3     *and then they performed and then they are pulled apart and it was a really lovely*  
4     *occasion, it went for about three hours, with a good 120 parents and families [...] so*  
5     *that is probably our biggest sense of connection. For the last couple of years, we've*  
6     *celebrated Samoan Independence day, by raising the flag for Samoa on that day,*  
7     *having a special ceremony, getting a minister, we get church leaders up all the time*  
8     *when we do something to do with Pacific Islanders, well certainly Samoa [...]*  
9     *The fact that there is over 100 of them is why we have done Samoan independence*  
10    *day, you know we have one Pitcairn and you do that and you would just run out of*  
11    *days and the energy is just too difficult.*  
(05:37)

In this excerpt, Principal 1 is describing the pre-Polyfest event the school puts on for Pacific families before the big Polyfest performance. The school invites families and a local minister to bless the event, and for the families to critique the students performances in preparation for the final performance. Principal 1 describes this type of event which is also put on for Samoan independence day is one of the main ways of building “*the biggest sense of connection*” with Pacific families. From this discourse we get the sense Principal 1 is proud of these students and committed to building strong relationships with the wider school Pacific community. He supports these events by attending and participating. Nonetheless, analysing this discourse we see that in fact what he refers to as Pacific is actually Samoan which he acknowledges in describing the event: “*we get church leaders up all the time when we do something to do with Pacific Islanders, well certainly Samoa.*” When I checked later in the interview, the Principal confirmed that the ministers who came to the school always were Samoan. Principal 1, explains this Samoan dominance to ‘things Pacific’ in schools in the line “*the fact that there is over 100 of them*” in terms of numbers. This numerical domination of things ‘Pacific’ or ‘Pasifika’ often being Samoan or overly generalised is problematic in education but is often not problematised in mainstream schools where teachers and school leaders may tend to be less aware of what the term actually means. Principal 4 who works in a school with a majority Pacific population is perhaps more aware of the need to problematise the Pacific umbrella terms. She states:

*Pasifika is almost a misnomer in this school because it is Tokelauan, Samoan, Tuvaluan. They don't (emphasis) identify as Pasifika [...] they identify in their*

*individual groups and there is increasing discomfort with even using the word Pasifika. They would never say I am Pasifika*

I do not have formally audio recorded data in which Tongan and Tokelauan participants discuss their problematising and experience of the umbrella terms Pacific or Pasifika. However, many informal discussions I have had over time with community members have covered this issue and the need to focus more on individual cultures or of mixed Pacific heritage has been addressed in recent research (Chu et al, 2013).

## 7.6 - Chapter summary

The third research question driving the findings of this chapter asked:

*What are people's reported beliefs of and experiences about the challenges related to school-based continued access to Pacific language education?*

Data illustrated the numerous challenges experienced throughout the education system in relation to accessing Pacific language education. These challenges are linked to: ideologies present in education and wider society of what is understood as valuable and useful for success, limitations in resourcing and awareness of issues surrounding Pacific languages and cultures in schools. Data analysed and presented in this Chapter has much potential to support the enactment of numerous educational policies outlined in Chapter 2 (2.6.1) which acknowledge the importance of and support Pacific languages and cultures in education and promote the application of linguistically and culturally sustaining pedagogies in Aotearoa. How these findings can support these policies is discussed in the following chapter.

## Chapter 8 - Discussion and conclusion

### 8.1 - Introduction

As a teacher-researcher, this applied research project is driven by the need to ‘do something’ in response to student, community, and teacher experience of inequitable access to Pacific language education in secondary schools. With a relational theoretical framework and methodology, this thesis is concerned with understanding the problem(s) at hand and using the findings to create possible solutions. Therefore, aiming to provide a support to ongoing community efforts, the research has two overarching aims:

- to explore how and why Pacific languages, specifically gagana Tokelau and lea Faka-Tonga, matter in secondary schools;
- how mainstream secondary schools can provide continued access to language education in schools where immersion or bilingual education are not currently available.

The three research questions have aimed to explore connections between language, culture, identity, and wellbeing; how experiences of Pacific language education connect with current and future imagined identities; and people’s reported experiences of and beliefs about the challenges related to school-based Pacific language education (see pp. 57-9 for a full description of the RQs). Therefore this Chapter begins by restating the problem(s) and summarising how the project has elucidated deeper understanding of these issues, before drawing on the evidence to discuss potential solutions.

### 8.2 - Defining the problem

The problems that this thesis addresses can be seen in the complex relationships between language use and ideologies, policy, and education. In this section, these relationships will be redrawn as a platform for later discussion.

In Chapters 1 and 2, student and community experiences, historical background, research (Bland, forthcoming; Huntsman & Kalolo, 2007; McCaffery & McFall, 2010; Major, 2018; May, 2020; Milne, 2017; Parsons, 2020; Salesa, 2017) were synthesised to outline the past and present (lack of) opportunities available for Pacific peoples in Aotearoa to learn and maintain Pacific languages within the education system. In doing so I highlighted the desire and need for accessible Pacific language education which was articulated by this collective of

voices from research, communities, and educators. The desire and need for access to Pacific language education were expressed as a means of addressing rapid patterns of language shift experienced by Pacific peoples in Aotearoa (McCaffery & McFall, 2010; Major, 2018; May, 2020; Si'ilata et al, 2019). Addressing language is important as language shift impacts the holistic wellbeing of people (Kupa, personal communication, February 2021; Parsons, 2020)

Against the backdrop of ongoing language shift in Pacific Communities, the current limited access to learning and maintaining Pacific languages in the New Zealand education system creates a dissonance between reality and current educational policies and goals in Aotearoa. Chapter 2 discussed *Tapasā*, a specific educational policy that implies schools in Aotearoa should enable Pacific learners to connect with their identities, languages and cultures within their education and that teachers should use “effective pedagogies for Pasifika learners” (MoE, 2019, p.2). The policy document, *Our Code Our Standards - the teacher code of professional responsibility* states that teachers should be providing culturally sustaining approaches to education for all students (Education Council, 2017). Access to Pacific language education in schools can be part of developing culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP) (Milne, 2017; Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). The CSP approach is based on the growing body of international cross-disciplinary literature which indicates that students are more likely to thrive in their education and experience a positive sense of wellbeing when they are strong in their languages and cultural identities (Franken et al, 2008; Hunkin, 1987, 2012; Ladson Billings 1994, 2017; Manuela & Anae; 2017; May 2014, 2020; Mila-Schaaf & Robinson, 2010; Milne, 2017; Paris & Alim, 2017).

CSP and Pacific language education, maintenance, and revitalisation are highly prominent in the most recent policy document, *Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020-2030* (MoE, 2020a). This policy outlines a ten-year plan which amongst many goals, aims to shift the education system which has failed Pacific peoples in the past by: embracing “innovative practices of our Pacific communities ... confronting racism and discrimination in our education system ... sustain[ing] the cultures of our children.” (MoE, 2020a). All three policy documents mentioned here reference equity and wellbeing as overarching aims for (Pacific) education and note the role of (Pacific) languages and cultural identities in realising these goals.

### 8.2.1 How does this research inform the problem?

This study provides additional context-specific empirical evidence to illuminate issues surrounding Pacific languages in (secondary) education and language shift in communities. An in-depth understanding of these issues is important in the development of potential solutions and ways forward, the focus of this chapter. The four keyways in which this study has contributed further understanding and which are discussed in this section are:

- Tokelau-Tongan empirical examples of how language and culture connect with wellbeing
- Tokelau-Tongan empirical examples of the complexities of multilingualism in Aotearoa
- Tokelau specific issues surrounding language and education in Aotearoa
- Tongan specific issues surrounding language and education in Aotearoa

These issues will now be discussed in turn.

### 8.2.2 Issues of Language, culture, identity and wellbeing in Tokelauan-Tongan context

The term ‘wellbeing’ is frequently used as an educational goal in current policy and educational institutional life, particularly in relation to Pacific peoples. Concepts such as language, culture, and identity are often connected with wellbeing. However, how these concepts look in people’s experiences, and how they might be supported with the education system are still not well understood (Fry & Wilson, 2018; Parsons, 2020).

In answering RQs 1, 2, and 3, the findings of this study provide clear empirical examples of how language maintenance and/or language shift is tied to wellbeing for Tokelauan and Tongan people. One example discussed in Chapters 5 and 7 (RQs 1 and 3), showed how young Tongans (and other Pacific peoples) are labelled ‘plastic,’ and are therefore positioned by others (and themselves) as having an inauthentic identity, if they could not speak their heritage language. Without an understanding and ability to use HLs, some young Tongans reported feeling unable to participate actively in family life and community events. Although there was some humour associated with being called ‘plastic,’ students reported being teased and laughed at for not speaking Tongan. The sense of being judged as not having an ‘authentic’ cultural identity seemed problematic, impacting confidence and wellbeing of these students.



Conversely, community adult participants Kaimakoi, Longo, and Peta discussed how ability to use heritage language, and subsequently feel connected to one's cultural heritage impacted self-esteem and confidence. For example, Kaimakoi a Tokelau community member described how she saw her connection with her languages and cultural identity to be *“very much at the heart of [...] your self-esteem, your confidence, and how you present yourself to the world.”* Kaimakoi, has a successful career in the public service and attributes her professional success with her multilingual identity and understanding of her cultural values. The data presented in depth in Chapter 5 provide Tokelauan and Tongan-specific evidence of connections between language, culture, identity, and wellbeing, thus adding to a growing body of research specifically focused on Pacific wellbeing in education and or health which suggests that “ethnic identity may both be the buffer and/or cause of anxiety and stress” (Manuela & Anae, 2017, p.141; Mila, 2006, 2014; Parsons, 2020).

Further Tokelau-Tongan context-specific examples of “ethnic identity” as a “buffer” (Manuela & Anae, 2017) for wellbeing are found in data explored in Chapter 5 (RQ1). This indicates how language learning supports students (and adults) who have grown up in Aotearoa to grasp Indigenous understandings of wellbeing that sit in their cultures. This deeper learning and understanding enriches experiences of cultural identity. For example, Pulēleti and Peta discussed their joy and enhanced sense of Tokelauan identity as they continue to learn and understand more deeply about language registers in gagana Tokelau. Student data showed how students did not always find Indigenous values and ideas they learned about in Tongan class easy to understand, negotiate, and adopt when growing up in Westernised society. However, they report that once this learning “clicked”, they began to appreciate and understand Tongan life as much more sophisticatedly structured than they had previously understood. These examples provide evidence of how language education can support Tokelauan and Tongan students growing up in Aotearoa to become more aware of how their language is a taonga, used in the caring for relationships and therefore something passed from generation to generation and ultimately bound to one's sense of identity and wellbeing. This type of learning is one way of supporting students to develop “secured identities” (Anae, 2006) which support Aotearoa-born Pacific peoples to become “healthier members” of society (Anae, 2006, p.136). Without opportunity to explicitly learn about Indigenous structures conveyed through language, such learning is more likely to be left to chance. Educational implications for this subsection will be discussed in section 8.3.

### 8.2.3 Complexities of multilingualism in Tokelauan-Tongan and school contexts

This thesis reveals challenges and realities faced by multilingual Tokelauan and Tongan communities, particularly within educational contexts. Findings support prior research surrounding bi/multilingualism (Cummins, 2000; García, 2009; García et al, 2017; García & Li, 2014; May 2020; Seals & Olsen-Reeder, 2019) by providing specific Tokelauan-Tongan and secondary school-level student examples that show:

- how bi/ multilingualism is a complex ‘continuum’ process
- how bi/multilingualism is shaped by experience and wider attitudes and policies in societies

In many contexts, such as monolingual English-medium mainstream schools in Aotearoa, (Major, 2018; May, 2020), bi/multilingualism is still widely (mis)understood as a binary process in which the mind houses and deals with two (or more) languages separately with limited storage capacity (May, 2020, p.21). This view of bilingualism, termed ‘Separate Underlying Proficiency’ (SUP) (May, 2020), has furthered belief that bi/multilingualism can lead to cognitive overload, and therefore is a potential academic, social, and emotional disadvantage for children (May, 2020). For these reasons bi/multilingualism has often been discouraged for children from minority language backgrounds as it is perceived to hinder childrens’ abilities to learn the dominant language and assimilate into dominant sociocultural norms. Data from Chapter 5 (RQ1) support the strong evidence-based understanding in sociolinguistics that bi/multilingualism is not a cognitive disadvantage but rather a complex ‘continuum’ process. When nurtured, this process enhances learning and ability to communicate (Cummins, 2000; García et al, 2017; May, 2020; Si‘ilata et al, 2019). In Chapter 5 the data show how participants engage with multilingualism in everyday contexts as a dynamic complex ‘continuum’ process. Peta, Kaimakoi, and Pulēleti describe how they weave in and out of languages (Tokelauan, Tongan, Tuvaluan, Samoan, te Reo Māori, and English), depending on whom they are interacting with and the context. They are translanguaging using their full linguistic repertoire in a dynamic and flexible manner (García & Li, 2014) to make meaning. Evidence from Chapter 5 (section 5.6, p.139) shows how their multilingualism competencies enable them to understand and support their families, communities, and workplaces in ways which monolingual people could not do. Furthermore,

Kaimakoi and Longo discuss how their multilingualism has given them and their children (Longo) an edge academically and in the workplace (pp. 106-7, p. 111).

Tongan student data from Chapters 5 and 6 illustrate emergent bi/ multilingualism along the bilingual continuum. These students are in a translanguaging space where they are comfortable to understand and use some context-related language or formulaic phrases in a home language but do not feel confident or fluent in using this language. When their emergent multilingualism is nurtured in a safe learning space, they gain confidence and become more flexible in their language use. These experiences of Tokelauan and Tongan adults and students provide context-specific evidence supporting 60 years of research that bi/multilingualism benefits cognitive flexibility, communicative sensitivity, and metalinguistic awareness (Cummins, 2000; García et al, 2017; May, 2020; Si'ilata et al, 2019).

Similarly, the complex multilingual practices and experiences of participants in this study support the growing body of research exploring how bi/multilingualism is shaped by wider attitudes and policies in societies and therefore is a multidimensional phenomenon (Bakhtin, 1992; García et al, 2017; García & Li, 2014; May, 2014, 2020). Chapters 5 and 7 (RQs 1 and 3) provide Tokelauan-Tongan and secondary school context-specific evidence demonstrating how language use is impacted by how speakers perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others in homes, communities, schools, and wider society.

Tokelauan and Tongan (adult and student) participants discussed their feelings of inferiority and/or shame in relation to how they spoke their heritage. As a child, Kaimaikoi did not consider herself a “*fluent speaker*” and she had to “*conquer her fear*” of making mistakes to gain confidence and proficiency in speaking Gagana Tokelau and lea faka-Tonga. Similarly, Peta felt shame at school being an “*Islander*” and wanted to disown her heritage language in order to fit in. Now as adults, both these Tokelauan leaders are proficient and more confident speakers but they still feel their heritage skills are inferior to those of the Island-born community members. Similarly, secondary students in Pasifika Studies and the Tongan language cluster appeared to index ability or lack of ability to use lea faka-Tonga well as a marker of authentic Tongan identity. Students reported that amongst peers (and in communities) if they cannot speak lea faka-Tonga in a “*real fluent*” manner they are called “*plastic*,” a term indicating they are not real. Adding my own recent experience, one of my

current students said that being called plastic also implies you are a pollutant which causes harm to the environment, especially the ocean.

