A study of bilingual education using Samoan language in New Zealand

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Pasifika peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand are amongst the fastest growing population of all the minority groups. The 2006 census shows that the Pasifika population makes up 6.9% of the total New Zealand population (Statistics New Zealand 2009). The current projections are that this figure will increase in 2026 to 18%. Many of the children who are at present strong in their language are in danger of becoming either monolingual, speaking English only. Samoan children in bilingual classes can achieve equally or higher than their Samoan counterparts in mainstream classrooms. This paper argues that the Samoan language has a crucial place and role to play in the teaching, learning and success of Samoan students in New Zealand schools.

1. Introduction

I was born and brought up in Samoa in the 1950s and 60s and educated under a Western education system that did not permit the use of my own language in school. English was the language of the school compound and classrooms from Grade 1 in primary school until the end of secondary school and anyone who was found speaking another language could expect punishment.[1] At primary school, for example, before the pupils had fully grasped the English vocabulary necessary to hold a simple conversation in English, it was a normal practice (for me at least) to say the Samoan word and then add an English ending to it to make it sound like an English word to avoid punishment. On my first day of intermediate school, I was caught doing just that – using the word *faikakala* (meaning "talkative") and adding the ending *ring* to it to make it *faikakalaring* as I didn't know its English equivalent. I had thought it was a subtle and creative form of

1. In Aotearoa New Zealand and Samoan usage, academic school levels are called "years" ("Year 1", "Year 2", etc.). To facilitate international comparisons, these are referred to as "Grade" in all chapters of this book.

language. From the school, the consequences of that creativity were a summons to the principal's office, three straps on the hand and a send-off home in front of the school assembly. Although I was confident that my parents would be sympathetic, the consequences from them were even harsher. Both gave me harsh and unforgettable punishments. Given that it was my first day, and that I could only think about the school expenses my parents had paid, in addition to my mother's hard work sewing my two new sets of school uniform nonstop for two nights, I thought the punishments were justified. After my parents had approached the principal to apologise for my so-called misbehavior and disregard of the school rules, I was promptly sent back to primary school for a year until I learned my lesson. This was later reduced to one term on good behavior so I was able to go back to intermediate school in Term 2.

My account of these events is not unlike others' of my generation where all would be immersed in English at school, then immersed in Samoan after school. Out of school the likelihood of using English for a Samoan word we didn't know, by attaching a Samoan ending, was generally slim. In retrospect, the school practice was good for us because it immersed us in English at school, while there were not many English distractions out of school where our fluency in Samoan would be threatened. For example, only a few had television sets with mainly American programmes; a few had radios but even then, the language of transmission was mostly Samoan.

There is, however, a contrast between the Samoans born and bred in Samoa in the 1950s and 60s and those born in New Zealand then and now. That is, Samoans born in Aotearoa New Zealand are continually immersed in English at school and out of school. For the first group, grounding in the Samoan language had set them up for linguistic and cultural success in it. For the others, wider exposure to the English environment has limited their oral proficiency in their mother tongue. For the Samoan school-age population, this limitation is having drastic effects on their education. It is argued that when second language learners, such as Samoan children in Aotearoa New Zealand learning English, are not grounded in their first or heritage language (L1, Samoan) they will not be able to transfer the skills in that language to the second language (L2, English) (Garcia 2003). It is the author's belief that Samoan bilingual children who are taught in both L1 and L2 in schools have far better academic success rates than those who are not.

In order to address this hypothesis, this chapter describes a study of Samoan bilingual primary school children's achievement in their L1 (Samoan) in relation to their reading comprehension achievement in their L2 (English). As a part of this, the development of instruments used to measure Samoan competencies is also described. These children are taught in mainstream schools in Aotearoa New Zealand which use both Samoan and English.

2. Background

2.1 Samoan language education in New Zealand

Pasifika (Pacific Islands) people in Aotearoa New Zealand make up 6.9% of the total New Zealand population, and those identifying with the Pasifika peoples ethnic group had the second largest increase from the 2001 Census (231,081), which was up 15% to total 265,974 in 2006. In 2006, 93% of Pasifika peoples in New Zealand lived in the North Island, two-thirds of which were in the Auckland region. The Pasifika group had the highest proportion of children (aged 0–14 years) of all the major ethnic groups, at 38% (Statistics New Zealand 2009). Samoans make up 50 percent of the Pasifika population in New Zealand, and 61 percent of these were born in New Zealand. The Samoan language is next only to English as the most widely spoken language with 85,428 users.

The same census also shows some alarming statistics. For example, even as the Samoan population increases, there has been a decrease in the number of Samoans who can speak their language, from 48 percent in 1996 down to 44 percent in 2006. This is predicted to have ramifications for the school-aged population, especially for maintaining language and culture, and most importantly, for identity and educational success. Hence there has been a desire of Samoan parents since the 1990s to establish Samoan Bilingual units in schools because they could see how quickly their children were assimilating into the English language to the detriment of their own language.

The parents' requests led to the establishment of the first Samoan bilingual school unit in the mid-1990s, with other units in other schools following (Kolhase & Tuioti 2002). The growth of Samoan bilingual units was noticed by May, Hill & Tiakiwai (2004) and they recommended that more schools should create opportunities for Samoan students to learn their Samoan language.

Studies on bilingual education in Aotearoa New Zealand are scarce, especially those which are evidence and research based. There have been studies on bilingual and immersion education in the case of Maori as *tangatawhenua* (indigenous people of the land) (e.g. May, Hill & Tiakiwai 2004; May & Hill 2004), and other studies which advocate for bilingual education generally (e.g. Kolhase & Tuioti 2002); as well as a few on Pasifika (e.g. Coxon, Anae, Mara, Wendt-Samu & Finau 2002) but such studies are almost non-existent for Samoan bilingualism. The very few existing studies (e.g. Tagoilelagi-Leota, McNaughton, MacDonald & Farry 2004; McCaffery & Tuafuti 2003), and the one that is the focus of this chapter, have begun to address the achievement of Samoan students in Samoan bilingual contexts by providing research-based evidence on achievement profiles, including instructional practice in Samoan bilingual education and its impacts on academic achievement.

2.2 Context of the study

The Enhanced Teaching and Learning of Comprehension in Grades 4–8, in a cluster of seven schools in the Mangere suburb of South Auckland, was a three-year Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) project undertaken by the Woolf Fisher Research Centre of the University of Auckland to examine the effectiveness of teaching reading comprehension in English for Māori and Pasifika students (McNaughton, MacDonald, Amituanai-Toloa, Lai, & Farry 2006). It involved about 60 teachers and approximately 3000 children.

