

Ko hoku hala fononga ki he lea faka-Tonga: Examining
changing linguistic identity in Aotearoa NZ

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2023

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A dissertation submitted to
Auckland University of Technology
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

Abstract

Linguistic identity is an essential component of one's holistic identity. This holds especially true for bi/multi-lingual people. Many scholars have studied linguistic identity and have found that through its various strands, it is the key to providing a sense of connection to other people through language. When I grew up as a New Zealand-born Tongan in the 1990s and 2000s, there was a decline in the Tongan language, with children abandoning the language and only adults who had been born in Tonga speaking it fluently. Most first-generation (in New Zealand) Tongan children grew up speaking only English, the dominant language and used it on a daily basis. There was little attention on sustaining, maintaining, and revitalising the Tongan language in Aotearoa. This autoethnographic study examines my changing linguistic identity as I acquired the Tongan language in Aotearoa. I investigated how my linguistic identity has been shaped over the course of my life. I performed narrative writing to describe my *hala fononga ki he lea faka-Tonga* in Aotearoa. In addition, I was curious as to whether and why I rejected the Tongan language as a child, as well as how my parents encouraged me to learn and speak Tongan. I was *lotolotoua* about which language to acquire and use, so I chose English over Tongan. Nonetheless, I was incidentally learning the Tongan language without my knowledge. If there had been as many Tongan language nest facilities in the area where I grew up as there are now, I might have learned the Tongan language as a young child. Over time, I became *lotofekumi* because I wanted to learn more about the Tongan language to communicate with others, which led to some degree of autonomous language learning. Being surrounded by speakers of the Tongan language inspired me to learn and speak the language. This became the motivation for learning the Tongan language. I started to *loto-feinga* to learn Tongan so that I could communicate with other Tongan speakers. This is significant because it assists me in appreciating my *koloa* of the Tongan language and understanding my linguistic identity, which can support others in recognising their linguistic identity.

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List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
FOB	Fresh Off the Boat
LOL	Laugh Out Loud
MASPAC	Māori and South Pacific Arts Council
MC	Master of Ceremonies
MIT	Manukau Institute of Technology
NCEA	National Certificate of Educational Achievements
NZ	New Zealand
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Association
PTG	Proud Tongan Girl
RWC	Rugby World Cup
SMH	Shaking My Head
UoA	University of Auckland
TV	Television

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Glossary

Term	Definition
Anga Fakatonga	Tongan way of living
Faka'apa'apa	Respect
Faka'apa'apa'i	To show respect
Fakahihiki'i	To praise or honour
Fiapālagi	The Samoan term for want to be pālangi or pakeha
Fiefia	To rejoice, to be happy or glad or joyful
Fiepālangi	The Tongan term for want to be pālangi or pakeha
Hala fononga ki he lea faka-Tonga	Journey towards the Tongan language
Hala 'o e fononga	Journey or path
Kāinga	Relation or relative
Kiekie	Tongan mat worn around the waist
Koloa	Treasure, goods, what one values
Lea Faka-Tonga	Tongan language
Loloto	Deep, deeply, depth
Loto	Inner, inside, centre
Loto-feinga	Habitually ready to try and try again
Loto-fekumi	To look for, to seek
Loto-foaki	Giftng unreservedly, giving from the heart
Lotolotoua	Of two minds, undecided, in doubt
Mā	To feel shame, to be ashamed
Māfana	Warm, warmth inwardly and subjectively
Māhu'ingamālie	Meaningful

Mālie	Good, pleasing, pleasant
Nifo koula	Gold tooth
Ngutu-lau	Habitually gossiping
Pukepuke fonua	Hold on to our language, culture, land, and people
Pule taha	Formal attire worn to church or events
Siofi, siosiofi, sio loto	To look at steadily, to reflect on
Tala'ofa	Amnesty
Talanoa	To talk, to tell stories, relate experiences
Talanoa'i	To tell, tell about, relate and divulge
Ta'ovala	Another mat worn around the waist
Tu'i	King
Tu'unga	Status

Attestation of authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signature

Date

Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank The Heavenly Father for the strength, protection, and guidance he has blessed me with through this journey. All glory and honour to you alone because without you I would not have been able to pursue these studies. “I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all the marvellous things you have done” (Psalms 9:1)

Thank you to my supervisor, Sharon Harvey for supervising me during this study. You introduced me to linguistic identity and linguistic terms that I was not aware of. Thank you for all the *talanoa*, proofreading, editing and feedback during this study. It was a slow start, but your encouragement and assistance helped me push through to make it to the end. This was a tough journey with many challenges along the way, but with your help I have gained so much.

Mālō ‘aupito to Dr. Linita Manu’atu for always giving me the chance to sit down and *talatalanoa* about ways I could reflect about my experiences. You reminded me that everything leads back to the *loto*, ‘what does your heart tell you’, which I was able to incorporate into this research. I am forever grateful for you doc and your passion for the Tongan language in Aotearoa.

Thank you to my *kāinga ngāue* Enriching Pasifika Whānau, Enriching Otara Early Learning Services and ‘Api Fakakoloa Educational Services. Thank you to management for letting me take time off to focus on my studies and also the teachers at the centre and coordinators at the homebased for the continuous *talanoa* with the Tongan vernacular I could include in this paper. I am truly appreciative of you all. *‘Ofa lahi atu*.