The narratives from adults and students surrounding language, shame, fear, and authentic identity illustrate the ideology of linguistic purism which, present in all societies, exemplifies how language use is shaped by wider attitudes and policies in society. Linguistic purism, the need to use the purest version of a language to preserve and honour the language, is often developed in response to symbolic domination (Seals, 2019). Many communities who have experienced language repression and subsequent language loss because of colonisation want to keep their language pure and untainted by the colonising language to ensure its survival (Seals, 2019). This response is understandable. However, the rise of linguistic purism affects people's wellbeing and confidence in using the language if they feel language should be used in a singular and perfect way (ibid). As we see amongst participants in this study, trying to speak one's heritage language when you are not perfect or 'plastic' can become a face threatening act and stop children speaking their heritage languages in the future, thus, contributing to language shift.

Data from Chapters 5, 6, and 7 (RQs 1, 2, 3) show how monolingual nation state language policies also link to linguistic purism continue to contribute to language shift in Tokelauan and Tongan (and other) communities. Peta discusses how she was part of the generation who were encouraged to give up speaking Tokelauan at home and assimilate to English only in order to best to support her education and future. Peta explains that this 'English only' policy still impacts the Tokelauan community today. Language assimilation policies have led to many Tokelauan parents still believing that fluency in English, even if it comes at the expense of gagana Tokelau, is still the best means to getting ahead in life. Therefore, parents do not always see the value in their children learning and maintaining gagana Tokelau (Excerpt 7.17, p. 207). Peta believes that if gagana Tokelau were to become more accessible in schools, one of the biggest challenges would be to get parent 'buy-in' to the idea that it is a useful addition to their children's education. Similarly, for two school principals interviewed this was an issue for Samoan language classes in their schools. In their cases, class sizes were small because many Samoan parents wanted their children to learn something new and useful as part of their education (Chapter 7, 7.5, p. 199). Longo too gives similar examples of this in her Tongan community (Excerpt 7.16, p. 206). I have experienced this too, prior to, during, and after conducting this PhD study. These examples further illustrate the colonial legacy of

hegemonic assimilation language policies imposed on Pacific peoples in Aotearoa (McCaffery & McFall, 2010).

Examples of how Pacific bi/multilingualism is shaped by hegemonic attitudes and policies in education are also found in Chapter 7 (RQ3). One school principal in this study said they “*assumed*” the handing down of language was core business in Pacific families. They had not checked the truth in this assumption. Other school principals reported not knowing which students could or could not speak their heritage languages (Chapter 7, RQ3, Extract 7.18, p. 208). Yet, experience and observations reported by community members and language teachers in this study (Chapters 5 & 7, RQ 3) show one cannot make such assumptions. Longo explicitly says that in her community parents are not teaching their children Tongan at home and subsequently the children are not growing up speaking Tongan (Extract 7.16, p. 206). Maria describes how Pacific multilingual students often have “*one leg in one leg out*” of the languages within their linguistic repertoire. She sees her students are capable but lack confidence and/or have not had a chance to formally learn their heritage languages although they might hear them spoken at home. The result can be an unsupported translanguaging space whereby students are not confident using their home languages or the dominant language and therefore often “*get spat out the end of school not really achieving what their parents came here for [improved educational and career opportunities]*” (Maria, also see Anita in Excerpt 7.3.3, p. 180). In this way the lack of understanding of the complexities of multilingualism and assumptions can lead to a negative impact on educational outcomes and overall wellbeing.

The frequent umbrella grouping of Pacific or Pasifika students and languages which happens via hegemonic processes such as measurement of achievement and progress across ethnic groups in mainstream secondary school (and in this thesis to some extent) also appears to contribute lack of knowledge and the production of assumptions. In Chapter 7 (RQ3, section 7.5.6, p. 208) we see how umbrella grouping in secondary schools leads to assumptions that things ‘Pacific’ are in fact Samoan, be it parent groups or celebrations. The umbrella title undermines the value of each language and culture and its uniqueness to its speakers. This evidence supports the call in Pacific educational research for a stronger focus in research, policy, and practice on specific groups such as Tokelauan, or Tongan or indeed to focus on issues surrounding mixed heritage (Chu et al, 2013, Tupuola, 2004).

The examples presented here provide evidence in a secondary school setting to support Major's (2018) work on the hegemony of English in primary school classrooms. Major (2018) argues that the complexity and the value of multilingualism (Li, 2000) are not understood in mainstream education where most teachers and school leaders are monolingual English speakers. Data from this thesis highlight the big gap in understanding of multilingualism that needs to be bridged for more equitable educational opportunities within our system. Pasifika Studies and the Tongan Language Cluster are two possible models within mainstream secondary education which nurture multilingualism in contexts where immersion/bilingual education is not currently possible. However, these programmes rely solely on the agency and hard work of individual teachers not systemic structures which would enable such programmes to be accessed by all students in Aotearoa.

We can see from these examples how complex multilingualism is in Tokelauan, Tongan, and school settings. Yet, though current educational policy and practice theoretically support multilingualism in the New Zealand education system, these complexities and their impact on young people and their wellbeing appear to be neither well understood nor addressed in education. Supporting the work of Kubota (2004), Norton and Toohey (2004) and Milne, (2018) culture, multiculturalism, and multilingualism are often still understood as and practised in static simplistic ways through language weeks, and cultural days, with no or few opportunities within the curriculum to problematise and raise awareness of issues surrounding multilingualism. Understanding and addressing challenges surrounding multilingualism (such as linguistic purism and its impact on how people view and use language) need to be addressed systemically and deliberately across homes, communities, and schools if multilingualism is to be valued and nurtured in Aotearoa. How this can be done will be discussed in section 8.3.

#### 8.2.4 Tokelau specific issues surrounding language and education in Aotearoa

Empirical data in this study some 70 years since the first wave of Tokelauan migration in the 1950s (see Chapter 2, section 2.2.1) reveal that not much has happened to ensure the overall wellbeing of Tokelauans in Aotearoa in education, especially at secondary level and in relation to access to language and culture at school. In Chapter 7 (RQ3), Kaimakoi and Pulēleti (Tokelauan participants in this study) report how they see Tokelauan language and culture not valued in the New Zealand education system as it cannot be studied beyond

ECE<sup>48</sup>. Kaimakoi, as a public servant, reports that in her advocacy work for Pacific languages, the education system as the hardest place to be heard. Yet she believes education is the most influential institution able to ensure the survival of gagana Tokelau (see section 7.2, pp. 179-80). Pulēleti and Peta also believe that access to gagana Tokelau is needed at all levels of education to ensure its survival. Peta sees that the language cannot be “*left to chance*” and therefore needs to be included within formal education. Pulēleti had to travel to Norway to study his own language (p. 180). As a university student in the 1990s, a Norwegian linguist suggested to Pulēleti that gagana Tokelau was absent from New Zealand education because Tokelau was a New Zealand colony (Chapter 7, section 7.2.2). Reflecting on this conversation 30 years on, Puleleti comments that nothing much had changed for Gagana Tokelau since the 1990s.

In direct contrast to the Tokelauan experience described in this thesis and the literature, are educational policies call for wellbeing and equity. Specific policies educational referring to the importance of Pacific languages and cultures in secondary education, and for teachers and schools to adopt culturally sustaining pedagogies (Education Council, 2017; MoE, 2019; MoE, 2020a) show holistic approaches to wellbeing are theoretically understood in education. These data and policies are in direct contrast with opportunities and resourcing currently available for access to Tokelau language and culture within the New Zealand education System revealing the inequality in the system. As Peta shared with me once, Tokelauans in Aotearoa currently have some of the lowest wellbeing outcomes in housing, health, and education (Statistics New Zealand, 2018).

#### 8.2.5 Tongan-specific issues surrounding language and education in Aotearoa

Data from this research show that lea faka-Tonga has more affordances than gagana Tokelau in the New Zealand secondary education system through its provision in NCEA qualifications. As a result, secondary schools can include Tongan language within their curriculum. As documented in Chapter 7, these affordances have increased as this study has progressed. However, data highlight that there are still many challenges within the school system for students and schools to access Tongan language learning. Chapter 7 (RQ3) shows the challenges teachers face in supporting students in learning lea faka-Tonga outside of the

---

<sup>48</sup> On May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021, it was announced to the Tokelau community that gagana Tokelau would be made an official NCEA subject which would become part of a student’s academic pathway to University Entrance. This is discussed further in the concluding section of the thesis.

Auckland area. Maria discusses how learning Tongan sits at the “*margins*” of the education system. For schools without large populations of Tongan students (outside of Auckland), accessing Tongan language education within the secondary school systems involves much “*tutuing around*.” Outside of Auckland, for students to access NCEA Tongan, schools are reliant on the good will of Auckland-based Tongans who mark student work in addition to their own full-time teaching jobs. In order to provide access for students to learn Tongan as part of the Tongan Language Cluster, a small group of people have to work very hard on top of heavy full-time workloads (Extract 7.5, p. 185). Moreover, the Tongan language cluster is only available once a week, after school on Fridays during Terms 2 and 3 of the school year. This is because of the time commitment required in organisation and the availability of students after school. Whilst this opportunity is valuable, playing a role in the language maintenance wider educational and social benefits of young Tongans in this region (Chapters 5 and 6, RQs 1 and 2). The arrangement does not allow students to focus on the regular language learning required for sustainable language maintenance. Maria confirms the Tongan Language Cluster is not yet able to support the language learning of students who have no base in Tongan language.

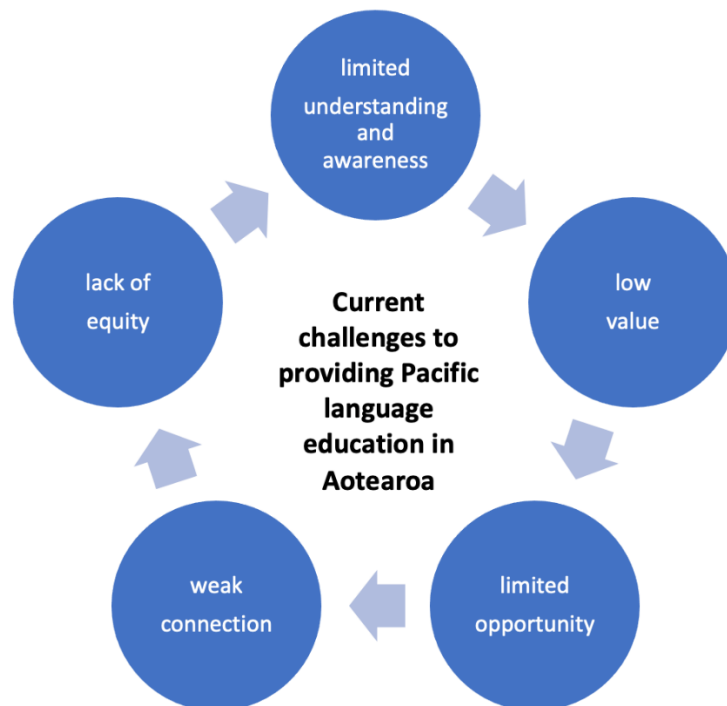
In the Pasifika Studies class, students have more regular access to language learning as it is timetabled four hours per week during the whole school year. Although the four hours alone cannot combat language shift, the course supports collective efforts for language maintenance across home, church, school, and community. Like the Tongan Language Cluster, Pasifika Studies offers many benefits beyond language maintenance. However, this model is entirely reliant on Anita and her time and energy invested in developing the course and establishing her web of community contacts who come in to support the language teaching. Without a key teacher advocating for programmes to work creatively to support multilingual students, models such as Pasifika Studies are difficult to sustain without the systemic support of the education system and can lead to teacher burn-out.

#### 8.2.6 Visual presentation of challenges

The challenges to providing continued access to Pacific language education in mainstream secondary schools presented in this section can be grouped around five interrelated concepts. I have grouped these issues around five interrelated concepts depicted in Figure 6 below:



Figure 6. Visual presentation of challenges to providing continued access to Pacific language education in mainstream secondary schools



These five interrelated concepts can in turn serve as a platform to discuss potential solutions, the focus of the following section.

This section has used evidence found in response to the three research questions to discuss the first overarching aim of the thesis:

- to explore how and why Pacific languages, specifically gagana Tokelau and lea Faka-Tonga, matter in secondary schools.

The following sections uses empirical evidence to examine the second overarching aim of the thesis:

- to understand how mainstream secondary schools can provide continued access to language education in schools where immersion or bilingual education are not currently available.

### 8.3 - Research-based Solutions

I now draw on empirical evidence from this study supported by existing literature to discuss

how continued access to Pacific language education might be provided in schools where immersion or bilingual education are not currently available. To do this I examine goals and possible actions that might be taken by all stakeholders in light of findings from this study.

### 8.3.1 What are the goals?

Bilingual/immersion education is the most effective means to reverse language shift and promote language revitalisation (May, 2020; Si'ilata et al, 2019). It is a goal worth striving for all Tokelauan and Tongan people living in Aotearoa. However, the 'White' spaces (Milne, 2017) of school funding, resourcing, and policy development based around student numbers and level of interest (illustrated in school principal data in Chapter 7-RQ3) indicate that the establishment of bilingual-immersion programmes is difficult in areas where there are not large populations of students and families able to attend - often outside of the Auckland area such as the schools and communities in this study. I believe it is crucial to maintain a goal of establishing bilingual programmes for gagana Tokelau and lea faka-Tonga in all settings. However, given the importance of language and culture in negotiating strong "ethnic identities" (Anae, 1998; Mila-Schaaf, 2011), supporting wellbeing, and the rate of language shift patterns in Tokelauan and Tongan communities, other means of supporting heritage language learning and maintenance are needed throughout Aotearoa, in addition to supporting bilingual/immersion models.

The first goal therefore should be to develop an 'all hands on deck' approach. This means there is a system-wide awareness and focus with coordinated efforts to value and provide continuous access to heritage language education in different settings throughout Aotearoa, regardless of population size. Families, communities, churches, schools (mainstream English-medium and bilingual/immersion), tertiary institutes, and government departments need to work together to support these efforts, with resourcing designed collaboratively and made available in all areas. This way issues of language do not only sit with those interested in language such as community elders or leaders, language teachers or linguists, rather the knowledge and responsibility are shared with all stakeholders. With an 'all hands on deck' approach to language maintenance and revitalisation, (language) education is in a stronger position to contribute to the ultimate goal: supporting student and community wellbeing. These two goals are encapsulated in the guiding Tokelauan values of this thesis tautua and alofa ki te tamā manu. Through tautua (service), we can alofa ki te tamā manu - collectively

undertake the shared duty of care to look after those (in this case community languages and people) in need so no one goes without. This is explained in the next section, where I draw on research findings to outline actions that might be taken within secondary schools in partnership with communities and other stakeholders to achieve these two goals.

### 8.3.2 What can be achieved?

Applying a strengths-based approach (Mila, 2014) informed by positive efforts already happening in communities and schools, empirical evidence from this study provides an outline of suggestions for actions that might be taken by all stakeholders. The focus of this PhD project is largely Tokelauan due to the community in which I work. Therefore, I begin by outlining Tokelau-related actions needed. Suggestions for the Tokelau context provide a foundation to discuss further actions required in the Tongan and wider Pacific and Community language approach to secondary education.