The first year of the project involved consultations with schools and teachers and a systematic collection of data to evaluate students' reading comprehension achievement. All schools were required to submit their Supplementary Test of Achievement in Reading (STAR) data for their students. At the same time, classroom observations were also conducted to ascertain the state of instructional practice. The achievement and the instructional data were analysed and a series of feedback, first to the cluster as a whole, and second, to individual schools, was given. Based on the outcomes of the first year, ten professional development sessions were held the following year, as well as additional data collection of achievement for that year. Furthermore, classroom observations were conducted to see if there were any shifts in instructional practice based on instructional categories identified the previous year. Under this bigger project, a smaller project was conducted by the author for her doctoral study to specifically look at the effectiveness of teaching reading comprehension in English for Samoan students in Samoan bilingual classrooms who are instructed in both Samoan and English (Amituanai-Toloa 2005). In this study, the author conducted fieldwork and performed analyses related to the achievement data from Samoan bilingual classrooms and their schools, extracted from the larger project. Additional data, from interviews with teachers, and students' oral proficiency and reading comprehension data in L1, were also collected. For comparison purposes, the English achievement of Samoan students in mainstream classrooms (i.e. where instruction is conducted in English only) were included.

3. Methods

3.1 Schools and classrooms

The larger study included teachers and school leaders in seven schools, researchers from the University of Auckland, and New Zealand Ministry of Education representatives. These were decile 1 schools that have students from both Māori (indigenous) and Pasifika communities in urban schools with the lowest employment

and income levels, and other students who do not fall into the two main groups but have similar socio-economic and employment status. [2]

The six bilingual classes described here operated in two of the schools involved in the larger project (McNaughton et al. 2006). School A was an intermediate school of Grades 7 and 8 only, where most of the students had come from nearby contributing primary schools of Grades 1 to 6. This school had three Samoan bilingual classrooms involved in the study: a Grade 7 (12 year olds), a Grade 7/8 composite (12 and 13 year olds) and a Grade 8 (13 year olds) classroom. School B, on the other hand, was a full primary school from Grades 1–8. The school caters for bilingual education for both Tongan and Samoan students, and three of its Samoan bilingual classrooms were involved in the study, all composite classes: a Grade 4/5 (8 and 9 year olds) and a Grade 5/6 (9 and 10 year olds) housed in one part of the school, and a Grade 7/8 classroom (12 and 13 year olds) housed in another part.

Placement of students in Samoan bilingual classes was the choice of parents who wanted their children to maintain their L1 and its culture; otherwise students are automatically mainstreamed. All classrooms used a mixture of Samoan and English, but they varied in their use of English and Samoan across the school day, and across curriculum areas.

3.2 Participants

3.2.1 *Children*

Two cross-sectional samples of Grades 4–8 students were used for this profile. The first sample came from the six Samoan bilingual classrooms in the two schools and the second sample consisted of Samoan students from mainstream classes. There were 177 students enrolled in bilingual classes and between 24 and 30 children in each of the bilingual classes, with 140 and 160 students, respectively, actually present over the repeated measures of STAR (Supplementary Tests of Achievement in Reading) (Elley 2001) and PAT (Progressive Achievement Tests) (Reid & Elley 1991). In mainstream English-only classes, there were 548 Samoan students enrolled, between 24 and 48 in each of the mainstream year levels (Grades 4–8), with 345 and 478 sitting for the STAR and the PAT respectively. Both samples were approximately 50% male and 50% female. Students were identified as Samoan based on school records.

2. A school's decile indicates the extent to which the school draws its students from low socio-economic communities. Decile 1 schools are the 10% of schools with the highest proportion of students from low socio-economic communities. A school's decile does not indicate the overall socio-economic mix of the school.

3.2.2 *Teachers*

The six teachers consisted of five females (two from School A, three from School B) and one male (School A). Teachers 1, 2 and 3 were at School B and Teachers 4, 5 and 6 were at School A. Three teachers were originally from Samoa and had received their teacher professional training in Samoa (Teachers 1, 2 and 6). The first two teachers underwent teacher re-training in New Zealand, but the third did not. The other three teachers were New Zealand trained (Teachers 3, 4 and 5). Half of the teachers were in the 25–35 age range and the other half in the 36–45 range. Teacher qualifications ranged from Diploma in Teaching to Bachelor of Education (Teaching), Bachelor of Teaching and Graduate Diploma of Teaching. Two held ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) Diplomas.

All teachers used English texts for reading comprehension. Two teachers (Teachers 2 and 6) used Samoan language only during reading comprehension instruction. Two other teachers used only English (Teachers 3 and 5) and the remaining two teachers used a combination of both (Teachers 1 and 4).

3.3 Classroom lessons

During the first year, reading lessons were observed across a sample of all the schools involved in the schooling improvement project. Generally the reading comprehension programme was similar across classes and similar to general descriptions of New Zealand teaching in the middle grades (Smith & Elley 1994; Ministry of Education 2006). A 10–15 minute whole-class activity which involved mostly introducing and sharing a text – often a narrative text – or reviewing a previous day's work was usually followed by a 30–40 minute guided reading session in small groups led by the teacher using an instructional text. Typically, the teacher worked with two groups over this time period and held conferences on the run with other groups. The general organisation meant that whole-class activities occurred on 3–5 days per week and small group work with one or two groups often daily, so that each group had one to three sessions with direct teacher guidance each week.

4. Measures

4.1 Development of instruments for measuring Samoan (L1)

Given the theoretical argument that transfer from L1 to L2 is influenced by the continued development of L1 proficiency including reading strategies (Garcia 2003), an examination of Samoan oral and reading proficiency was seen as prerequisite to examining English reading proficiency. The first aim was thus to describe developmental patterns in oral language and reading comprehension in L1 where

no age-related descriptions for Samoan students had previously been made. The second aim was to identify specific aspects of language development in both L1 oral and L1 reading comprehension that might have some impact on their L2 achievement.