### 8.3.3 Tokelau-related actions/ suggestions

‘Alofa ki te tamā manu’ is a Tokelauan value that I believe the New Zealand education system needs to understand and embrace if it is to care for the equity and wellbeing of Tokelauan people in Aotearoa. As discussed in Chapter 1, this value symbolises the importance of having compassion and looking after the vulnerable inherent in Tokelauan community values and practices (Kupa, personal communication, 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2021; Tokelau Community communication, April, June, 2021). On many levels the symbolism of the orphaned chicks (Kupa, personal communication, 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2021) embodies the inequities experienced by Tokelauan people living in Aotearoa highlighted in this research. These inequities are not often talked about in research or schools. The following suggestions are intended to support the New Zealand education system as to how it might alofa ki te tamā manu, to begin to reverse these inequities, ensuring young Tokelauan people are nurtured and shown compassion, to have what they need to thrive or fly safely.

Policy across all areas of society needs to urgently and explicitly clarify how New Zealand is legally responsible in caring for Tokelauan peoples as including maintenance of language and culture as Tokelau is the only dependent colony in the Realm of New Zealand. In recent times ‘Realm nations’ has become a ‘buzz phrase’ in work surrounding wellbeing and equity policies (MoE, 2020a, 2020b). In the meantime, as language shift happens at a rapid pace

(Statistics New Zealand, 2018), generations of Tokelauan students continue to attend school rarely seeing their language and culture as a valued part of their education or have the opportunity to learn their HL at school.

One of the immediate policy changes resulting from ongoing Tokelau community work of which this thesis is one part, is the inclusion of gagana Tokelau within NCEA (and University Entrance) at secondary school. This policy change was announced on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The MoE has said it will work with communities to resource and support the development of gagana Tokelau as an NCEA subject. This is an exciting step forward for young people of Tokelauan heritage wanting to learn their language (RNZ, November, 2020) and have their cultural heritage and identity valued as part of their education and career pathways. This change also reflects the perseverance and huge efforts made by the Tokelauan community over many years. Throughout the five years of this applied PhD project, many community members and teaching colleagues have said that they believed gagana Tokelau needs to be made available within the education system to ensure the survival of Tokelau language and culture. Walking with the Tokelau community over the past three years trying to advocate for a Tokelau NCEA pathway, we conversed with high level and low-level MPs and bureaucrats who voiced support. However, often we felt that the conversations were not deeply heard. This very recent affordance for gagana Tokelau within the New Zealand Curriculum is rewarding for all involved in this campaign.

Now this affordance has been made, the teaching and resourcing of gagana and agānuku Tokelau in Aotearoa schools needs a systemic supporting framework. This involves engaging Tokelau communities with those schools where there are Tokelauan student populations. Physical and digital connections between young Tokelauans living in Tokelau and in Aotearoa will be valuable here. Further afield, Aotearoa-based schools might also connect and share learnings with the Hawai‘i-based Tokelau community school (see Chapter 2, section 2.5.5). The importance of how a sense of connection between two lands and the sharing of experiences and language, supports identity, was discussed by Ka‘ili (2005) in Chapter 1 as well as Tokelauan and Tongan participants in Chapter 5 (5.3, 5.5).

As a Realm country, the New Zealand government is responsible for supporting the education system in Tokelau. A second development is that the MoE has recently begun to engage with Tokelau community experts in the rewriting of the Tokelauan Curriculum in for

schools in Tokelau. With the introduction of gagana Tokelau in NCEA in Aotearoa and the collaboration with Tokelau on curriculum development, there is an opportunity for mutual support. For example, the current work in Tokelau on developing cognitive/ academic language proficiency (CALP), including curriculum resources such as an instructional reading series, could be used Aotearoa-Tokelauan settings. This presents an excellent opportunity to explore and resource the CLIL approach in secondary schools both in Tokelau and in areas of Aotearoa where there are high numbers of Tokelauan students.

In areas where CLIL is not possible, a similar model to Pasifika Studies (profiled in this study) could be used and adapted in English-medium secondary schools around Aotearoa to ensure all students have access to learning gagana Tokelau as part of NCEA. Whilst this model of language education does not provide immersion opportunities, we saw in Chapters 5 and 6 that such programmes do show students that their HLs and cultures are valued in school and an important part of their educational pathways. This has a positive flow on effect and inspired students to use and engage with their HLs and cultures at home and in the community. In this way mainstream education can support HL maintenance and learning.

In the Tokelau setting, this framework needs to enable Tokelau community-school partnerships to build programmes drawing on and acknowledging the linguistic and cultural expertise of community members, connect cultural learning and existing language programmes in communities with learning in schools. In consideration of the holistic approach to Tokelauan wellbeing, Kupa (2009; personal communication, 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2021) discusses how there is much learning that happens in the collective practices of a Tokelau community, for example through the practice of inati, fatele, weaving, and fishing. Such learning might be further connected with many cross-curricular learning contexts at school (e.g. science, environmental studies, language, performing and visual arts). Language and cross-curricular learning needs to be ensured provision of: pedagogical support and development of resources alongside programmes by a team of appropriately skilled educators working with the community and teachers, appropriate remuneration for the community, and a means of providing access to this teaching and learning for Tokelauan students in areas or school which do not have high numbers of Tokelauans. As suggested by Principal 4 (7.4.4) access could be provided via institutions such as Te Kura o te Pounamu (the Correspondence School of New Zealand) or the establishment of a Community Languages school in Aotearoa, such as the community languages schools in Australia (Willoughby, 2014; 2018, see pp. 43-

4). The success of such a framework is consistent, collaborative, clear communications across all stakeholders.

The NZC also needs to include learning about Tokelau for Tokelauan and non-Tokelauan students to increase general awareness of Tokelau's historical connections and relationship with Aotearoa. This is an action that can happen in mainstream and bilingual-immersion schools. As we saw in Chapter 6 (RQ2) academic learning about cultural identity has potential to support students of Tokelauan heritage to more deeply understand their linguistic and cultural identity, as well as showing that Tokelau culture and history is a taonga valued by others and worth of including in education. Non-Tokelauan students can also gain much from learning about and appreciating Tokelau history and connection to Aotearoa. This kind of learning can support ongoing projects in schools to provide culturally sustaining curricula. Learning about Tokelau enables students to critically engage with topics such as colonisation and Christianity in the Pacific, slavery in the Pacific, and to understand and engage with connections between Indigenous knowledges and worldviews. This supports Manuela and Anae's (2017, p.129) call for "ethnic enhancements" made to "bolster" existing programmes for young Pacific peoples for "optimal wellbeing outcomes." In this way Tokelau focussed-critical content supports social justice in education by educating to "liberate" (Anae, 2020). This will be discussed further in more general terms in section 8.3.5.

Many suggestions discussed here as to how the New Zealand education system might alofa ki te tamā manu to nurture Tokelauan wellbeing extend to Tongan, and other Pacific and community language groups. These implications are discussed further in the following sections.

#### 8.3.4 Raising awareness of multilingualism and wellbeing

This thesis contributes Tokelauan and Tongan examples to the existing body of research showing: how multilingualism is the norm in most Pacific contexts (Milne, 2017; Salesa, 2017); how complex multilingualism is as a phenomenon (García & Li, 2014; Kramsch, 2020; Phipps, 2019; Seals & Olsen-Reeder, 2019); and how experiences of multilingualism can enhance or hinder identity and wellbeing (Anae, 2006; Anae & Manuela, 2017; Mila-Schaaf & Robinson, 2010; Tupuola, 2004). Data from this study show there is a need to raise awareness of the complexities and benefits of multilingualism in community and school

settings. For a systemic ‘all hands on deck’ approach to supporting Pacific wellbeing, of which language maintenance, I make the following suggestions. They speak of a variety of programmes, systems, and resources might be developed to support existing programmes and awareness raising of issues surrounding language and wellbeing in mainstream secondary schools.

To support community awareness raising of the complexities and benefits of multilingualism, additional ‘all hand on deck’ resourcing is required. Community participants in this study discuss how they often encounter an ‘English is most important’ mindset within their communities (Chapter 7, Section 7.5.5). This mindset reflects the symbolic (and sometimes physical) violence inflicted on Pacific peoples over nearly two centuries through colonial language repression and assimilation policies and how these policies still impact many people today (Anae, 2020; Hau‘ofa, 1994; Lopesi, 2018, McCaffery & McFall, 2010; May, 2001). In consultation and collaboration with communities, schools, government agencies and other stakeholders need to ask how they might support community programmes. Following a social justice framework, these programmes might first focus on conscientising (Freire, 1973), discussing injustices of the historical treatment of Tokelauan and Tongan peoples in Aotearoa (see Chapter 2), and its impact on people’s language, culture, and wellbeing. Following this, programmes might look at how communities can develop a transformative praxis to language shift and language revitalisation in relation to wellbeing and what they need from outside stakeholders to support these efforts. As part of these discussions, relevant stakeholders might support communities to engage with literature surrounding the benefits of multilingualism (May, 2020, Si‘ilata et al, 2019) and how it supports wellbeing (Anae & Manuela, 2017; Parsons, 2020). In addition, communities might discuss how Indigenous values such as tauhi vā, vā feāloaki, and alofa ki te tamā manu can be applied to language maintenance and revitalisation within the community and wider context. These programmes might ‘bolster’ (Manuela & Anae, 2017) existing and future programmes which look at implementing models of wellbeing such as Te Vaka Atafaga (Kupa, 2009) and Fonua (Mafi, 2018). Programmes developed need to be resourced financially, supported with administration and (human) resourcing, promoted and made widely available to all communities. For example, year-round access can come through churches and schools across Aotearoa, not just in pockets where there are large Pacific communities. These programmes would provide additional and ongoing support to existing initiatives such as Pacific language weeks.

As the majority of Pacific students attend English-medium schools (May, 2020), the issues surrounding multilingualism need to be understood if schools are to support Pacific languages, identities, and wellbeing in mainstream education. One suggestion from this research is for all teachers to engage with more deeply understanding multilingualism, its benefits and how it can be used as part of developing culturally sustaining pedagogies as part of the mandatory professional growth cycle linked to policy documents such as *Tapasā* (MoE, 2019). Professional learning programmes need to support understanding of how multilingualism is a continuum process which can be nurtured or stunted depending on attitudes and the environment in which it exists. Literature such as Li's (2000) descriptions of the multiple ways of being bilingual (see Chapter 5, 5.2, 5.5) and García et al's (2017) practical and theoretical work surrounding translanguaging need to be widely circulated and integrated into pre- and in-service professional learning with opportunities and resourcing. Teachers might engage with theoretical concepts used in this thesis, such as social justice and identity theories, to more deeply understand how edgewalking might look in practice for teachers, students, and whole school communities.

Moreover, language hierarchies (De Bres, 2015) need to be problematised in schools to ensure the learning and using of community languages is seen as useful and meaningful as learning 'status' world languages such as Spanish or Mandarin. Data show how individual language teacher knowledge of, and engagement with various different theoretical constructs (Chapter 6, sections 6.2 - 6.5) influence teacher practice and pedagogy and the implementation of positive programmes supporting Pacific bilingualism. Both Anita and Maria are actively involved with teaching as inquiry and the action research process. This illustrates the power of educational praxis for change. If an 'all hands on deck' approach (rather than a specialist language teacher approach) to understanding and supporting multilingualism is developed there is much potential for English-medium education to support Pacific language maintenance and other community languages in schools where bilingual education is not currently available.

In some English-medium skills, content and language integrated learning (CLIL)

Professional learning about multilingualism in Pacific contexts and beyond could inform and be further supported by programmes and systems in secondary schools similar to



programmes implemented in international research surrounding multilingualism and HLE (García et al, 2017; Seals & Kreeft-Peyton, 2016). Firstly, multilingualism, the speaking of many languages at school, needs to be promoted. Drawing on translanguaging pedagogies (García et al, 2017) and international HLE research (Seals & Olsen-Reeder, 2019) students in Aotearoa need to be explicitly and regularly encouraged and shown how to use their whole linguistic repertoire in class and the in the wider school community. This can be as simple as regularly asking students to describe and discuss curriculum content in different languages and making this information physically and visibly available. Students can complete and present schoolwork in their heritage languages such as we saw in Pasifika Studies (Chapter 6) across the curriculum not just in language classes. Schools can also tap into local community expertise to support learning multilingually. Teachers need to make an effort to display and use other languages in their classes, for example by having bilingual dictionaries or digital translation devices available. Teachers can encourage students to have confidence in and celebrate their multilingual proficiencies, regularly letting students know that it is ‘okay’ to make mistakes. In doing so, the stigma associated with seeming different or not being fully fluent in one’s HL might be slowly addressed. Similarly, all teachers need to be aware of and address issues, such as students feeling ‘plastic’ or inauthentic because of language proficiency and look for opportunities to support language learning. Awareness needs to include not making assumptions that all Tongans or Tokelauans can speak HLs fluently. Regardless of student numbers, when the umbrella title Pacific or Pasifika is used, teachers and school systems need to refer to specific groups, e.g. Tokelauan, Tongan, or Tokelau-Samoan as often as possible to ensure numerically smaller ethnic groups are treated with equity.

Secondary (and primary) school systems such as enrolments and databases could collect and use much more detailed information on student linguistic repertoire and cultural heritage. Enrolment processes in schools differ hugely around Aotearoa. Often when it comes to languages, the focus is on English proficiency, not on other languages (Major, 2018). To better support multilingualism and language maintenance, a set procedure for collecting language-related data when students enrol could be made mandatory. This might include questions like:

- Which languages do you hear/speak/use at home?
- How often do you use them?
- How confident do you feel using them?

- Can you read and write in these languages?
- Do have resources to support your use of these languages?
- How can the school support you and your family to maintain your HL(s)?

In asking these questions, schools can then look at how they might better support HLs within the whole curriculum. This information might be integrated into curriculum planning and professional development to support all teachers to be more aware of how multilingual students can use and develop their whole linguistic repertoire in learning. It might also inform school budgeting for resources to support multilingualism such as bilingual tutors, dictionaries, and reading materials. Furthermore, from collecting such information, schools might find much to celebrate in discovering the linguistic richness within the school. Currently, as we see in the data these issues sit with specialised language teachers like Maria, Anita, and Julia, the message that multilingualism is valued, and a resource is not school-wide.

If the programmes and systems mentioned above become a normal part of school and teacher-wide practices, mainstream education will be able to support and multilingualism much more than current practice. In doing so, we may begin to decolonise multilingualism and harness multilingual potential, its benefits for cognitive and emotional development and capabilities, and overall wellbeing to transform current monolingual English-dominant mainstream education (Major, 2018; Phipps, 2019).

### 8.3.5 ‘Ethnic enhancement’ to bolster current programmes and initiatives

In exploring the imagined future identities of students, data in Chapter 6 suggest that a critical approach to language education<sup>49</sup> supports students to feel their HL backgrounds are ‘worth’ learning about and subsequently feel more invested and empowered to value, learn, and use HLs. This supports the work of Manuela and Anae (2017), and Brito et al (2004). Manuela and Anae (2017) suggest that current cultural enhancement programmes such as Pacific language classes or participation in Polyfest might be bolstered with ‘ethnic enhancements’ to the development of support strong ethnic identities of Pacific youth in Aotearoa. ‘Ethnic enhancements,’ which build critical awareness of issues surrounding language, culture and identity, support the conscientisation of Pacific youth by problematising and focusing on the “impacts of colonisation, Christianity and neoliberalism

---

<sup>49</sup> for example by studying topics such as the Dawn Raids in Pasifika Studies - see Chapter 6, section 6.5

on Pacific peoples and nations” (ibid, p.129) and acknowledging the different needs of “island-born and NZ-born” Pacific peoples (ibid, p.141).

Brito et al’s (2004) study provides an example of how ethnic enhancements can be integrated into existing language programmes. Brito et al (2004) explored how a critical approach to Cape Verdean language classes in the USA supported the conscientisation of students to increase awareness and engagement with language and identity. A Cape Verdean HL programme in a Boston secondary school approached HL learning through discussion of topics such as why “political independence didn’t bring linguistic independence” when Cape Verde gained independence from Portugal in 1975 (Brito et al, 2004, p.183). Brito et al (2004) concluded that by students knowing themselves they will be able to “liberate themselves from the marginalisation they experience inside and outside the schools” and “transform their own lives by knowing where they fit in the larger society and by knowing who they are is not determined by others but by what they bring with them as human beings and as Cape Verdeans” (ibid, p.199, see Brito et al (2004) for a full account). Although the cultural context is not identical to the Aotearoa-Tokelauan-Tongan context depicted in this thesis, the Brito et al (2004) example shows how Manuela and Anae’s (2017, p.141) call for ethnic enhancements (to areas such as Pacific language education) might Pacific young people to draw on Pacific “indigenous knowledges to navigate their contemporary realities.”

In April and May 2021, I was able to attend two examples of “ethnic enhancement” opportunities which might be further supported and resourced to be made available and promoted to all schools. ‘The cry of the stolen people’ (Viliamu et al, April 2021) depicts the pain Tokelauan peoples have suffered as a result of blackbirding (the kidnapping of Tokelauan people as slaves during the 1800s) through a multimedia creative presentation. This was presented at a Tokelau community gathering and brought to the surface a sad part of Tokelauan history not always known amongst Tokelauan youth in Aotearoa. Many people discussed afterwards that this type of resource should be an essential part of student learning for Tokelauan and non-Tokelauan peoples.

Similarly, in May 2021, I attended the Panther Rap with a Year 10<sup>50</sup> language class. This a presentation by three original members of the Polynesian Panthers who share their

---

<sup>50</sup> Year 10 students are around 14 years old in Aotearoa.

experiences of participating in activism against racism in Aotearoa during the 1970s and 1980s (Anae, 2020). Sharing their experiences of living through the Dawn Raids<sup>51</sup>, the Panthers bring a message of “peaceful resistance against all forms of racism, Pacific empowerment, and educate to liberate” (Anae, 2020, p.174; Anae et al, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2021). According to Anae (2020, p.175), the concept of ‘educate to liberate’ serves both to “bring Pacific people up to the level of their Palagi counterparts across all segments of society” and to support the conscientisation of Palagi to decolonise thinking surrounding history and culture. After attending this presentation, our class discussions indicated that this message ignited the interest of many students from different Pacific backgrounds to more deeply understand relevant history in Aotearoa and their part within this bigger picture.

The examples presented above are examples of two Aotearoa-based ‘ethnic enhancements’ which have potential to support the successful edgewalk of multilingual cultural identities of young Pacific peoples. Such initiatives need to be included, resourced, and made mandatory within mainstream secondary education. The focus on suggestions within this thesis are for ethnic enhancements for language classes. However, as Manuela and Anae (2017) and data in Chapters 6 and 7 suggest, there are many different existing platforms in schools such as Polyfest where these types of ‘ethnic enhancements’ might be included and used as a platform for language revitalisation and positive negotiation of identity and wellbeing<sup>52</sup>.

From this discussion we see how critical learning around language and identity can be linked to many different areas of education; language, performing arts, and history. Mainstream education has many options and opportunities to include ethnic enhancement programmes which support language maintenance at home and in communities by helping young people to see their languages and cultures are valuable and important to their education and futures. These programmes are essential in conscientizing young people to “transform their own lives by knowing where they fit in the larger society and by knowing who they are is not determined by others but by what they bring with them as human beings” and as Tokelauan, Tongan, and Pacific peoples (Brito et al, 2004, p.199).

### 8.3.6 An overarching language policy in Aotearoa

---

<sup>51</sup> See pp.28-9

<sup>52</sup> Full discussion of how this might be done in the Polyfest setting is beyond the scope of the thesis.

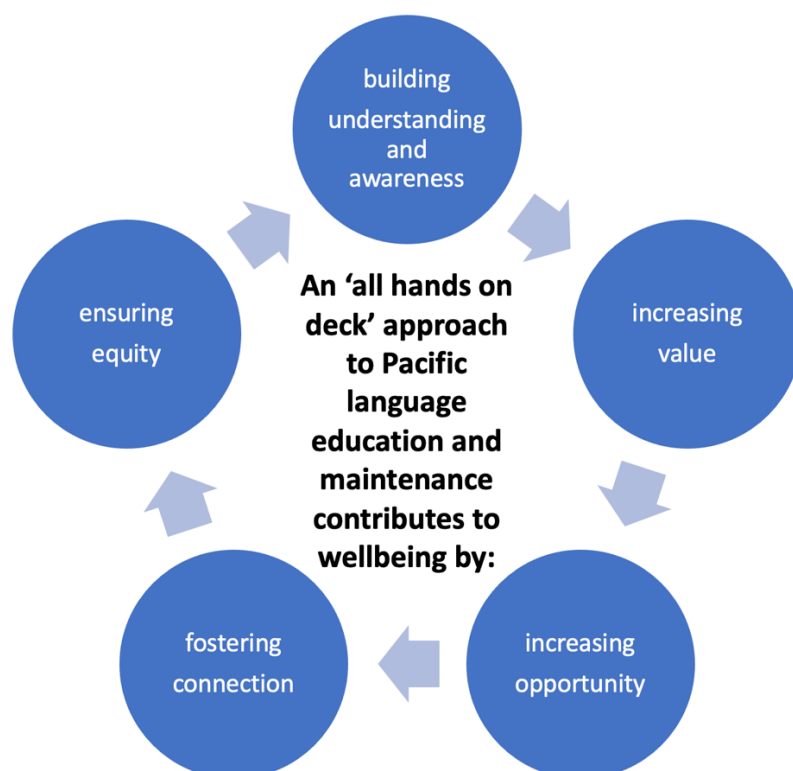
Suggestions made so far to reinforce the 30-year call for an overarching language policy in Aotearoa (Auckland Languages Strategy Working Group, 2018; 2021; Bell et al, 2005; Major, 2018; Peddie, 2005; Seals, 2017, 2021; Seals & Olsen-Reeder, 2018; Waite, 1992).

Internationally, language policies have opened up resourcing for languages (Seals & Olsen-Reeder, 2018). A language policy would provide an opportunity to clarify New Zealand's legal obligation to care for revitalisation of gagana Tokelau, vagahau Niue, and Cook Islands Maori, languages within the Realm of New Zealand. Abroad, overarching language policies have opened up the space for government-funded community languages schools which are supported by teachers and resources and feed into mainstream education, often being included within national school leavers qualifications (Seals & Shah, 2018). With over 160 languages spoken in Aotearoa (Seals, 2017), there is much scope for similar community language school initiatives which work with communities to support language maintenance. An overarching language policy would help navigate and build awareness of Aotearoa's complex linguistic diversity ultimately supporting social cohesion within this country - an overarching goal for Aotearoa New Zealand suggested in the human rights commission report investigating the Christchurch Mosque shootings (Royal Commission, 2021; Salahshour, 2021).

### 8.3.7 Visual presentation of solutions

In the figure below I show how the five interrelated concepts representing challenges (8.2.6) can also serve as a platform to summarise the potential solutions presented in this section to adopt an 'all hands on deck approach to Pacific language education and maintenance which supports wellbeing (see page 244 for a summary of recommendations linked to these five interrelated concepts).

Figure 7. A visual representation of solutions



#### 8.4 - Contributions to research

As stated at the outset of the thesis, this applied research is firstly intended to be a practical support, to assist ongoing efforts for language maintenance in Tokelauan, Tongan and school communities. However, the thesis also contributes to academic literature in the following ways.

Specifically in the field of Pacific education, scholars have called for more focus on individual ethnic groups rather than umbrella 'Pacific' focused studies (Chu et al, 2013; Coxon et al, 2002). The social justice, ethnographic approaches in this study in specific community settings highlight social injustices and issues specific to each community as well as common experiences. Tokelauan-focused research in Pacific education is generally absent in the literature. In addition, Pacific educational research has not tended to focus on language and language in education per se (Chu et al, 2013). When language has been the focus it has tended towards younger learners. This study contributes a Tokelau and Tongan focus on language and language maintenance to the literature. The focus on mainstream secondary school provision of Pacific language education outside of the greater Auckland area provides additional new understandings of the issues at play in Pacific education in areas of lower but

significant Pacific populations. In these ways, the study serves as a support for recent government initiatives to strengthen Pacific languages such as the Pacific Languages Strategy (Ministry for Pacific Peoples, 2021) and the Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020-2030 (MoE, 2020a).

This study also offers new theoretical understandings and possibilities for the future. Pacific scholarship has previously been related to Western theories in disciplines such as critical education, psychology, and sociology (Manuela & Anae, 2017; Mila-Schaaf, 2011). Although language as a construct has been present in much Pacific educational research (Chu et al, 2013; Coxon et al, 2002), to my knowledge, this is the first study which bridges Norton's (1995, 2013) sociolinguistic theory of identity with Pacific theoretical understandings of identity and *vā*<sup>53</sup>. For both Pacific and Western scholars able to applying complementary theoretical lenses to explore issues of language, culture and identity presents the opportunity for a rich exploration of context, and deeper understanding and empathy of intercultural worldviews. Cross pollination of theoretical understanding provides a useful tool for exploring the using and learning of Pacific languages as part of positive identity negotiation in Aotearoa and the wider Pacific area in the future. The process is another example of how edgewalking as theory, practice, and position can lead to seeing the bigger picture, creating something new (Krebs, 1999; Stewart-Withers, 2016) and “for the world to move forward” (Reynolds, 2017, p. 283).

Lastly the applied nature of this research contributes a further example of how praxis required within social justice research and relational methodologies can potentially positively transform educational outcomes.

## 8.5 - Future directions for research

There are many options for future research projects which could grow from this study. Firstly, as a teacher-researcher, one future project might be to undertake a more longitudinal study of how new Tokelauan and Tuvaluan programmes set up based on models (such as Pasifika Studies in this study) impact language maintenance and revitalisation of these languages within our school and wider community. If opportunities for CLIL in the Pacific education

---

<sup>53</sup> For a full description of how these theories interweave and differ and how they emerged from the data see Chapters 3, 5, 6, and 7.

space open up in the future, there is a similar role for research to investigate its impact on language revitalisation and to support further development of CLIL resources. Future research also needs to look at how other language communities such as Kiribati, Fijian, and other non-Pacific community languages might be included within New Zealand education. Similarly, recent research (Gaugatao, 2018; Mackley-Crump, 2013) has discussed Polyfest as a platform for language revitalisation and rich learning. There is much scope to explore how related endeavours might be further developed within secondary schools in Aotearoa.

This doctoral study touched on how the marrying of different theories can open up new ways of exploring and understanding issues surrounding language shift, identity, indigeneity, and education. As discussed above, there is much room for further exploration of theoretical mutual learning which can then be applied to finding solutions for real-life challenges such as language shift.

Another further theoretical and methodological direction from this research is to support Tokelauans to develop Tokelauan theories and methodologies based around Indigenous Tokelauan values and concepts such as *vā feāloaki*, *te vaka atafaga*, and *alofa ki te tamā manu*. Development of specific Tokelauan theories would be a huge support to all future Tokelauan-focused research.

## 8.6 - Limitations

While this research contributes to interdisciplinary understandings of praxis, theory, and policy in numerous ways, it has limitations. First of all, this research investigating Pacific languages *gagana Tokelau* and *lea faka-Tonga* in education was initiated and carried out by myself, a Palagi teacher-researcher. Whilst I have worked throughout the research process (and continue to do so) *with* Pacific communities in various roles Pacific communities as a teacher, an ally, and friend, I am not of Pacific heritage. My efforts to apply researcher reflexivity and empathy throughout the research process in the most ethical and respectful way possible, do not enable me to speak as or for a Pacific person. For this reason, out of respect for Pacific and Indigenous scholarship, I applied *vā*-inspired and informed methodologies rather than fully embracing Pacific research methods such as *talanoa* in collecting data. A Pacific researcher voice would add different validity to this research as it



could bring lived experiences to analysis and presentations of findings authentically within Pacific research frameworks.

Perhaps the biggest limitation some might see in this study is the aspirational nature of the practical suggestions made in this chapter. Time, workload, and focus on all languages required to achieve these goals at a nation-wide level are all challenges which might prevent the realisation of the goals suggested in thesis. This said, community-focused work that has been achieved within the context of this thesis and further afield is proof that grass-roots actions and initiatives working towards aspirational goals can make a difference. Therefore, though these aspirations might be perceived by some as insurmountable, I believe it is important to maintain aspirational transformation in language education as a goal and to keep working towards this or we will see no change.

Several other limitations pertain to the research design and process. The official ethics committee data collection period approved for this thesis was February to December 2018. Although I had already worked within Pacific education in my former school and therefore had some existing connections prior to beginning doctoral research, during the data collection period I spent a lot of time getting to know Tokelau and Tongan communities. I wanted my participants to know that my motivation was to establish ongoing connections beyond my thesis and not just to gather data and move on. My investment in relationship building is a strength of this thesis and supports ongoing projects for language maintenance projects between schools and communities. In order to respect people's time and need to connect and build trust in me and my intentions, the amount of officially audio recorded data is small relative to the actual interactions that took place. Participants only participated in one official audio-recorded interview or focus group discussion. Nonetheless, I believe the time I invested in relationship building and my ongoing involvement in community projects throughout this thesis and beyond, are evident in the depth of discussions captured in this thesis.

Similarly, the number of students and community members involved in the research is small and the geographical coverage of participating communities is limited to two major cities outside of the Auckland area (with the exception of one email interview with a teacher from another town). These limitations exist for several reasons. Firstly, as mentioned above the official data collection period was relatively short for respectfully establishing relationships

with communities. Therefore, I focused on the two communities who embraced me and the ideas behind this research project. Logistically, travel to more than one other city away from my home city was not feasible. Furthermore, there were not large numbers of students studying Pacific languages other than gagana Samoa in most secondary schools, and no students studying gagana Tokelau at the time; the pool of school communities was also limited. A longitudinal study would have allowed me to work with a larger number of students, community and government participants, thus gathering data more widely and more comparatively. Such an approach would have further enriched the findings and strengthen the claims.

Time constraints both at my end and amongst participants limited data collection tools in the following ways. I sent transcripts to all adult participants for feedback. Five of the adult participants sent back comments, mainly with small changes to spelling or details of numbers. Some of these participants were moved by reading the interview transcripts. Although I kept in touch with adult participants, we did not have time to go through the transcripts as a means of stimulated recall to further delve into emerging themes and events. Nonetheless, ongoing contact and work within the Tokelau community, with Tongan colleagues, and Anita and Maria has enabled me to frequently clarify ideas, especially relating to concepts such as *vā* and other Indigenous Tokelauan and Tongan concepts.

I did not remain in touch with student participants for logistical and ethical reasons. I met the students only once and they were based in a different city from me. Travelling back to revisit the students was not financially possible. As I was not in ongoing contact with the students, getting them to re-read transcripts via email and sending them back to me with comments felt too much of a time burden on them. Doing so via email would also have made it difficult to guarantee the identities of the students involved would be protected. I could have asked the teacher to go through the transcripts with the students in an appropriate manner, but as a teacher myself I felt strongly that this would be too much of a burden on the teacher's classtime. A stimulated recall session with the students from the focus group discussions would have certainly enabled much more depth in the analysis and findings. However, again my ongoing work as a secondary school teacher of Pacific students and within Pacific communities brings experience and background understanding to the students discourse from the officially recorded data in 2018.