However, a major challenge facing the design of more effective instruction for language minority students is the dearth of standardised assessments in the minority language appropriate for bilingual and immersion contexts (Garcia 2000; Tabors & Snow 2001). In the absence of such tools in Samoan, five narratives were specially designed for use in questioning and retelling formats for both reading comprehension and oral language in bilingual children across the year levels.[3] Two of these narratives (Narratives 1 and 2, below) were originally designed and field tested for English reading comprehension in a study aimed at an English reading age level of 6 years (Werner 2003). For the purposes of the present study these were translated into Samoan and an additional three narratives in Samoan, written by the author, were included. Two Samoan language experts were given copies of the five Samoan narratives (including the two translated stories) to grade according to level of language complexity (*easy*, *middle* or *difficult*) and determine the age levels (Grades 4–8) for which they were most suitable. One rater was an experienced teacher with special expertise in Reading Recovery (Clay 1998), an early literacy intervention, who had taught Samoan language at tertiary and secondary levels. The other was a Samoan-titled researcher with educational expertise.[4] Both were fluent speakers of the common and hierarchical oratory Samoan language, and also held influential positions within the Samoan Association of Teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand (FAGASA – *Fa'alapotopotoga mo le A'oa'oina o le Gagana Samoa i Aotearoa*). The selection, grading and leveling of the narratives were largely based on, but not limited to, commonality and familiarity to Samoan students in the different year levels. The two experts and the first author took two sessions to develop and define what the terms *difficult* and *familiar* were as criteria for leveling. The grading was completed independently and reached 85% agreement. The levels of inter-grade agreement ranged from 89% for *middle* and *difficult*, and 100% for *easy*.

3. In the oral component the test was adapted to both production (retelling) and listening comprehension. However, the present chapter is concerned only with the results from the retelling, and therefore the listening component will not be described further here.

4. A titled person in Samoa is someone who holds a *matai* or chiefly title. This title is conferred on a person by a family or community sometimes as acknowledgement of a person's contributions or as a passing on of genealogical responsibilities. To be fluent in the hierarchies of the Samoan language is a necessary aspect of being donned a *matai*.

The five narratives, with the gradients of difficulty, are summarized in English below.

Narrative 1 – O ananafi i le a'oga (*Yesterday at school*) (*easy*). Among the important things children go to school for is friendship. The story depicts a child who went to school one day only to find her/his friends absent. Saddened and uncomfortable by it, the child coped when he/she found consolation in a new student who had just started school that day.

Narrative 2 – O le fa'alavelave o le matou ta'avale (*The problem with our car*) (*difficult*). It is assumed that all Samoan families have cars. The story tells of a Samoan family who set out for a family lunch in their car only to find when pulling into a petrol station that there was something wrong with it. The protagonist tells us that if it had not been for Mum, the car would not have started.

Narrative 3 – Nana i le fanua (*Hidden in the land*) (*difficult*). This contemporary version of one of the oldest and most popular Samoan legends, *Nafanua* (*na* – hide; *fanua* – land) is a story of a Samoan heroine born out of a blood clot to an elderly couple who couldn't have children. She grew up to be one of the most courageous and influential women of Samoa. She brought Samoa together and predicted the coming of Christianity. The story is designed to reconnect students' ideas of myths and legends to the present day reality of being Samoan. Most students would have heard this story being told orally by an elder as a leisurely bedtime activity, not only to expose them to Samoan superstition and beliefs but also as a reminder of Samoan people of long ago and what it means to be Samoan.

Narrative 4 – O se aso fa'avauvau (*A solemn day*) (*middle*). Having a pet that children can call their own comes with responsibilities as well as downsides. This story shows how a pet that has been more or less a member of the family was sadly taken away by old age. Facing such a crisis is one of the biggest challenges in a child's life. One of the ways to cope with such sadness is by remembering aspects that have brought much happiness.

Narrative 5 – Ua leiloa la'u ato a'oga (*The lost school bag*) (*easy*). The story highlights the consequences of being irresponsible by leaving personal belongings where they should not be. The boy had been at home from school for a while but when it was time to do his homework, he could not find his school bag, although his grandmother – who could not speak English – eventually helped him find it. The narrative shows the relation of Samoan children to their elderly relatives and suggests that they should be welcomed in the homes.

4.3 Assessment of L1 (Samoan) oral competency: Retelling

L1 oral language was assessed, using the texts described above, in relation to both sentence structure and use of vocabulary. Students were asked to retell the story in their own words in Samoan after the story was read to them twice. Four codes

were assigned: OT (*oge tala* – no words), VA (*vaega amata* – emergent), VF (*vaega feololo* – beginning) and VM (*vaega matutua* – fluent). Each component (sentence structure and vocabulary) was worth 3 points. In each, OT was a nil score; VA, VF and VM were scored 1, 2 and 3 points, respectively. The total of the two components together was thus 6 points. One text was used with each student, based on the gradient of difficulty, but where possible unfamiliar texts were selected. Students were individually assessed, but within classes two different texts were used, with half the class receiving one and half the other. This was to control for any bias due to differences between texts in difficulty or topic relevance.

4.3.1 *Sentence structure*

Sentence structure refers to how well students are able to form Samoan sentences in their oral retelling. OT was assigned in two instances. In one case it was because the child produced no utterances at all, and in the other because the child could utter some words but could not form a sentence from them. Children at this level may be able to understand the story, but cannot retell it in Samoan. VA was given for a response that used a sentence or sentences lacking linkages, which resulted in unconnected labels for objects, actions, events and characters, and where one main idea was recalled. VF refers to any response that is formulated in short and simple sentences with ideas linked only by plain conjunctions, but without covering all of the main points. In this type of response, sentences are limited to two or three main ideas. The VM category was for any response that contained three or more ideas explicitly examined and retold with fluency and clarity using proper sentence intonation from beginning to end, thus reflecting a developed understanding of the story. The following examples from the database illustrate these four levels of sentence structure:

> OT (Grade 5 child)
> *Le mea … O le tama po o se teine? … O le … nofo fale, ma … O le tama o Sam sa ia um …*
> Something … Is it a boy or a girl? … The … stayed home and … The boy Sam was um …

> VA (Grade 8 child)
> *... Na mafua?… le maile, na i ai le mea na tupu i le a'oga i le tama o Pele…pau a na….*
> …The reason? … the dog, there was something that happened at the school to the boy called Pele…that's all….

> VF (Grade 6 child)
> *E fiafia ia o tamaiti ia Trophy. E fa'atali Trophy se i sau le aiga. Ua ma'i Trophy, ua fai le kui*
> Trophy likes students. He waits for the family to come [home]. Trophy is sick, he had an injection.