Further limitations lie within the variety of data collection tools. Data collection involved talanoa-informed interviews and focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, participant classroom observations, supporting documents such as community reports and flyers for language week celebrations, and ongoing community involvement. These data collection methods involved audio recording and research field notes. Inclusion of other data collection tools such as linguistic reflection drawings, journals, qualitative surveys as well as audio recordings and photos could provide more depth in rich descriptive data.

Although there are parallels in international and local literature and this study, its context specific- nature means the generalisability of this research is limited.

## 8.7 - Conclusion

This final chapter has brought together different strands from the literature, theory, findings from the current study, and community engagement to address the two overarching aims of the thesis:

- why continued access to Pacific languages (specifically gagana Tokelau and lea faka-Tonga) matters for all stakeholders in mainstream education
- how mainstream secondary schools can provide continued access to language education in schools where immersion or bilingual education are not currently available

To address the first overarching aim, based on the evidence presented in this thesis, I argue that access to Pacific languages matters for all stakeholders in mainstream secondary education as it can support the wellbeing of young Pacific peoples in many ways. These ways include developing self-confidence and academic capability, heightened understanding of Indigenous ways of being and how they can be applied to and support modern life, negotiation of authentic and strong cultural or ethnic identity, and the normalising of multilingualism in monolingual societies. Addressing the second overarching aim of the thesis, whilst supporting current scholarship which argues bilingual or immersion education is the most effective way to maintain heritage languages and the many associated benefits of multilingualism (and thus an ultimate goal), I argue that in partnership with families, communities, and other stakeholders, mainstream secondary education can play a much more active and complementary role in maintaining HLs. In a systemic ‘all hands on deck’

approach to language maintenance secondary schools can actively provide access to HL education and support by:

- reaching out to communities to develop awareness of the benefits and importance of multilingualism and to integrate community expertise in the development of Pacific language education at school
- supporting all teachers and leaders to understand and harness the benefits of multilingualism and the role of language and culture in supporting with wellbeing
- making creative spaces within the curriculum to provide access to language education with community partnerships
- exploring the CLIL approach to Pacific language education
- supporting and developing explicit critical learning about language and culture within the curriculum
- increasing processes which support multilingualism, e.g. school enrolments, visibility and classroom use of HLs
- advocating for better access and resourcing for Pacific language education to the MoE and other government agencies
- creating a well-understood language policy which clarifies the New Zealand government's role in the maintenance of Pacific languages together with a road map to ensure the enactment of this policy

In addition to addressing the overarching aims of the thesis, this chapter has presented research contributions, future directions, and limitations. In the concluding section, I share where the study has taken me.

## 8.8 - Final reflections

Earlier this year, a Samoan colleague asked me what my PhD was about. I replied that it was about many things that she already knew and understood deeply as a Samoan teacher, but that we Palagi teachers still needed to learn. By this I was referring to my own journey of conscientisation to praxis (Freire, 1973) which has been supported by the theoretical and methodological considerations I have learned about in undertaking research. The theoretical social justice lens applied to this thesis has revealed how much my own education and worldview have been influenced by 'White' spaces (Milne, 2017). This reinforces why I feel

it is important for me to try to decolonise my own mindset while living and teaching in Aotearoa.

The complementary sociolinguistic and Pacific theoretical approaches showed me why and how I might more deeply understand and approach language and identity in my teaching and thinking about language education. Edgewalking in theory and practice gave me a positive, exciting, and creative framework to go about this process for myself and to share with others. Relational methodological approaches based on values that support holistic care for people, their environment, and therefore languages and cultures guided me how to behave, engage, showing me what is expected in research and practice as a teacher if *teu le va-tauhi vā-vā fealoaki* is to happen in educational settings and life in general. My journey on the road between conscientisation and praxis has shown me that relational values of holistic care such as *tautua*, *alofa ki te tamā manu*, and *teu le va-tauhi vā-vā feāloaki* are not inherent in a Western approach to education. They are values that all teachers, (regardless of ethnicity or cultural background) need to understand and embrace if equity and wellbeing for our students and social justice within our education system are to be achieved.

This applied research journey led me to apply for a job at a secondary school with perhaps the largest population of Tokelauan students in the world, a school where the majority of students are Pacific peoples. Together with the Tokelau community in this thesis, we have established a Tokelau language and culture programme within the curriculum based on the model of Pasifika Studies (see Chapters 4 and 6) presented in this thesis. Since its inception in July 2020, we have already seen some benefits from the implementation of this course, such as awareness raising of Tokelau's history and place in Aotearoa and the Pacific, and awareness of issues of language shift within the community. There is much potential for community-school partnership to grow and develop and for our school to decolonise its approach to language education by embracing languages, cultures and ways of learning present in our school community (Phipps, 2019).

Parallel to my own story, since beginning this doctoral research 2017 I have observed and been a part of increased talk and awareness of the importance of Pacific languages, cultures, identities, and wellbeing in the education sector and wider public life. Between 2017 and 2019, the MoE policy document *Tapasā*, endorsing the inclusion of Pacific languages as a key part of Pacific student educational success, was developed and published. *Tapasā* is now

expected to be used in schools to inform teacher practice and school programmes (MoE, 2019). From 2019 until now there have been increasing opportunities for schools and communities to apply for funding from the MoE and MPP to support Pacific languages. The NCEA review and changes which began in 2018 (during my data collection period) are now under way in its implementation in schools. The review names wellbeing and equity and inclusion as guiding principles (MoE, 2020b). Improved educational outcomes for Māori and Pacific students are a major focus of this NCEA review for change (MoE, 2020b). The recent decision to include gagana Tokelau as an NCEA subject has been mandated as part of the Pacific Action Plan for education (MoE, 2020a). Most schools in Aotearoa continue to work towards providing more culturally responsive or sustaining curriculum and environments (Education Gazette, 2021b). Internationally, 2020 was the year of the Indigenous language. These affordances are worthy and come with some financial support. This shows that there is overall increased awareness of the importance and urgency of the situation documented throughout the thesis.

Yet, going to school each day I see and experience the challenges discussed by Pacific Peoples in this thesis on a daily basis. From a linguistic and cultural perspective there are no sustainable action plans or blueprints for ensuring continued access to language learning for young Aotearoa-born Tokelauans and Tongans. Financial initiatives still leave Pacific language maintenance to chance and at the margins, relying solely on the agency and passion of school Principals, teachers, and community members to offer extra time on top of normal full-time workloads and commitments. Funding requires hours of additional time for applications, proposals, and budgets. If a project is successful, time is required to find community tutors, write contracts, organise programmes, train tutors, meet with those involved and write milestone reports. In addition, funding initiatives run for short periods, such as one year and language maintenance and revitalisation are long-term investments. People involved in this work are very often the same people. Throughout this thesis I have seen how going the extra mile, though rewarding, is exhausting and can end with burnout. This is not a sustainable approach to Pacific language maintenance and education but is the current reality. What I have described in relation to Pacific language education and maintenance reflects a bigger picture of inequity in Aotearoa.

However, I see the incredible Pacific powerhouse (Salesa, 2017) and the potential our students bring to school each day. From a critical perspective, I see that our school system

and curriculum need to enable this potential to be realised without forcing students to assimilate to dominant, Western approaches to education. If Aotearoa is to truly take seriously Pacific language maintenance and education and the high-stakes issues connected with language maintenance, such as identity and wellbeing, Pacific language maintenance and education must assume a place of equal status alongside hegemonic concepts such as English literacy and numeracy. There needs to be systemic structures in place such as those outlined in this Chapter. The cry for that is evident in this thesis is not new or alone. As stated at the outset, my applied research is undertaken in the spirit of tautua, as an additional support to community and academic voices to show how, as a nation, Aotearoa and education can ‘alofa ki te tamā manu’ by providing systemic support for language maintenance for gagana Tokelau, lea faka-Tonga and other languages within our community.

## References

- Agar, M. (2006). Culture: Can you take it anywhere?, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(2), 1-16.
- Airini, Anae, M., Mila-Schaaf, K., Coxon, E., Mara, D., & Sanga, K. (2010). *Teu Le Va — Relationships across research and policy in Pasifika education: A collective approach to knowledge generation & policy development for action towards Pasifika education success*. Auckland UniServices for the Ministry of Education.
- Alasauutari, P. (1995). *Researching culture: Qualitative method and cultural studies*. Sage Publications.
- Anae, M. (1997). Towards a NZ-born Samoan identity: some reflections on 'labels'. *Pacific Health Dialog*, 4(2), 128-137. <http://pacifichealthdialog.nz/pre-2013-archive/Volume204/No220Pacific20Peoples20in20New20Zealand/Viewpoints20and20Perspectives/Towards20a20NZ20born20Samoan20identity20some20reflections20on20labels.pdf>
- Anae, M. (1998). *Fofoa-i-vao-ese: the identity journeys of New Zealand-born Samoans* [Unpublished PhD Thesis]. University of Auckland.
- Anae, M. (2006). Samoans. In Ministry for Culture and Heritage (Ed.), *Settler and migrant peoples of New Zealand* (pp. 230-236). David Bateman Ltd.
- Anae, M. (2010). Research for better Pacific schooling in New Zealand: Teu le va - A Samoan perspective. *MAI review*, 1, 1-24. <http://www.review.mai.ac.nz/mrindex/MR/article/download/298/298-2299-1-PB.pdf>
- Anae, M. (2016). Teu le va: Samoan relational ethics. *Knowledge Cultures*, 4(3), 117-130.
- Anae, M. (October 18, 2020a). *The terror of the Dawn Raids*. E-tangata. <https://e-tangata.co.nz/history/the-terror-of-the-dawn-raids/>
- Anae, M. (2020b). *The platform: The radical legacy of the Polynesian Panthers*. BWB Texts.
- Apple, M. W. (1999). *Power, meaning, and identity: Essays in critical educational studies*. Peter Lang.
- Auckland Languages Strategy Working Group. (2018, August). *Strategy for languages in education in Aotearoa New Zealand: 2019-2033*. Author.
- Baker, C. (2006). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Multilingual Matters.



- Baker, C., & Wright, E. (2021). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Multilingual Matters.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1992). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays* (M. Holquist, Ed., M. Holquist & C. Emerson, Trans.). University of Texas Press.
- Banks, A. (2014). Series foreword. In Torres, C. A. (Ed.), *First Freire: Early writings in social justice education* (pp. xi-xiii). Teachers College Press.
- Barkhuizen, G. (2016). A short story approach to analysing teacher (imagined) identities over time, *TESOL Quarterly*, 50(3), 655-683. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.311>
- Bell, A., Harlow, R., & Starks, D. (2005). Who speaks what language in New Zealand. In A. Bell, R. Harlow, & D. Starks (Eds.), *Languages of New Zealand* (pp. 13-29). Victoria University Press.
- Benham, M. (2008). *Indigenous educational models for contemporary practice: In our mother's voice: Volume II*. Routledge.
- Billig, M. (1995). *Banal nationalism*. Sage.
- Blackledge, A. (2005). *Discourse and power in a multilingual world*. John Benjamins.
- Blackledge, A., & Creese, A. (2010). *Multilingualism: A critical perspective*. Continuum.
- Bland, A. (Forthcoming). *The implementation of a Samoan junior language programme in a South Island, New Zealand secondary school* [Unpublished PhD thesis]. University of Canterbury.
- Blommaert, J., & Jie, D. (2010). *Ethnographic fieldwork: A beginner's guide*. Multilingual Matters.
- Blommaert, J., & Verschueren, J. (1998). *Debating diversity: Analysing the discourse of tolerance*. Routledge.
- Borg, S. (2011). The impact of in-service teacher education on language teachers' beliefs. *System*, 39(3), 370-380. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2011.07.009>
- Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The logic of practice* (R. Nice, Trans.). Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (2000). *Pascalian meditations*. Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (2007). The forms of capital. In A.R. Sadonik (Ed.), *Sociology of education* (pp.83-95). Routledge.
- Brito, I., Lima, A., & Auerbach, E. (2004). The logic of non-standard teaching: A course in Cape Verdean language, culture, and history. In B. Norton & K. Toohey (Eds.), *Critical pedagogies and language learning* (pp.181-200). Cambridge University Press.

- Buchholtz, M. (2000). The policies of transcription. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 32(10), 1439-1465. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166\(99\)00094-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(99)00094-6)
- Buchholtz, M., Casillas, D.I., & Lee, J. S. (2017). Language and culture as sustenance. In D. Paris & H.S. Alim (Eds.), *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world* (pp.43-60), Teachers College Press.
- Burnett, R., & Bond, S. (2020) 'Pasifika' and 'I-Kiribati' identity in Aotearoa New Zealand: 'Dancing' and 'edgewalking' through multiple identities, *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 61(2), 327-337. <https://doi.org/10.1111/apv.12251>
- Butler, J. (1995). Collected and fractured: Response to identities. In K.A. Appiah & H.L. Gates (Eds.), *Identities* (pp.439-449). University of Chicago Press.
- Cameron, D. (2007). Language endangerment and verbal hygiene: History, morality and politics. In A. Duchêne & M. Heller (Eds.), *Discourses of Endangerment :Ideology and interest in the defence of languages* (pp. 268-85). Continuum.
- Cameron, D., Frazer, E., Harvey, P., Rampton, B., Richardson, K. (1993). Ethics, advocacy, and empowerment: Issues of method in researching language. *Language and Communication*, 13(2), 18-94.
- Chomsky, N. (1995). 'Bare phrase'. In H. Campos & P. Kempshinsky (Eds.), *Evolution and revolution in linguistic theory: Essays in honor of Carlos P.Otero* (pp. 51-109). Georgetown University Press.
- Chu, C. (2016). Pasifika. In M Peters (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of educational philosophy and theory* (pp. 1-5). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-532-7\\_11-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-532-7_11-1)
- Chu, C., Glasgow, A., Rimoni, F., Hodis, M., & Meyer, L. H. (2013). *An analysis of recent Pasifika education research literature to inform improved outcomes for Pasifika learners*. Ministry of Education, New Zealand, Research Division.
- Clery, T.N. (2014). Extending the talanoa: weaving Pacific and performative methods for peace research in contemporary Fiji. In P. Fairbairn-Dunlop & E. Coxon (Eds.), *Talanoa: Building a Pasifika research culture* (pp.105-127). Dunmore Publishing.
- Clifford, J. (1997). *Routes: Travel and translation in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century*. Harvard University Press.
- Clyne, M. (1991). *Community languages: The Australian experience*. Cambridge University Press.
- Community Spotlight. (2017). Te Lumanaki o Tokelau i Amelika Language and Culture School, *Amerasia Journal*, 43(1), 136-144. <https://doi.org/10.17953/aj.43.1.136-144>