VM (Grade 5 child)
E masani na alu na ia i le a'oga ma taalo fa'atasi ma ana friends, e a'ai fa'atasi ma na fiafia ia i le lunch. O le tasi aso na pasi i le maile e pafu ia e le i ou. Na o'o i le a'oga e iloa e leai ni ana uo, sa faitau ma tusi ma a'ai, ma ua fiafia ai Pita
He [Pita] usually goes to school and plays together with his friends. They eat together and he likes lunch [time]. One day he passed a *baf* dog but the dog did not bark. When he got to school he noticed his friends weren't there. He read [a book] and wrote [a story] and Pita was happy.

4.3.2 *Vocabulary*

The same four codes were used for assessment of vocabulary level. OT was indicative of a child who did not have sufficient Samoan words for the retelling. VA was assigned when the child used everyday nouns, pronouns and verbs. VF indicated that the child knew the words but lacked the ability to use them to describe events and people. VM showed that the child had a rich vocabulary and broader knowledge of usage of a wide range of descriptive and mood-setting words and intonations that could be applied to retellings about events, people and places. The following retelling of Narrative 1 by a Grade 8 student (graded VM – fluent) illustrates how the student was able to go beyond the text and use vocabulary (underlined) that was not heard in the original. The usage of these Samoan words illustrates two aspects of student word knowledge: that the student was familiar with a pool of low frequency words and phrases, and that the student had the ability to use these as alternative words to show further understanding of the text.

O le tama o Pita e fiafia e alu i le a'oga. <u>Toeititi</u> ono ona tausaga. Na alu i le a'oga. Sa <u>savali</u> ae lea na <u>iloa</u> iina e le'i i ai ana uo i le a'oga ona <u>popole</u> lea. Toeititi ta le lunch ona tutu lemu lea i luga ua savali ae sau Sam, o le tama fou fai mai le faia'oga e va'ai. Uma le a'oga fiafia lava Pita.
The boy Pita likes going to school. He's almost six years old. He went to school. He walked and he saw that his friends were not at school and he was worried. When it was close to lunch we stood up slowly and started walking when Sam came. He is a new boy that the teacher said to look after. After school Pita was very happy.

4.4 Assessment of L1 (Samoan) reading comprehension: Component analysis

To test reading comprehension, a series of comprehension questions about the texts was prepared, and student responses were analysed according to the reading skills involved:

Question 1: Activating prior knowledge. Having heard the title, the child is required to make an inference about the nature of the story.
Questions 2–6: Metacognition. Specifically, this involves identifying the main ideas (based on the importance of idea units) and being aware of their significance.

Questions 7–11: Comprehension products. These questions probe comprehension as an outcome, based on a taxonomy of answers required. Question 7 is simple recall; 8 is simple inference; 9 is more complex inference; 10 is evaluation; and 11 asks for an interpretation.

Questions 12–16: Strategies and awareness. These questions investigate the use of strategies, and awareness of those strategies. Question 12 is related to identification of an unknown word. Question 13 asks for construction of meaning and 14 probes into how information is extracted from the text. Questions 15 and 16 are related to strategies of synthesising information and making inferences.

4.5 Assessment of L2 (English) reading proficiency

4.5.1 *Supplementary Tests of Achievement in Reading (STAR)*

Schools as a group used the STAR tests as data because they provide a recognised, standardised measure of reading comprehension which can be reliably compared across schools (Elley 2001). These were designed to supplement the assessments that the teachers make about students' "close" reading ability in Grades 4–9 (Elley 2001). In Grades 4–6, the test consists of four sub-tests measuring word recognition (decoding of familiar words through identification with familiar pictures), sentence comprehension (completing sentences with appropriate words), paragraph comprehension (replacing words which have been deleted from the text) and vocabulary range (finding synonyms for underlined words). In Grades 7–9, students complete two additional subtests: language of advertising (identifying emotive words from a series of sentences) and reading different genres or styles of writing (selecting phrases in paragraphs which best fit the purpose and style of the writer). Both tests have high reliability and validity (Elley 2001; Reid & Elley 1991).

4.5.2 *Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT)*

Reported here too are outcome data on the revised PAT in Reading (Reid & Elley 1991). These measure both factual and inferential comprehension of prose material in Grades 4–9. Past evidence had shown that Pasifika and Māori students had low achievement on the inferential component of PAT (McNaughton et al. 2006), so re-examining this in Samoan bilingual classrooms seemed to be appropriate. The PAT consists of prose passages of 100–300 words followed by multi-choice options. The passages are narrative, expository and descriptive, and different year levels work with different combinations of these. The proportion of factual to inferential items per passage is approximately 50%-50% in each year level. The maximum raw scores for both factual items and inferential items were approximately 20 (Reid & Elley 1991).

5. Results

Results were analysed quantitatively using frequencies, descriptive and inferential statistics in terms of patterns of achievement in reading comprehension across grade levels, including content analysis to determine student strengths and weaknesses.

5.1 L1 oral language: General patterns and development across grades

Overall, students performed slightly above the midpoint of 3 on the retelling task for L1 oral language (M = 3.80, SD = 2.09, n = 147) and performed equally on the two components of vocabulary and sentence structure (M = 1.87, SD = 1.04 and M = 1.93, SD = 1.09 respectively), but with large standard deviations (Table 1).

Table 1. L1 oral component mean scores and standard deviations (total group n = 147)

L1 oral component	Mean	SD
Vocabulary	1.87	1.04
Sentence	1.93	1.09
Total	3.80	2.09

A gradual development in performance on the oral assessment was noted from Grades 4 to 6 with a noticeable drop among the Grade 7 group (Figure 1) and a lesser drop for Grade 5. While the latter drop seems contradictory, the general pattern is that development is lower at these grade levels before peaking at Grade 6. Grade 6 students had the highest scores in the language measure (M = 4.77, SD = 1.47) and highest again in componential scores (sentence structure, M = 2.46, SD = 0.66; vocabulary, M = 2.31, SD = *0.85*).

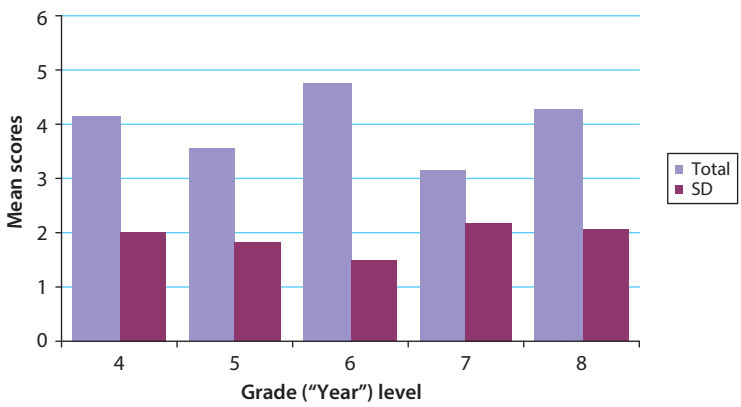

Figure 1. Mean oral language scores by grade level

In terms of sentence structures, the data indicate that the majority of students in each year level were in the VM (fluent) category (overall mean percentage in VM m = 41.04%). There were no Grade 6 students and a very low percentage (6.3%) of Grades 4 and 5 students in the OT categories (Figure 2) indicating that these students had little difficulty with sentences when retelling stories in Samoan, and that they therefore had a high level of control over their first language development.

The average percentages of students in the vocabulary categories were close to those of sentence structure (Figure 3). For example, 39% of students were in the fluent (VM) category and almost 25% in the middle vocabulary range (VF). There was a higher percentage (27%) in the beginner (VA) category compared to those in this category for sentence structure (19%). Similar to the sentence structure figures, there were no Grade 6 students in the no words (OT) category, indicating that word knowledge in Samoan was not a weakness for this grade level.

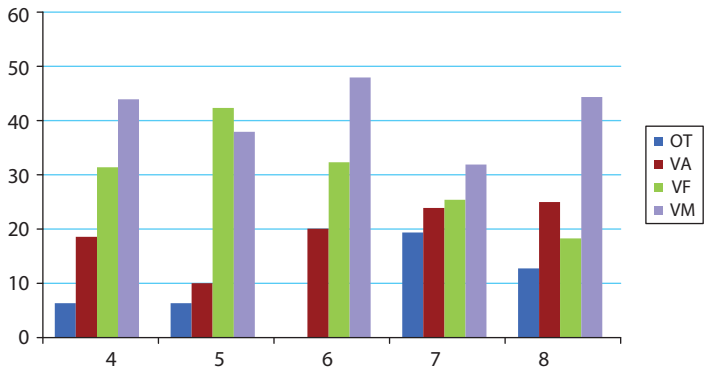

Figure 2. Average percentage (by grades) of fluency obtained for sentence structure in Samoan

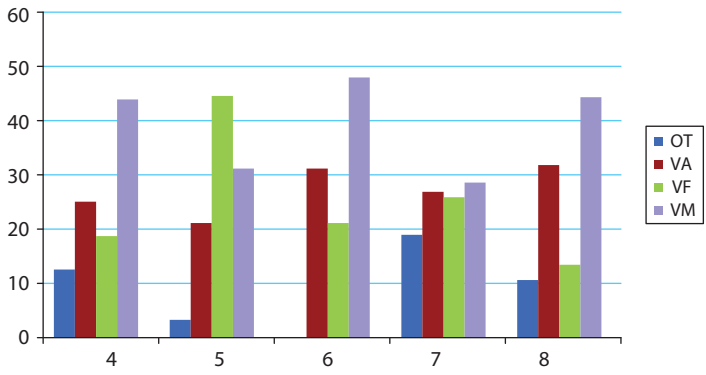

Figure 3. Average percentage of fluency obtained in word vocabulary in Samoan

However, it is necessary to examine this finding against the figures for L1 reading comprehension.

There are a few aspects from the analysis that are especially worth noting. One is the slump at Grade 7 for both components, which also echoes a drop in development in the L1 reading comprehension as noted below. It should be noted, however, that the numbers of children represented in the Grade 7 and 8 levels were double the numbers from the earlier years, and that School A – which drew from primary schools that did not have bilingual classes – had Samoan-medium classes only at Grades 7 and 8. This would account for the drop at Grade 7. The other aspect is the pattern of Grade 8 students in both components. In both sentence structure and vocabulary, there were more students in the OT category – who could not verbally retell using a sentence (16%) or lacked sufficient words to retell (14.7%) – than at younger levels (Figures 2 and 3).

5.2 L1 reading comprehension: General patterns and development across grades

The students varied in their performance on the 16 individual questions. The average student had difficulty answering Questions 2–6 and Questions 13, 14, and 16 (Figure 4).

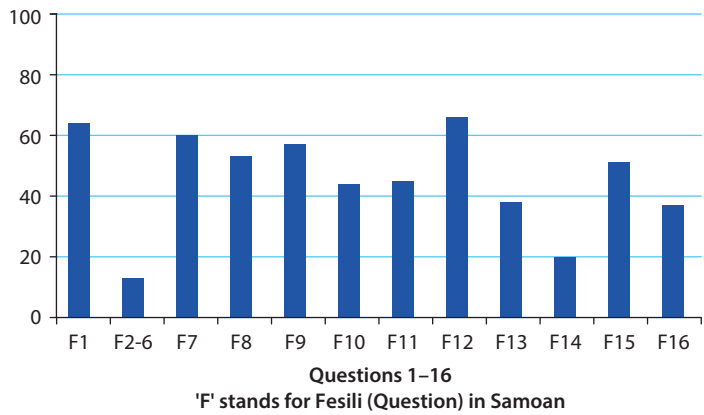

Figure 4. Percentage of students answering individual questions correctly

Question 12 (identifying an unknown word) and Question 1 (activating background knowledge), recorded the highest percentages of correct responses at 66% and 64% respectively. A simple recall (Question 7) was next highest with 60% of correct responses, followed by 57% on more a complex inference question (Question 9) and 53% on a simple inference question (Question 8). While these

bilingual students were able to activate background knowledge and could recall facts and identify unknown words, they had difficulty decoding these unknown words in Samoan, even in context, as evidenced in the low percentages of correct responses for Question 14 (20%) and Question 16 (37%). Both questions asked students to check and evaluate their answers and to consider how they would help a fellow student get the correct answer from the text. Questions 2–6, which collectively asked students to identify five or more main points in the story, had a very low score (13%).

To more closely investigate the development across grades, the 16 questions were grouped into their main comprehension components. A trend across grade levels was that although there was a steady development in L1 reading comprehension for younger students, a marked drop-off occurred for older students at Grade 7, a trend similar to the L1 oral components. Table 2 shows this drop across each of the reading components.