- Conteh, J. (2018). Principles and processes of ethnographic research in multilingual settings. In J. Conteh (Ed.), *Researching education for social justice in multilingual settings: Ethnographic principles in qualitative research* (pp.7-42). Bloomsbury.
- Conteh, J., & Toyoshima, S. (2005). Researching teaching and learning: Roles identities and interview processes. *English teaching practice and critique*, 4(2), 23-34. <https://www-proquest-com.helicon.vuw.ac.nz/scholarly-journals/researching-teaching-learning-roles-identities/docview/926392967/se-2?accountid=14782>
- Copland, F., & Creese, A. (2015). *Linguistic ethnography: Collecting, analyzing and presenting data*. Sage Publications.
- Corbin, J., & Morse, J.M. (2003). The unstructured interactive interview: Issues of reciprocity and risks when dealing with sensitive topics. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 9(3), 335-354. <https://doi-org./10.1177/1077800403009003001>
- Coxon, E., Anae, M., Mara, D., Samu-Wendt, T., & Finau, C. (2002). *Literature review on Pacific education issues*. Report to the Ministry of Education.
- Creese, A., & Blackledge, A. (2015). Translanguaging and identity in educational settings. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 35, 20-35.
- Cruikshank, K. (2018, 5-7 October). *Why TESOL but not community languages* [Conference presentation]. CLESOL, 16<sup>th</sup> National conference, Christchurch, New Zealand.
- Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power, and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire*. Multilingual Matters.
- Cummins, J. (2005). A proposal for action: Strategies for recognising heritage language competence as a learning resource within the mainstream classroom. *Modern Language Journal*, 89(5), 585-592. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3588628>
- Cummins, J. (2008). BICS and CALP: Empirical and theoretical status of the distinction. In B. Street & N. Hornberger (Eds.), *Encyclopaedia of language and education, Volume 2: Literacy* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 71-83). Springer.
- Cummins, J. (2016). Reflection on Cummins (1980), “The cross-lingual dimensions of language proficiency: Implications for bilingual education and the optimal age issue.” *TESOL Quarterly*, 50(4), 940-944.
- Davis, K., Bell, B., & Starks, D. (2001). Māori and Pasifika languages in Manukau: A preliminary study. *Many Voices*, 15, 8-13.
- Darder, A. (2011). Teaching as an act of love: Reflections on Paulo Freire and his contributions to our lives and our Work. In *Counterpoints*, 418, 179–194.
- Darvin, R., & Norton, B. (2015). Identity and a model of investment, *Annual review of*

- applied linguistics*, 35, 36-56. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190514000191>
- Dawson, S. (2019). *Identities and ideologies in study abroad contexts: Negating nationality, gender, and sexuality* [Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis]. Victoria University of Wellington.
- De Bres, J. (2015). The hierarchy of minority languages in New Zealand. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 36(7), 677-693.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2015.1009465>
- Dei, G. (2011). *Indigenous philosophies and critical education: A Reader*. Peter Lang.
- Durie, M. (2006). Measuring Māori wellbeing. *New Zealand Treasury Guest Lecture Series*, 1, 2007-2009.
- Education Council New Zealand. (2017). *Our code, our standards: Code of professional responsibility and standards for the teaching profession*.  
<https://teachingcouncil.nz/assets/Files/Code-and-Standards/Our-Code-Our-Standards-Nga-Tikanga-Matatika-Nga-Paerewa.pdf>
- Education Counts. (2021a). *Number of Schools*.  
<https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/schooling/number-of-schools>
- Education Counts. (2021b). *Pasifika Language in Education: Number of Schools Offering Pasifika Language in Education*.  
<http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/schooling/student-numbers/6044>
- Education Gazette. (2021a). *The many threads of early learning in Aotearoa*.  
<https://gazette.education.govt.nz/articles/the-many-threads-of-early-learning-in-aotearoa/>
- Education Gazette. (2021b). *Rongohia te hau: Driving transformative change*.  
<https://gazette.education.govt.nz/articles/rongohia-te-hau-driving-transformative-change/>
- Ellis, R. (2005). *Instructed second language acquisition: A literature review*. Ministry of Education.
- Erikson, E. (1968). *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. Norton.
- Evans, M.A., Fox, M., Cremaschi, L., & McKinnon, L. (2004). Beginning reading: The views of parents and teachers of young children. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 96(1) 130-141. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.96.1.130>
- Eynon, P., De Corte, E., & Verschaffel, L. (2003). Framing students mathematics related beliefs: A quest for conceptual clarity and a comprehensive categorization, in E. Pehkonen, G. Törner, & G.C. Leder (Eds.), *Beliefs: A hidden variable in mathematics*

- education?* Kluwer academic publishers. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.helicon.vuw.ac.nz>
- Fa'avae, D., Jones, A., & Manu'atu, L. (2016). Talanoa'i 'a e talanoa- Talking about talanoa. *AlterNative*, 12(2), 138-150. <https://doi.org/10.20507/AlterNative.2016.12.2.3>
- Fairbairn-Dunlop, P. (2010). Pacific youth connecting through 'Poly.' In C. Ward, J. Liu, P. Fairbairn-Dunlop, & A. Henderson (Eds.), *Youth voices, youth choices: Identity, integration and social cohesion in culturally diverse Aotearoa/New Zealand* (pp. 20-29). Wellington.
- Farrelly, T., & Nabobo-Baba, U. (2014). Talanoa as empathic apprenticeship. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 55(3), 319-330. <https://doi.org/10.1111/apv.12060>
- Feki, H. (2015). Koe lālānga 'eku mo'ui - A personal narrative on Tongan perspectives of wellbeing, *He kupu*, 4(2), 41-44. <https://www.hekupu.ac.nz/article/koe-lalanga-eku-moui-personal-narrative-tongan-perspectives-wellbeing>
- Fishman, J. (1964). Language maintenance and language shift as a field of inquiry: A definition of the field and suggestions for its further development. *Linguistics*, 2(9), 32-70. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ling.1964.2.9.32>
- Fishman, J. (1980). Bilingualism and biculturalism as individual and societal phenomena. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 1(1), 3-15.
- Fishman, J. (1991). *Reversing language shift: Theory and practice to of assistance to threatened languages*. Multilingual Matters.
- Fishman, J. (2001). *Can threatened languages be saved? Reversing language shift revisited: A 21<sup>st</sup> Century perspective*. Multilingual Matters.
- Fishman, J. (2013). Language maintenance, language shift, and reversing language shift. In T.K. Bahatia & W.C. Ritchie (Eds.), *The handbook of bilingualism and multilingualism* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), pp. 466-494). Blackwell Publishing Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118332382.ch19>
- Franken, M., May, S., & McComish, J. (2008). *Pasifika languages research and guideline project: Literature review*. New Zealand Ministry of Education.
- Freire, P. (1973). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. The Seabury Press.
- Freire, P. (2005). *Teachers as cultural workers: Letters to those who dare teach*. Routledge.
- Freire, P., & Betto, F. (1985). *Essa escola chamada vida*. Atica.
- Fry, J., & Wilson, P. (2018). *Better lives: Migration, wellbeing and New Zealand*. Bridget Williams Books.

- Gal, S. (1998). Cultural bases of language-use among German speakers in Hungary. In P. Trudgill & J. Cheshire (Eds.), *The sociolinguistics reader: Multilingualism and variation, Volume 1* (pp.113-121). Edward Arnold.
- García, O. (2009). *Bilingual education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: A global perspective*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- García, O., Ibarra Johnson, S., & Seltzer, K. (2017). *The translanguaging classroom: Leveraging student bilingualism for learning*. Caslon.
- García, O., & Li, W. (2014). *Translanguaging: Language, bilingualism and education*. Palgrave MacMillan.
- Garner, M., Raschka, C., & Sercombe, P. (2006). Sociolinguistic minorities, research, and social relationships. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 27(1), 61-78. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17447140608668538>
- Gaugatao, S. (2018). Polyfest at 43: Potential for deep learning - untapped. *Education Central*. <https://educationcentral.co.nz/polyfest-at-43-potential-for-deep-learning-untapped/>
- Gegeo, D. W. (2001). Cultural rupture and indigeneity: The challenge of (re) visioning "place" in the Pacific. *The Contemporary Pacific*, 13(2), 491-507. <http://hdl.handle.net/10125/13580>
- Gibbons, P. (2002). *Scaffolding language, scaffolding language learning: Teaching second language in the mainstream classroom*. Heinemann.
- Glasgow, A. (2010). Measures to Preserve Indigenous Language and Culture in te Reo Kuki Airani (Cook Islands Māori Language): Early-childhood education models. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 6(2), 122–133. <https://doi.org/10.1177/117718011000600204>
- Glasgow, A. (2019). *Ko toku reo ko toku ia mana: My language my identity - the Pacific language nest: How language culture and traditions are supported and promoted for the Pacific communities of the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau in Aotearoa New Zealand* [Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis]. Victoria University of Wellington.
- Gluckman, A. (1987). Nga Tapuwae College - The teaching of seven languages - A case study, In W. Hirsch (Ed.), *Living languages: Bilingualism and community languages in New Zealand* (pp. 109-116). Heinemann.
- Goodenough, W.H. (1994). Toward a working theory of culture. In R. Borosky (Ed.), *Assessing cultural anthropology* (pp. 262-73). McGraw Hill.
- Government of Tokelau. (2021). *History*. <https://www.tokelau.org.nz/About+Us/History.html>

- Hammersley, M. (1993). Introducing ethnography. In G. Graddol, J. Maybin, & B. Stierer (Eds.), *Researching language and literacy in social context: A reader* (pp. 1-7). Multilingual Matters.
- Hau‘ofa, E. (1993). Our sea of islands. In E. Hau‘ofa, E. Waddell, & V. Naidu (Eds.), *A new Oceania: Rediscovering our sea of islands* (pp. 2–16). The University of the South Pacific.
- Hau‘ofa, E. (1994). Our sea of islands. *The contemporary Pacific*, 6(1), 148-161.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/23701593>
- Heller, M. (1987). *The role of French language schools in the formation of French ethnic identity in Toronto*. Centre de recherches en education franco-ontarienne, Institut d’études pédagogiques de l’Ontario.
- Heller, M. (1999). *Linguistic minorities and modernity. A sociolinguistic ethnography*. Longman.
- Heller, M. (2006). *Linguistic minorities and modernity* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Continuum.
- Heller, M. (2007). Bilingualism as ideology and practice. In M. Heller (Ed.), *Bilingualism: A social approach* (pp.1-24). Palgrave.
- Heller, M. (2008). ‘Doing ethnography.’ In Li Wei & M. Moyer (Eds.), *The Blackwell guide to research methods in bilingualism and multilingualism* (pp. 249-62). Blackwell.
- Heller, M., Pietikäinen, S., & Pujolar, J. (2018). *Critical Sociolinguistic Research Methods: Studying Language Issues that Matter*. Routledge.
- Hereniko, V. (2018). *Reimagining our relational futures together*. Keynote address, OCIES, Wellington, November.
- Higgins, R., & Rewi, P. (2014). ZePA-Right-shifting: Reorientation towards normalisation. In R. Higgins, P. Rewi, & V. Olsen-Reeder (Eds.), *The value of the Māori language: Te hua o te reo Māori* (pp. 7-32). Huia.
- Hill, M., & Thrupp, M. (Eds.). (2019). *The professional practice of teaching in New Zealand* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Cenage.
- Hirsch, W. (Ed). (1987). *Living languages: Bilingualism and community languages in New Zealand*. Heinemann.
- Holmes, J. (1987). Providing support for the language learner. In W. Hirsch (Ed.), *Living languages: Bilingualism and community languages in New Zealand* (pp. 7-15). Heinemann.
- Holmes, J. (2019). Foreword. In C. A. Seals, & V. Olsen-Reeder, V. (Eds.), *Embracing multilingualism across educational contexts* (pp. 9-10). Victoria University Press.

- Holmes, J., & Aipolo, A. (1991). The Tongan language in Wellington: Proficiency, use and attitudes. In J. Holmes & R. Harlow (Eds.), *Threads in the New Zealand tapestry of language* (pp. 71-116). Linguistic Society of New Zealand.
- Holmes, J., & Harlow, R. (Eds.). (1991). *Threads in the New Zealand tapestry of language*. Linguistic Society of New Zealand.
- Hooks, B. (1990). Postmodern blackness. *Postmodern Culture*, 1(1).  
[doi:10.1353/pmc.1990.0004](https://doi.org/10.1353/pmc.1990.0004).
- Hornberger, N.H., & Wang, S.C. (2008). Who are our heritage language learners? Identity and biliteracy in heritage language education in the United States. In D.M. Brinton, O. Kagan, & S. Bauckus (Eds.), *Heritage language education: A new field emerging* (pp. 3-35). Routledge.
- Hunkin, G. A. L., (1987). Being Samoan means knowing my language. *New Settlers and Multicultural Education Issues*, 4(3), 28-35.
- Hunkin-Tuiletufuga, G. (2001). Paesifika languages and Paesifika identities: Contemporary and future challenges. In Macpherson et al (Eds.), *Tangata o Te Moana Nui: The evolving identities of Pacific Peoples in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, Dunmore Press.
- Hunkin, G. A. (2012). "To Let Die": The state of the Samoan language in New Zealand. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 8(2), 203-214.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/117718011200800208>
- Huntsman, J., & Kalolo, K. (2007). *The future of Tokelau: Decolonising agendas 1975-2006*. Auckland University Press.
- Jamieson, P. (1976). *The acquisition of English as a second language by young Tokelauan children living in New Zealand* [Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis]. Victoria University of Wellington.
- Johansson, M. (2018, 19-22 November). *Of words, warriors and war* [Keynote address]. OCIES, 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, Wellington, New Zealand.
- Kagan, D. M. (1992). Implications of research on teacher belief. *Educational Psychologist*, 27, 65-90.
- Kagan, O. E., Carreira, M. M., & Hitchens Chik, C. (2017). *The Routledge handbook of Heritage Language Education: From innovation to program building* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315727974>
- Ka'ili, T. (2005). Tauhi vā: Nurturing Tongan sociospatial ties in Maui and beyond. *The contemporary Pacific*, 7(1), 83-114. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23721933>



- Ka'ili, T. (2017). *Marking Indigeneity: The Tongan Art of Sociospatial Relations*. University of Arizona Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1t89kr9.6>
- Kalavite, T. (2014). Exploring Pacific Tongan Research Methods. In P. Fairbairn-Dunlop & E. Coxon (Eds.), *Talanoa: Building a Pasifika research culture* (pp.159-177). Dunmore Publishing Ltd.
- Keane, M., Khupe, C., & Seehawer, M. (2017). Decolonising methodology: Who benefits from Indigenous knowledge research? *Educational Research for Social Change*, 6(1), 12-24. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2221-4070/2017/v6i1a2>
- Kennedy, J. (2019). Relational cultural identity and Pacific language education. *The International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives*, 18(2), 26-39. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1231309.pdf>
- Kēpa, M. & Manu'atu, L. (2008). Pedagogical decolonisation: Impacts of the European/Pākehā society on the education of Tongan people of Aotearoa, New Zealand, *American Behavioural Scientist*, 51(12), 1801-16.
- Kidman, J. (2018, 19-22 November). *Comparatively speaking: Notes on decolonising research* [Keynote address]. OCIES, 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, Wellington, New Zealand.
- Kramsch, C. (2020). *Language as symbolic power*. University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations. <https://doi-org.helicon.vuw.ac.nz/10.1017/9781108869386>
- Krebs, N.B. (1999). *Edgewalkers: Defusing cultural boundaries on the new global frontiers*. New Horizon Press.
- Krebs, N.B. (2000). For students with multicultural heritage: A refreshing, confrontative approach. *Multicultural Education*, 8(2), 25-27.
- Kubota, R. (2004). Critical Multiculturalism and Second Language Education. In B. Norton, & K. Toohey (Eds.), *Critical pedagogies and language learning* (pp. 30-52). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139524834.003>
- Kupa, K. (2009). Te Vaka Atafaga: A Tokelau assessment model for supporting holistic mental health practice with Tokelau people in Aotearoa, New Zealand, *Pacific Health Dialog*, 15(1), 156-63.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). What we can learn from multicultural education research. *Educational Leadership*, 51(8), 22-26.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: a.k.a. the remix. *Harvard*

- Educational Review*, 84(1), 74-78.  
<https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.84.1.p2rj131485484751>
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2017). The (R)Evolution will not be standardized: Teacher education, hip hop pedagogy and culturally relevant pedagogy. In D. Paris & H.S. Alim [Eds], *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world* (pp.141-156). Teachers College Press.
- Lee, H.M. (2003). *Tongans overseas: Between two shores*. University of Hawai'i Press.
- Li, W. (2000). Dimensions of bilingualism. In W. Li (Ed.), *The bilingualism reader* (pp.3-25). Routledge.
- Li, W. (2011). Moment analysis and translanguaging space: Discursive construction of identities by multilingual Chinese youth in Britain. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43, 1222-35.
- Li, W. (2018). Translanguaging as a practical theory of language. *Applied Linguistics*, 39(1), 9-30. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amx044>
- Liddicoat, A. (2018). Indigenous and immigrant languages in Australia. In C.A. Seals & S. Shah, (Eds.), *Heritage Language Policies around the World* (pp. 237-253). Routledge.
- Lilomaiaava-Doktor, S. (2009). Beyond “migration”: Samoan population movement (*malaga*) and the geography of social space (*vā*). *The contemporary Pacific*, 21(1), 1-32.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/23724742>
- Lin, A. (2004). Introducing a critical pedagogical curriculum: A feminist reflexive account. In B. Norton & K. Toohey (Eds.), *Critical pedagogies and language learning* (pp. 271-290). Cambridge University Press.
- Lopesi, L. (2018). *Flase divides: How do we get to know each other again?* Bridget Williams Books Limited.
- McCaffery, J. & McFall-McCaffery, J. T. (2010). O tatou o aga'i i fea?:'Oku tau o ki fe?: Where Are We Heading?: Pacific Languages in Aotearoa/New Zealand. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 6(2), 86-121.
- McComish, J., May, S., & Franken, M. (2007). *LEAP: Language enhancing the achievement of Pasifika*. Ministry of Education, Learning Media.
- McKinley, A., & Smith, L. T. (Eds.). (2019). *Handbook of Indigenous education*. Springer.
- Macedo, D. & Araújo Freire, A. (2005). Foreword. In P. Freire, *Teachers As Cultural Workers: Letters to those who dare to teach* (pp.vii-xxvi). Westview Press.
- Mackey, A. & Gass, S. (2005). *Second language research: Methodology and design*. Routledge.

- Mackley-Crump, J. (2013). The festivalization of Pacific cultures in New Zealand: Diasporic flow and identity within transcultural contact zones. *Musicology Australia*, 35(1), 20-40. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08145857.2013.761098>
- Mackley-Crump, J. (2014). The Pacific festival space: Understanding and contextualising the importance of community. In P.Fairbairn-Dunlop & E. Coxon (Eds), *Talanoa: Building a Pasifika research culture* (pp.53-70), Dunmore Publishing.
- Mafi, S.F. (2018). *Ko e talanoa fekau 'aki pea moe mo 'ui kakato 'o e mātu 'a Tonga nofo Nu 'usila, The perspectives of wellbeing of Older Tongan people living in New Zealand: A qualitative study* [Unpublished masters thesis]. Victoria University of Wellington.
- Māhina, 'O. (2004). *Reed book of Tongan proverbs: Ko e tohi 'a e Reed ki he lea Tonga heliaki*. Reed.
- Māhina, 'O. (2008). From vale (ignorance) to to'ilo (knowledge) or poto (skill) - the Tongan theory of ako (education): Theorising old problems and new. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Scholarship*, 4(1), 67-96. <https://doi.org/10.1177/117718010800400108>
- Māhina, 'O. , Ka'ili, T. , & Ka'ili, 'A. (2006). *Ko e ngaahi 'ata mei he hisitōlia mo e kalatua 'o Tonga: Ke tufunga 'i ha lea Tonga fakaako*. Centre for Pacific Studies, The University of Auckland.
- Major, J. (2018). Bilingual identities in monolingual classrooms: Challenging the hegemony of English. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 53, 193-208. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40841-018-0110-y>
- Makoni, S., & Pennycook, A. (2007). *Disinventing and reconstituting languages*. Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781853599255>
- Manu'atu, L. & Kēpa, M. (2002). Towards reconstituting the notion of study clinics. In: Kakai Tonga Tu'a community based educational project. Invited presentation given to the First National Bilingual Education conference, pp.1-3.
- Manuela, S., & Anae, M. (2017). Pacific youth, acculturation and identity: The relationship between ethnic identity and well-being, new directions for research. *Pacific Dynamics: Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, 1(1). 129-147. <http://dx.doi.org/10.26021/896>
- Manuela, S., & Sibley, C. G. (2015). The Pacific identity and wellbeing scale-Revised (PIWBS-R). *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 21(1).146-155. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0037536>

- Mara, D. L., & Burgess, F. (2007). *Early literacy: Quality teaching and learning in Pasifika early childhood education*. NZCER.
- Matagi Tokelau. (1991). *History and traditions of Tokelau*. University of the South Pacific.
- May, S. (2001). *Language and minority rights: Ethnicity, nationalism, and the politics of language*. Pearson Education.
- May, S. (2005). Introduction: Bilingual/immersion education in Aotearoa/New Zealand: Setting the context. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 8(5), 365–376.
- May, S. (Ed.). (2014). *The multilingual turn: Implications for SLA, TESOL, and bilingual education*. Routledge.
- May, S. (2020). *Research to understand the features of quality Pacific bilingual education: Review of best practice*. Ministry of Education.  
[https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/199690/Research-to-understand-the-features-of-quality-Pacific-bilingual-education.pdf](https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/199690/Research-to-understand-the-features-of-quality-Pacific-bilingual-education.pdf)
- Menard-Warwick, J. (2009). *Gendered identities and immigrant language learning*. Multilingual Matters.
- Menard-Warwick, J. (2014). *English language teachers on the discursive faultlines: Identities, ideologies and pedagogies*. Multilingual Matters.
- Mila-Schaaf, K. (2006). Vā-centred social work: Possibilities for a Pacific approach to social work practice. *Social Work Review*, 18(1), 8-13.
- Mila-Schaaf, K. (2011). *Polycultural capital and the pasifika second generation: Negotiating identities*. Working paper, number 3, Integration of immigrants programme, Massey University.  
[http://integrationofimmigrants.massey.ac.nz/publications\\_pdfs/Karlo%20Mila-Schaaf%202011.pdf](http://integrationofimmigrants.massey.ac.nz/publications_pdfs/Karlo%20Mila-Schaaf%202011.pdf)
- Mila, K. (2014). Theorising advantage in a context of disparity: Pacific peoples who grow up in New Zealand. In P.Fairbairn-Dunlop & E. Coxon (Eds), *Talanoa: Building a Pasifika research culture* (pp. 32-52). Dunmore Publishing.
- Mila-Schaaf, K., & Robinson, E. (2010). ‘Polycultural’ capital and educational achievement among NZ-born Pacific peoples. *Mai Review*, 1, 1–18.
- Milne, A. (2017). *Coloring in the White Spaces: Reclaiming Cultural Identity in Whitestream Schools*. Peter Lang.
- Milne, A. (2018, 1 June). *Colouring in the White Spaces* [Keynote address]. LoopEd, Annual Conference, Wellington, New Zealand.

- Ministry for Pacific Peoples. (2021). *Pacific languages strategy - for targeted consultation DRAFT*. <https://www.mpp.govt.nz/assets/Pacific-Languages-Strategy-Consultation-/Pacific-Languages-Strategy-Ministry-for-Pacific-Peoples-.pdf>
- Ministry of Education. (2007). *The New Zealand curriculum*. Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education. (2013). *Pasifika education plan*. Wellington.  
<https://education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Ministry/Strategies-and-policies/PasifikaEdPlan2013To2017V2.pdf>
- Ministry of Education (MoE). (2019). *Tapasā: Cultural competences framework for teachers of Pacific learners*. Author. <https://teachingcouncil.nz/assets/Files/Tapasa/Tapasa-Cultural-Competencies-Framework-for-Teachers-of-Pacific-Learners-2019.pdf>
- Ministry of Education. (2020a). *Pacific Action Plan*. [https://conversation-space.s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/Pacific+Education+Plan\\_WEB.PDF](https://conversation-space.s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/Pacific+Education+Plan_WEB.PDF)
- Ministry of Education. (2020b). *NCEA Education*. <https://ncea.education.govt.nz/what-ncea-change-programme>
- Moll, L., & Gonzalez, N. (1994). Lessons from research with language minority children. *Journal of Reading Behaviour*, 26(4), 439-456.  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/10862969409547862>
- Neal, J. (2006). *Edgewalkers: People and organisations that take risks, build bridges, and break new ground*. Praeger Publishers.
- New Internationalist. (December, 5, 1991). Country profile: Tonga. 226.  
<https://newint.org/features/1991/12/05/profile>
- Nikula, T. (2017). CLIL: A European approach to bilingual education. In N. Van Deusen-Scholl & S. May (Eds.), *Second and foreign language education* (pp. 111-124). Springer. DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-02246-8\_10
- Norrby, C., & Hajek, J. (2011). Introduction to Part 1, In C.Norrby & J.hajek (Eds), *Uniformity and uiversity in language policy: Global perspectives* (pp.3-6). Multilingual Matters,
- Norton, B. (2000) *Identity and language learning: Gender, ethnicity, and educational change*. Pearson Education Limited.
- Norton, B. (2013) *Identity and language learning: Extending the conversation*. Multilingual Matters.
- Norton, B., & Toohey, K. (2004). Critical pedagogies and language learning: An introduction. In B. Norton & K. Toohey Eds, *Critical pedagogies and language learning* (pp.1-17). Cambridge University Press.

- Norton, B., & Toohey, K. (2011). Identity, language learning, and social change. *Lang. Teach*, 44(4), 412-446.
- Norton Peirce, B. (1995). Social identity, investment, and language learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 35(2), 307-322. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3587803>
- O’Callaghan, J. (2019). *Fears about Māori immersion schools proving unfounded*. Stuff. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/education/114407912/fear-mori-immersion-schools-would-leave-kids-illiterate>
- O’Shea, A., & O’Brian, M. (Eds.). (2011). *Pedagogy, oppression and transformation in a ‘post-critical’ climate: The return of Freirean thinking*. Bloomsbury.
- Ochs, E. (1979). Transcription as theory. In E. Ochs & B. Schieffelin (Eds.), *Developmental pragmatics* (pp.43-72). Academic press.
- Olsen-Reeder, V. (2018). Deathly narratives: Theorising “reo-orientation” for language revitalisation courses. *MAI Journal*, 7(2), 203-214. <https://doi-org/10.20507/MAIJournal.2018.7.2.7>
- Otheguy, R., García, O., & Reid, W. (2015). Clarifying translanguaging and deconstructing named languages: A perspective from linguistics.” *Applied Linguistics Review*, 6, 281–307. <https://doi-org/10.1515/applirev-2015-0014>
- Paea, M. K. (2015). *Tauhi Vā Māfana : Tongan leadership and culture in the New Zealand Public Service* [Unpublished PhD thesis]. Victoria University of Wellington.
- Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. *Educational Researcher*, 41(3), 93-97. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X12441244>
- Paris, D., & Alim, H.S. (Eds.). (2017). *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world*. Teachers College Press.
- Parsons, L. (2020). *O le Aso Ma le Filiga, O le Aso Mata’igatila: A qualitative study looking at Samoan language maintenance within second generation households* [Unpublished master’s thesis]. Victoria University of Wellington.
- Pattoni, L. (2012). Strengths-based approaches for working with individuals. *Insights: Evidence Summaries to Support Social Services in Scotland*, 16, Institute for research and innovation in social services. <https://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/insights/strengths-based-approaches-working-individuals>

- Peddie, R. (2005). Planning for the future? Languages policy in New Zealand, In A. Bell, R. Harlow, & D. Starks (Eds.) *Languages of New Zealand* (pp. 30-55). Victoria University Press.
- Pene, G., Peita, M., Howden-Chapman, P. (2009). Living the Tokelauan way. *Social policy journal of New Zealand*, 35, 79-92. <https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/journals-and-magazines/social-policy-journal/spj35/living-the-tokelauan-way.pdf>
- Phinney, J. (1990). Ethnic identity in adolescents and adults: Review of research. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108(3), 499-514. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.108.3.499>
- Phipps, A. (2019). *Decolonising multilingualism: Struggles to decreate*. Multilingual Matters.
- Ponton, V. (2018). Utilizing Pacific methodologies as inclusive practice. *SAGE open*, 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018792962>
- Poutasi, C.M. (1999). *How does the ability/inability to speak the Samoan language impact upon New Zealand raised Samoan women and their identity as a Samoan?* Unpublished text.
- Pulojar, J. (2007). African women in Catalan language courses: Struggles over class, gender and ethnicity in advanced liberalism. In B. McElhinny (Ed.), *Words, worlds, and material girls: Language, gender, globalisation* (pp. 305-47). Mouton de Gruyter.
- Radio New Zealand. (November, 2020). *Community want gagana Tokelau in New Zealand school curriculum*. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/429553/community-want-gagana-tokelau-in-new-zealand-school-curriculum>
- Rampton, B. (2006). *Language in late modernity: Interaction in an urban school*. Cambridge University Press.
- Refiti, A. (2002). Making spaces: Polynesian architecture in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In S. Mallon & P. F. Pereira (Eds.), *Pacific Art Niu Sila: The Pacific dimension of contemporary New Zealand arts* (pp. 209-225). Te Papa Press.
- Reynolds, M. (2017). *Together as brothers: A catalytic examination of Pasifika success as Pasifika to teu le va in boys' secondary education in Aotearoa New Zealand* [Unpublished PhD thesis]. Victoria University of Wellington.
- Reynolds, M. (2019). Culturally relevant (teacher) education : teachers responding through va in the inter-cultural space of Pasifika education. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 54(1), 21–38. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40841-019-00128-1>

- Roberts, M. (1991). The New Zealand-born Chinese community of Wellington: Aspects of language maintenance and shift. In J. Holmes & R. Harlow (Eds.), *Threads in the New Zealand tapestry of language* (pp. 31-70). Linguistic Society of New Zealand.
- Royal Commission of Inquiry. (2021). *Executive summary*. Royal Commission New Zealand. <https://christchurchattack.royalcommission.nz/the-report/executive-summary-2/executive-summary/>
- Salahshour, N. (2021). A critique of New Zealand's exclusive approach to intercultural education. *NZ J Educ Stud*, 56, 111–128. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40841-020-00179-9>
- Salesa, D. (2017). *Island Time: New Zealand's Pacific futures*. Bridget Williams Books Limited.
- Samu, T., Mara, D., & Siteine, A. (2013). Education for Pacific people for the twenty-first century. In P. O'Connor & S. Sauni (Eds.), *Within and beyond the reef of Pasifika education* (pp. 139-52), Pearson.
- Schachter, S. (2016). Early childhood educators' knowledge, beliefs, education, experiences, and children's language- and literacy-learning opportunities: What is the connection? *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 36, 281–294. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2016.01.008>
- Scollon, R. (1998). *Mediated discourse as social interaction*. Longman.
- Seals, C.A. (2013). *Multilingual identity development and negotiation amongst heritage language speakers: A study of East European-American schoolchildren in the United States* [Unpublished PhD thesis]. Georgetown University.
- Seals, C.A. (2017). Pasifika Heritage Languages in New Zealand. In O. Kagan, M. Carreira, & C. Chik, (Eds.), *Handbook on Heritage Language Education: From Innovation to Program Building* (pp. 298-312). Routledge.
- Seals, C. A. (2019). *Choosing a Mother Tongue: The politics of language and identity in Ukraine*. Multilingual Matters. <https://doi-org.helicon.vuw.ac.nz/10.21832/9781788925006>
- Seals, C.A. (2021). Heritage Languages in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia. In S. Montrul & M. Polinsky, (Eds.), *Cambridge Handbook of Heritage Languages and Linguistics* (pp. 156-177). Cambridge University Press.
- Seals, C.A., & Kreeft-Peyton, J. (2016). Heritage Language Education: Valuing the Languages, Literacies, and Cultural Competencies of Immigrant Youth. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 18(1), 87-101.