Table 2. L1 reading comprehension component correct responses: Mean averages across grade levels

Question/s	Component	Grade Level				
		4	5	6	7	8
1	Activating Prior Knowledge	39.5	64.7	75.0	59.7	73.4
2–6	Metacognition	42.2	38.3	80.5	60.6	77.0
7–11	Comprehension Products	48.9	60.5	70.2	48.7	51.3
12–16	Strategies and Awareness	32.6	43.0	67.9	41.8	39.9

The performance in reading comprehension in L1 on the graded texts was consistent with the gradients of difficulty according to the experts' judgements. There was a spread of scores ($SD = 8.57$) and the mean score across the two narratives for reading comprehension was 15.68 ($n = 157$). Again, there was a consistent increase in scores from Grade 4 to 6 but again a dramatic drop in scores at Grade 7 (Table 3).

Generally the students had similar accuracy levels on the components from Grade 4 to Grade 8, but there was a noticeable drop in percentages of students passing each component in Grade 7 (Table 2). A number of reasons can be advanced for this pattern. The Grade 7 and Grade 8 students were given the more difficult narratives and hence the pattern of dropping may reflect that increased difficulty. However, it was also the case that Grade 8 students had more mixed language instructional backgrounds (shown by the oral assessments). The baseline measures of the sub-tests on the reading comprehension measures in L2 (English) also showed lower scores in Grade 7 and Grade 8 which may have been due to the

Table 3. L1 mean (M) oral scores and comprehension scores across grade levels and individual dimensions

		Grade level					Total
		4	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	*M*
Oral							
	N	19	16	13	55	44	147
Vocabulary(3)[1]	*M*	2.00	1.75	2.31	1.56	2.11	1.87
	SD	(1.05)	(0.86)	(0.85)	(1.07)	(1.04)	(1.04)
Sentence Structure (3)	*M*	2.16	1.81	2.46	1.56	2.16	1.93
	SD	(1.01)	(1.05)	(0.66)	(1.13)	(1.06)	(1.09)
Total (6)	*M*	4.16	3.56	4.77	3.13	4.27	3.80
	SD	(2.03)	(1.82)	(1.48)	(2.16)	(2.06)	(2.09)
Comprehension							
	N	24	13	13	62	45	157
Prior Knowledge (2)	*M*	0.79	1.31	1.54	1.00	1.60	1.21
	SD	(0.83)	(0.85)	(0.78)	(0.81)	(0.72)	(0.84)
Main Ideas (10)	*M*	2.50	2.62	4.85	3.29	7.13	4.34
	SD	(3.34)	(3.69)	(4.04)	(3.35)	(3.12)	(3.81)
Products (10)	*M*	5.04	5.23	7.54	4.48	6.89	5.57
	SD	(3.57)	(2.92)	(1.27)	(2.97)	(2.48)	(3.03)
Awareness (10)	*M*	3.25	4.54	7.23	3.87	5.42	4.55
	SD	(2.47)	(2.96)	(2.09)	(3.14)	(2.30)	(2.92)
Total (32)	*M*	11.58	13.69	21.15	12.65	21.04	15.68
	SD	(8.77)	(8.45)	(5.71)	(8.37)	(5.78)	(8.57)

[1] Possible total scores for each dimension included in brackets.

changed format, but also might reflect the lower language levels (see Amituanai-Toloa 2005).

5.3 Relationships: L1 oral and L1 reading comprehension

As expected, within the total group of Samoan children in the bilingual classes there was a significant positive correlation between their oral language scores in Samoan and their reading comprehension scores in Samoan ($r(133) = 0.55$, $p < .001$) (Table 4).

Table 4. Intercorrelation between oral and reading comprehension dimensions

Dimensions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Oral Score	–	.98(**)	.98(**)	.55(**)	.22(*)	.30(**)	.60(**)	.60(**)
2. Oral – Sentence Structure		–	.92(**)	.54(**)	.23(**)	.28(**)	.58(**)	.55(**)
3. Oral – Vocabulary			–	.55(**)	.20(*)	.31(**)	.59(**)	.55(**)
4. Comprehension Score				–	.48(**)	.83(**)	.86(**)	.82(**)
5. Comprehension – Prior Knowledge					–	.37(**)	.38(**)	.24(**)
6. Comprehension – Main Ideas						–	.54(**)	.47(**)
7. Comprehension – Products							–	.69(**)
8. Comprehension – Awareness								–

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$
Correlation between Dimension 1–3 were based on n = 148.
Correlation on Oral Scores (Dimension 1–3) were based on n = 148.
Correlation on Oral Scores (Dimension 1–3 vs. Comprehension Scores (Dimension 4–8) were based on $n = 133$.
Correlation on Comprehension Scores (Dimension 4–8) were based on $n = 158$.

This indicates that the better the L1 oral ability of a student, the better his or her reading comprehension, and vice versa. L1 oral ability was most significantly related to a child's L1 product as well as strategic and awareness in comprehension, both correlations being 0.60. In terms of individual dimensions, the sentence structure and vocabulary both had positive relationships with each dimension of comprehension. However, the relationships between main ideas in comprehension and the two dimensions of oral ability were of smaller magnitude albeit significant.

5.4 L2 reading comprehension

Inferential and factual questions in the PAT and subtest scores in STAR were analysed. This analysis was based on the cross sectional sample at the beginning of 2003 followed by longitudinal samples to the end of 2004. After two years of the intervention, gains were made by both bilingual and mainstream Samoan students. The gains in stanines across four time points are shown in Table 5. The overall gain by the bilingual students ($M = 1.13$ stanine, $SD = 1.10$ stanine) was significantly higher than the gain made by the mainstream students ($M = 0.81$ stanine, $SD = 1.38$, $t = 8.44$, $p < .01$). The pattern of gains in the table also suggests that the predictable lag in development in L2 in the bilingual classrooms was

Table 5. Mean achievement (STAR) in stanines across grade levels over two years (T1–T4): Samoan Bilingual (SB) and Samoan Mainstream (SM) students

Grade level	Instruction (*n*)		Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4	Gain T1–T4
4	SB	*M*	2.50	3.00	3.60	4.50	2.00
	(*n* = 10)	*SD*	0.85	0.82	0.97	1.08	0.94
	SM	*M*	3.44	3.56	4.21	4.42	0.98
	(*n* = 48)	*SD*	1.30	1.29	1.43	1.70	1.14
5	SB	*M*	2.5	3.3	3.8	3.9	1.40
	(*n* = 10)	*SD*	0.97	1.34	1.23	0.88	1.17
	SM	*M*	3.62	4.11	4.00	4.02	0.40
	(*n* = 45)	*SD*	1.45	1.51	1.64	1.71	1.50
6	SB	*M*	2.42	3	2.92	4.08	1.67
	(*n* = 12)	*SD*	1.51	1.76	1.16	1.51	0.65
	SM	*M*	2.29	3.33	3.08	3.17	0.88
	(*n* = 24)	*SD*	1.43	1.61	1.38	1.37	1.23
7	SB	*M*	2.89	3.34	3.57	3.51	0.63
	(*n* = 35)	*SD*	1.18	1.24	1.22	1.17	1.00
	SM	*M*	2.63	3.50	3.76	3.68	1.05
	(*n* = 38)	*SD*	1.28	1.41	1.63	1.61	1.54
8[a]	SB	*M*	2.85	3.69	–	–	0.85
	(*n* = 39)	*SD*	1.29	1.54	–	–	0.93
	SM	*M*	2.91	3.82	–	–	0.91
	(*n* = 45)	*SD*	1.26	1.84	–	–	1.24
Total[b]	SB	*M*	2.69	3.22	3.49	3.82	1.13
	(*n* = 67)	*SD*	1.17	1.29	1.19	1.22	1.10
	SM	*M*	3.12	3.67	3.86	3.93	0.81
	(*n* = 155)	*SD*	1.45	1.45	1.57	1.68	1.38

[a] Grade students left schools at the end of the first year.
[b] Excludes Grade 8 students. Source: Amituanai-Toloa, McNaughton, & Lai 2009)

reduced such that by the end of Grade 5 (Time 4 for the Grade 4 cohort) students were at similar levels to their mainstream peers.

The developmental lag from lower Grade levels and a catch-up at Grade 6 in the STAR test for SB students parallels the pattern in the PAT assessment (Table 6). PAT mean scores on factual and inferential questions were identical across Grade levels, with maximum raw scores for both item types approximately 20 (Reid & Elley 1991). This suggests that students experienced similar difficulties

in answering factual and inferential questions. There was a significant correlation between factual and inferential items ($r = 0.72$, $p < .01$).

Table 6. Means (and standard deviations) of PAT factual and inferential questions across grade levels at baseline Time 1 (Samoan bilingual and Samoan mainstream students)

		Factual questions		Inferential questions		
Grade level	**n**	**Bilingual**	**Mainstream**	**Bilingual**	**Mainstream**	
4	21	2.52	5.59	2.90	4.99	70
		(1.40)	(2.83)	(1.52)	(2.51)	
5	14	4.64	5.85	4.29	4.76	99
		(2.50)	(3.13)	(2.64)	(2.56)	
6	20	5.49	5.88	5.50	5.99	91
		(2.68)	(3.31)	(2.66)	(2.84)	
7	52	6.10	6.00	6.15	6.57	95
		(2.74)	(2.89)	(2.67)	(2.78)	
8	53	6.79	6.12	7.07	5.99	93
		(3.23)	(2.88)	(3.13)	(2.78)	
Total	160	5.64	5.89	5.80	5.66	448
		(3.05)	(0.17)	(3.02)	(0.67)	

Source: Amituanai-Toloa, McNaughton & Lai (2009)

6. Discussion

The general aim of this paper has been to argue that Samoan language has a crucial place and role to play in the teaching, learning and success of Samoan students in Aotearoa New Zealand schools. As is evident in the study described here, Samoan students who come from low socio-economic backgrounds and have been instructed in both Samoan and English in bilingual classrooms can achieve as highly as Samoan students in mainstream (monolingual English) classrooms.

The profile of STAR and PAT baseline L2 achievement, for example, shows that Samoan bilingual student achievement lags behind that of Samoan mainstream students at the beginning but that they later catch up to their mainstream peers at Grade 6 and progress further by Grade 8. The stanine gains made by the longitudinal cohort of bilingual students who sat the STAR tests at all four time points were shown to be higher than mainstream longitudinal cohorts who also

sat the tests at the same time points. On the PAT, bilingual students were found to score low on inferential questions compared to mainstream students, although both groups were high on factual questions.

The purpose of examining the L1 achievement of bilingual students was to see if there were any relationships with their L2 achievements. The findings from the L1 assessments suggest that there are aspects of L1 that might be related to L2 development and academic success. For example, the L1 oral achievement on sentence structure and vocabulary measures were only average, such that the lack in these L1 components might be directly related to the low scores on the inferential component of the PAT and the paragraph comprehension component (Subtest 3) of STAR; hence the L2 developmental "lag" in the lower grade levels. These low scores might also be attributed to the inability of students to identify "main ideas" in texts; hence the low metacognition of bilingual students found in L1 reading comprehension achievement. Intercorrelations, however, confirm the positive relationships between the L1 oral component and L1 reading comprehension and vice versa. There is an indication here that language development for second language learners is complex and needs to be understood further for teaching and learning purposes. The study managed to scrape the surface of this development, but a deeper understanding of its complexity, particularly for Samoan children, needs to be broken down and unpacked in a planned, systematic way through further research.

These findings suggest that Samoan students in bilingual classrooms need more time in this type of education, what international research refers to as "late exit", to fully see its benefits. Students need to be continually instructed in both L1 and L2, albeit during part of the day, to come to terms with concepts and applications in both languages, as well as to strengthen their cultural and linguistic abilities necessary for identity development and academic success. But there are also provisos, one of which is effective instruction, and another that the time in bilingual education needs to be at least six to eight years in order to see its many long-term benefits.

The evidence shows that there is a place for Samoan language in the education of Samoan students in Aotearoa New Zealand. But this is dependent on the New Zealand government's validation of this type of education through a Pasifika language policy whereby schools should be given greater responsibility, and parents and their children should take greater responsibility, for bilingual education in the primary school years and beyond. The author's advocacy for bilingual education for Samoan school students is based on her Samoan linguistic and cultural experience, as well as the evidence in this study, which shows that strength in L1 can provide opportunities for linguistic success in L2.

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Appendix

Samples of assessments in Samoan and English

Nana i le fanua (Samoan)

Fesili 1
O a ni mea e te mafaufau i ai pe a e fa'alogo i le ulutala "Nana i le fanua"
(Maka (1)

Fesili 2–6
Afai e te toe fa'amatalaina lenei tala i sau uo, o a ni manatu taua o le tala o le a e fa'amatalaina ina ia matua malamalama ai lava lau uo?
manatu 1
(maka 1)
manatu 2
(maka 1)
manatu 3
(maka 1)
manatu 4
(maka 1)
manatu 5
(maka 1)
o nisi manatu

Fesili 7
O le a le mea na nana i le fanua?
(maka 1)

Fesili 8
Aisea na nana ai?
(maka 1)

Fesili 9
Aisea na ofo ai i la'ua ina ua la fa'alogoina le tagi mai o le tamaiititi?
(maka 1)

Fesili 10
Aisea na matua fiafia ai i la'ua i le mea ua la mauaina?
(maka 1)

Fesili 11
Fai mai le tala "Ua matua le mafa'anaina ma i'u lava ina moe tagi le tina"
O le a le uiga o lea fa'aupuga?
(maka 1)

Fesili 12–14
Fai mai le tala "A ea le igoa o Mauailetafaoata"?