- Seals, C.A., & Olsen-Reeder, V. (2018). Te Reo Māori, Samoan, and Ukrainian in New Zealand. In C.A. Seals & S. Shah, (Eds.). *Heritage Language Policies around the World* (pp. 221-236). Routledge.
- Seals, C.A., & Olsen-Reeder, V. (2019). (Eds.). *Embracing multilingualism across educational contexts*. Victoria University Press.
- Seals, C.A., & Shah, S. (2018). Introduction: A focus on heritage language policy. In C.A. Seals & S. Shah, (Eds.). *Heritage Language Policies around the World* (pp. 1-9). Routledge.
- Shahriar, A. (2018). An ethnographic study of young people from poor rural Sindh, Pakistan. In J. Conteh (Ed.), *Researching education for social justice in multilingual settings: Ethnographic principles in qualitative research* (pp.79-95). Bloomsbury.
- Si'ilata, R. (2014). *Va'a Tele: Pasifika learners riding the success wave on linguistically and culturally responsive pedagogies* [Unpublished PhD thesis]. University of Auckland. <http://hdl.handle.net/2292/23402>
- Si'ilata, R., Samu, T., & Siteine, A. (2019). The va'atele framework: Redefining and transforming Pasifika education. In E.A. McKinley & L.T. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of Indigenous education* (pp. 907-936). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-3899-0\\_34](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-3899-0_34)
- Skerrett, M. (2019). Colonialism, Māori early childhood, language, and the curriculum. In E. McKinley and L. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of Indigenous education* (pp.483-504). Springer,. [https://doi-org.helicon.vuw.ac.nz/10.1007/978-981-10-3899-0\\_17](https://doi-org.helicon.vuw.ac.nz/10.1007/978-981-10-3899-0_17)
- Skerret-White, M. N. (2003). *Kia mate rāanōa tama-nui-te-rā: Reversing language shift in Kōhangareo* [Unpublished PhD thesis]. University of Waikato.
- Smith, G.H. (1999). Paulo Freire: Lessons in transformative practice. In P. Roberts (Ed.), *Paulo Freire, politics and pedagogy: Reflections from Aotearoa New Zealand* (pp.35-42). Dunmore Press Limited.
- Smith, G., & Smith L. (2019). Doing indigenous work: Decolonizing and transforming the academy. In E.A. McKinley & L.T. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of Indigenous education* (pp. 1075-1101). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-3899-0\\_70](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-3899-0_70)
- Smith, G., & Webber, M. (2019). Transforming research and Indigenous education struggle. In E.A. McKinley & L.T. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of Indigenous education* (pp. 813-822). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-3899-0\\_70](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-3899-0_70)

- Smith, L. T. (1989). Te reo Māori: Māori language and the struggle to survive. *Access: Contemporary Issues in Education*, 8(1), 3-9. [https://pesaagora.com/access-archive-files/ACCESSAV08N1\\_003.pdf](https://pesaagora.com/access-archive-files/ACCESSAV08N1_003.pdf)
- Smith, L. T. (1992). Maori women: Discourses, projects and mana wahine. *Women and Education in Aotearoa*, 2, 33-51.
- Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Zed Books.
- Soja, E. (1996). *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other real and imagined places*. Blackwell.
- Somers, M. (1994). The narrative constitution of identity: A relational network approach. *Theory and Society*, 23, 605-649.  
[https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/43649/11186\\_2004\\_Article\\_BF00992905.pdf?sequence=1](https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/43649/11186_2004_Article_BF00992905.pdf?sequence=1)
- Spradley, J. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. Wadsworth.
- Spring, J. (2008) Series editor foreword. In M. Ah Nee-Benham (Ed.), *Indigenous educational models for contemporary practice: In our Mother's voice, volume 11* (pp.xiii-xv), Routledge.
- Statistics New Zealand. (2018). *2018 Census ethnic group summaries-Tokelauan*.  
<https://www.stats.govt.nz/tools/2018-census-ethnic-group-summaries/tokelauan>
- Stein-Chandler, L., & Cherrington, K. (2008). Reflections on the case: An edited interview with Lynette Stein-Chandler and Katie Cherrington. In M. Ah Nee-Benham (Ed.), *Indigenous educational models for contemporary practice: In our Mother's voice, volume 11*, (p. 271), Routledge.
- Stewart-Withers, R. (2016). Edge walking ethics. *New Zealand sociology*, 31(4), 28-42.
- Stubbe, M., Lane, C., Hilder, J., Vine, E., Vine, B., Mara, M., Holmes, J., Weatherall, A. (2013). Multiple Discourse Analyses. *Qualitative Sociology Review (Polish edition)*, 9(1), 112-151.
- Tait, C., Epstein, S., Navarro, D., Newton, J., & Black, A. (2020). Motivations and disincentives in studying the languages of the Asia-Pacific region in Aotearoa New Zealand. *New Zealand Studies in Applied Linguistics*, 26(1), 20-47.
- Talaitapu-Kerslake, M., & Kerslake, D. (1987). Fa'asamoa, in W. Hirsch (Ed.) *Living languages: Bilingualism and community languages in New Zealand* (pp. 143-150). Heinemann.

- Talmy, S., & Richards. K. (2011). Theorizing qualitative research interviews in Applied Linguistics. *Applied Linguistics*, 32(1), 128–148.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190510000085>
- Taumoeofolau, M. (2005). 'Tongans.' Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand,  
<http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/tongans>
- Taumoeofolau, M. (2017). The cultural-linguistic making of the Tongan female self. In U. L. Vaai & U. Nabobo-Baba (Eds.), *The relational self: Decolonising personhood in the Pacific* (pp. 137–152). The University of the South Pacific Press.
- Te Ara The Encyclopedia of New Zealand. (2015). *Tokelauans*.  
<https://teara.govt.nz/en/tokelauans>
- Te Kete Ipurangi. (2021). *Language enhancing the achievement of Pasifika (LEAP)*. Ministry of Education. <https://pasifika.tki.org.nz/LEAP>
- The Guardian. (2011). *Endangered languages: The full list*.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2011/apr/15/language-extinct-endangered#data>
- Tiatia. J. (1998). *Caught between cultures: A New Zealand-born Pacific Island perspective*. Christian Research Association.
- Tikly, B., & Barrett, M. (2011). Social justice, capabilities and the quality of education in low income countries. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 31, 3-14.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2010.06.001>
- Toleafoa, A. (2020). *How the Polynesian Panthers' legacy is alive today*. Youtube.  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMrQzVXyFOc&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMrQzVXyFOc&feature=emb_logo)
- Tuafuti, P. (2013). Additive bilingual education: Unlocking the culture of silence. In P. O'Connor & S. Sauni (Eds.), *Within and beyond the reef of Pasifika education*, (pp.83-). Pearson.
- Tu'inukuafe, E. (1987). The Tongan language in New Zealand. In W. Hirsch (Ed.), *Living languages: Bilingualism and community languages in New Zealand* (pp. 131-136). Heinemann.
- Tu'itahi, S. (2007). *Fonua, A Pacific model*. Health Promotion Forum.  
<http://hauora.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/FonuaaPasifikmodel.pdf>
- Tu'itahi, S. (2009). Fonua: A model for Pacific health promotion. In Editor (Ed.), *A collaboration between Pasifika@Massey and the Health Promotion Forum of New Zealand*. Health Promotion Forum.  
<http://www.hauora.co.nz/resources/FonuaaPasifikmodel.pdf>

- Tupuola, A.M. (2004). Pasifika edgewalkers: complicating the achieved identity status in youth research. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 25(1), 87-100. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07256860410001687045>
- United Nations General Assembly. (2007). *Report of the Human Rights Council: United Nations Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, Article 14. United Nations.
- Vaai, U. L., & Nabobo-Baba, U. (2017). *The relational self: decolonising personhood in the Pacific*. The University of the South Pacific Press.
- Vaioliti, T. (2006). Talanoa research methodology: A developing position on Pacific research, *Waikato Journal of Education*, 12, 21-34. <https://doi.org/10.15663/wje.v12i1.296>
- Valdés, L. (2005). Bilingualism, heritage language learners, and SLA research: Opportunities lost or seized? *Modern Language Journal*, 89(3), 410-426.
- Valdés, G. (2017). Foreword. In O. García, S. Ibarra Johnson, & K. Seltzer (Eds.), *The translanguaging classroom: Leveraging student bilingualism* (pp. v-vii). Caslon.
- Verivaki, M. (1991). Greek language maintenance and shift in the Greek community of Wellington. In J. Holmes & R. Harlow (Eds.), *Threads in the New Zealand tapestry of language* (pp. 71-116). Linguistic Society of New Zealand.
- Vila, X. & Brexta, V. (2013). The Analysis of Medium-sized language communities. In X. Vila (Ed.), *Survival and development of language communities: Prospects and challenges* (pp.1-17). Multilingual Matters.
- Viliamu, M., Kirifi, J., & Mateo, Z. (2021, April 26). *The cry of the stolen people*. Visual installation performance. Whitirea, Porirua.
- Waite, J. (1992). *Aotearoa: Speaking for ourselves Part A: The overview*. Learning Media
- Weeden, C. (1997). *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Blackwell.
- Williams, C. (1996). Secondary education: Teaching in the bilingual situation. In C. Williams, G. Lewis, & C. Baker (Eds.), *The language policy: Taking stock* (pp. 39-78). CAI.
- Willoughby, L. (2014). Meeting the challenges of heritage language education: lessons from one school community. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 15(3), 265-281. <https://doi-org./10.1080/14664208.2014.915457>
- Willoughby, L. (2018). High stakes assessment of heritage languages: The case of the Victorian Certificate of Education. In P. Pericles Trifonas & T. Aravossitas (Eds.), *Handbook of Research and Practice in Heritage Language Education*. Springer. [https://doi-org./10.1007/978-3-319-44694-3\\_40](https://doi-org./10.1007/978-3-319-44694-3_40)

Wolfgramm-Foliaki, E. A. (2006). '*Ko e hala kuo papa*': *Pathways and sites for literacy development in Tongan families* [Unpublished doctoral thesis]. University of Auckland.

## Appendix A - Sample Information Sheet<sup>54</sup>

### ***Pasifika Heritage Language Education in New Zealand Secondary Schools***

#### **INFORMATION SHEET FOR BOARD of TRUSTEES, PRINCIPALS, AND TEACHERS**

You are invited to take part in this research. Please read this information before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to participate, thank you. If you decide not to participate, thank you for considering this request.

#### **Who am I?**

My name is Juliet Kennedy and I am secondary school language teacher undertaking Doctoral research in Applied Linguistics at Victoria University of Wellington. This research project is work towards my PhD thesis.

#### **What is the aim of the project?**

This project aims to explore the different opportunities available for Pasifika students to learn and use Pasifika languages in New Zealand secondary schools and to explore in which ways these programmes might contribute to the overall success of Pasifika students. This research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee: reference number 0000025475.

#### **How can you help?**

You have been invited to participate because as a member of the Board of Trustees, principal or teacher at a New Zealand secondary school you are a stakeholder of Pasifika language education. If you agree to take part I will interview you in a location and at a time of your choice. Alternatively you have the option of participating in a talanoa or focus group (please refer to the appropriate information sheet). I will ask you questions about Pasifika heritage language education in your school. The interview will take between 30 minutes to one hour. I will audio record the interview with your permission and write it up later. You can choose to not answer any question or stop the interview at any time, without giving a reason. You can withdraw from the study by contacting me at any time before March 30th, 2018. If you withdraw, the information you provided will be destroyed or returned to you.

---

<sup>54</sup> As there were many different groups, each participant information and consent form read slightly differently. In the interest of space I have include one example of a participant information sheet and a consent form here.

### **What will happen to the information you give?**

This research is confidential. This means that the researchers named below will be aware of your identity but the research data will be combined and your identity will not be revealed in any reports, presentations, or public documentation. However, you should be aware that in small communities your identity might be obvious to others in your community.

Only my supervisors and I will read the notes or transcript of the interview. The interview transcripts, summaries and any recordings will be kept securely and any recordings will be destroyed in December 2022.

### **What will the project produce?**

The information from my research will be used in my PhD dissertation, the development of resources to be distributed to the communities, reports to schools and relevant organisations with research findings and suggestions, academic publications and conferences.

### **If you accept this invitation, what are your rights as a research participant?**

You do not have to accept this invitation if you don't want to. If you do decide to participate, you have the right to:

- choose not to answer any question;
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview
- withdraw from the study before March 30th, 2018;
- ask any questions about the study at any time;
- read over and comment on a written summary of your interview via email or in person by 20th April, 2018;
- be able to read any reports of this research by emailing the researcher to request a copy.

### **If you have any questions or problems, who can you contact?**

If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either my supervisor or myself.

Juliet Kennedy

PhD Candidate

School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies (LALS)

[juliet.kennedy@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:juliet.kennedy@vuw.ac.nz)

Dr Corinne Seals

Lecturer

LALS

[corinne.seals@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:corinne.seals@vuw.ac.nz)

### **Human Ethics Committee information**

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convenor: Associate Professor Susan Corbett. Email [susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz) or telephone +64-4-463 5480.

## Appendix B - Sample Consent Form

### ***Pasifika Heritage Language Education in New Zealand Secondary Schools***

#### **CONSENT TO INTERVIEW**

This consent form will be held for 5 years.

Researcher: Juliet Kennedy, School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies, Victoria University of Wellington.

- I have read the Information Sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions at any time.
- I agree to take part in an audio recorded interview.

I understand that:

- I may withdraw from this study at any point before 30/9/2018, and any information that I have provided will be returned to me or destroyed.
- The identifiable information I have provided will be destroyed by 31/12/2022
- Any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisor.
- I understand that the results will be used for a PhD dissertation, reports to relevant schools, communities and organisations, academic publications, and presented to conferences.
- My name will not be used in reports, nor will any information that would identify me. However, I am aware that in small communities my identity might be obvious to others in my community.

- |   |                          |                          |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • I would like a summary of my interview on request:  | Yes                      | No                       |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • I would like to receive a copy of the final report and have added my email address below. | Yes                      | No                       |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact details: \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix C - Transcription Conventions

In the interests of space and readability, I leave out most questions, back-channeling, false starts and repetitions. Below are the symbols I use.

...	Trailing intonation
[...]	Text omitted
[text]	Author's paraphrase or background information
(( ))	Comment on voice quality or paralinguistic features (e.g. laughter, gestures, pause)

Direct citation from page 201:

Menard-Warwick, J. (2014). *English language teachers on the discursive faultlines: Identities, ideologies and pedagogies*. Multilingual Matters.

|