(12) Afai e i ai se upu e te leiloa tusi i lalo
(13) Mata o le a se uiga o lena upu ua e tusia i lalo?
(maka 1)
(14) Afai e leiloa e lau uo le uiga o le upu, o a ni mea e te ta'ua i lau uo e iloa ai e ia le uiga o lea upu?
(maka 1)

Fesili 15–16
(15) E fa'apea ona e iloa le lagona ua o'o i ai le ulugali'i ina ua maua le pepe?
(maka 1)
(16) Ta'u i lau uo le auala na e iloa ai le lagona ua o'o i ai le ulugali'i?
(maka 1)

Hidden in the Land

Question 1.
When you hear the title of this story: 'Hidden in the Land' –
What do you think of?
Answer: Treasure/something bad; what I did/do. Score (1)

Questions 2–6
Imagine you wanted to tell a friend this story so they really understood it. Which parts would you make sure you told them?

idea 1 (score 1)
idea 2 (score 1)
idea 3 (score 1)
idea 4 (score 1)
idea 5 (score 1)
other

Question 7
What was hidden in the land?
Answer: A bloodclot/little girl/baby (score 1)

Question 8
Why was it hidden?
Answer: Because it was not human/only blood (score 1)

Question 9
Why were they surprised when they heard the little child cry?
Answers: they never expected the clot to be a child/they thought it was someone else's
(score 1)

Question 10
Why did the old people feel ecstatic at their new finding?
Answer: because they've always wanted a child. (score 1)

Question 11
In the story it says '…She was inconsolable and cried herself to sleep'
What do you think that means?
Answer: she cried non-stop/nobody could make her stop crying (score 1)

Question 12–14
The story said "What about Mauailetafaoata," thought the old woman

(12) Is there a word or words there you didn't know?
Answer: identifies 'Mauailetafaoata' (score 1)

(13) What do you think 'Mauailetafaoata' means?
Answer: found at daybreak/dawn/morning (score 1)

(14) How would you tell a friend to work out what it means?
Describes using context (e.g. from the words referring to
a specific idea such as when they were looking for name (a) the time of day
(b) appearance (c) what the couple were feeling. (score 1)

Question 15–16
(15) How do you know how the couple felt?
Describes the happiness the couple felt (e.g. danced, laughing etc.) (score 1)

(16) How would you tell a friend to work out what it means?
Describes how you think about what the sentences say, putting together,
figuring from sentences.

TELL ME/TA'U MAI PEPA FA'AMAU

Tausaga i le a'oga
_____

Igoa: _____ **Aso:** _____ **Potu:** _____ **A'oga:** _____

Toe Ta'u Mai **FAUINA O FUAIUPU**

AOFA'I O MAKA

Oge Tala Leai se fa'amatalaga. Le mafai ona fa'amatala	**Vaega Amata** Le lava le feso'ota'iga o fuaiupu ma le fa'amatalaina o le tala. Tasi le manatu autu na maua mai.	**Vaega Feololo** Maua le feso'ota'iga ae pupu'u fuaiupu. E iai le tomai e fa'amatala ai mea tutupu i tagata ma nofoaga ae le lava upu i fuaiupu e fa'amatala ai. 2–3 manatu na maua mai.	**Veaga Matutua** Tele manatu auiliili i fuaiupu i fa'amatalaga. Manino le fa'aaogaina o fa'aupuga mai le amataga e o'o i le fa'ai'uga. Lava le tomai e fa'amatala ai ma lagona. 3+ manatu autu na maua

UPU FA'AAOGA

Oge Upu Leai ni upu e iloa.	**Veaga Amata** Fa'aagoaina o upu masani e fa'aigoaina mea (labels), nauna, soanauna ma veape	**Vaega Feololo** Fa'aagoaina o upu e fa'aigoa ai mea (labels), ae vaivai upu e fa'amatalaina ai mea tutupu ma tagata (descriptive)	**Vaega Matutua** Lautele le iloa o upu fa'aaoga e fa'amata auiliili ma manino ai mea e tutupu ma tagata ma nofoaga. Fa'amatala ma lagona

TELL ME/TA'U MAI RECORD SHEET
HIDDEN IN THE LAND

YEAR LEVEL

Name: _____ **Date:** _____ **Room No:** _____ **School:** _____

Retelling **SENTENCE STRUCTURE**

TOTAL SCORE

1. There lived in the village of Falealupo, Savai'i an old couple. One day the old woman had a sore stomach and her pain was unbearable and asked her husband for help.

2. The old man did not know what to do. All he could see was the wife in so much pain.

3. The old woman told him that she was having a baby. But to their amazement, a blood clot appeared. They were so sad because they wanted a baby for a long time.

4. They gently picked up the blood clot and wrapped it in tapa cloth. They buried it near their house.

No words Cannot retell.	**Emergent** Sentences lack linkages hence unnconnected labels for objects, actions, events and characters. 1 main idea recalled	**Beginning** Sentences short and simple with ideas linked only by palin conjunctions 'and' or 'and then' But limited descriptive sentences. 2–3 main ideas present.	**Fluent** Main ideas in the story are fluently connected and structured in sentences, clauses and phrases reflecting a developed understanding of story. 3 or more ideas presented.

VOCABULARY

5. They were woken by cries of the baby. They woke up and saw a little girl standing and crying where they had buried the blood clot.

6. They brought her into the house. Full of happiness, they danced around the child and laughed heartily and loudly. They finally have a child after all these years.

7. They thought about all the beautiful names to call her. "Lalelei" "Mauailetafaoata" "Tagivale" were some of the names they thought about.

8. Finally the little girl said, "I have a name already. My name is Nafanua because you hid me in the land.

No words	**Emergent**	**Beginning**	**Fluent**	
No known words	Basic labeling, nouns, pronouns and verbs	Labels are plain but limited descriptive words	Wide range of descriptive and mood setting words	