Thank you to my *kāinga*:

Nena Sela + Nena Ofa, Maketi + Isa and Ana Sisifa Ma’u + Tupoumoheofo for always taking care of my kids when I have no one else to call. Always accepting my last-minute requests for babysitting and words of encouragement “*kuo ke mei ‘osi Lupe ‘ai ai leva ke lava*”.

My siblings and their partners and children – Taaniela + Rachel, Vililausi'i + Henga, Antonio + Sisilia and Tii + Pina – thank you for taking turns looking after my children so I could spend long days and nights in the study rooms.

My babes – 'Ailine Solo Tukutukunga – Thank you for proofreading my work especially the Tongan terms and correcting the spelling. Thank you for sticking by me each step of the way I am truly thankful to have you by my side.

My parents – Pita Lasike and 'Ana Sisifa Lasike (RIP) for always supporting me with what I want to do. Thank you for the life lessons and teachings as I am who I am today because of you both. Your love and affection has encouraged me to do better and be better. I love you both so much.

Last but not least, my rock – Sione Kaveinga and my gems – Sione Lisiate, Liumeitupou, Antonio, Taua and Vililausi'i. Thank you Kaveinga for always holding it down for our little family so I could pursue this spontaneous dream that I wanted to do. I know I caught you off guard with my acceptance letter to study but look, we made it lol. Thank you to my children for challenging me every day with your questions and curiosity. Your daily challenges become my achievements and I did this for US.

Mālō 'Aupito

Tu'a 'ofa atu

Chapter 1 Introduction

This dissertation presents an autoethnographic investigation into the author's personal journey with the Tongan language in the context of Aotearoa. The study aims to explore my linguistic identity and the various factors that have impacted its development throughout my life.

About me

Um Mālō e lelei and hello

Um Mālō e lelei and hello

Ko hoku hinga ko Talilupe Lufe

My name is Talilupe Lufe

Oku ha'u 'eku tamai mei Niutoua

My dad comes from Niutoua

Pea ha'u eku fa'e mei Neiafu Vava'u

My mum comes from Neiafu, Vava'u

Pea ko au 'oku ou ha'u au mei Otala

And me, I come from Otara

My name is Talilupe Lufe, and I am a Tongan born in New Zealand to migrant parents. I am Tongan first, as it is a part of my ethnicity and heritage before I am a New Zealander, where I was born and raised. The introduction above is how I would present myself identifying as a Tongan, but acknowledging Otara as where I am from in Aotearoa. This is because growing up here my primary language was English with little understanding of Tongan, where Te Reo Māori was also taught in schools. I was not familiar with how to introduce myself and I chose Otara to represent where I came from. Additionally, I used to feel that it was important to state that in my formalities as it would help deliver the message that I grew up in Aotearoa. Having little knowledge of the Tongan language and not being able to speak, I was confused about my linguistic identity as a New Zealand-born Tongan. I will present a brief background of myself, which is a significant component of assisting the reader to understand the reason for this research.

My parents were born and raised in Tonga and later migrated to Aotearoa in the early 1980s when they were teenagers. They were both fluent Tongan speakers with little English understanding. However, my parents wanted to adapt to the Aotearoa settings

and began to familiarise themselves with the English language. They felt that they had to learn English because of the cost of living in Aotearoa, and the only way to get money is through work. My parents saw English as a language of survival (McCarty et al., 2009), which most migrants would relate to as it is how they enquire about job vacancies and get through interviews. Through this adapting, my parents used a lot of translanguaging (Seals & Olsen-Reeder, 2020), which is the use of both Tongan and English in one sentence, with us children. Consequently, this resulted in me using English only at home and out in the community. The Tongan language was then only used by my parents and the elders.

1.1 Focus

Over the years, there has been a declining language shift in the Tongan language. Tongans who were born in New Zealand were not valuing their native or home language (Khan, 2020), which is the first language they learn, as English was and still is the dominant language. I was not aware of the significance of understanding my linguistic identity and how the Tongan language supported my sense of belonging (Oakes, 2013). Therefore, I wanted to research about my *hala fononga ki he lea faka-Tonga* and understand my linguistic identity that was shaped and continues to form. It is also important to recognise the factors that helped in shaping my linguistic identity. I will present how I went from a passive Tongan language speaker to a now active Tongan language learner.

1.2 Relevance

The relevance of this study is assisting in understanding one's linguistic identity through self-reflection of personal experiences. From this research I have found that there is a dearth of studies around linguistic identity and how it has been shaped for the Pasifika community (Kennedy, 2019). Most studies of the Tongan language in Aotearoa have been carried out in maintaining, sustaining and revitalising the language (Hill, 2017; McCaffery & Tuafuti, 2003; Seals, 2017; Starks, 2006; Taumoeofolau et al., 2002; Vita, n.d.); however, I am yet to find an autoethnography of linguistic identity which focus on the Tongan language. This study is a helpful contribution to the literature because other New Zealand-born Tongans and first speakers of home or native languages may not value their language or start learning their language later in

life. Therefore, others who read this dissertation might relate to this and may find some guidance in my writing.

1.3 Questions and objectives

To explore my changing linguistic identity and *hala fononga ki he lea faka-Tonga*, I have four questions. My primary question is:

- How has my linguistic identity been shaped throughout my life?

Supporting the primary question are the next three questions:

- How can I talk about my *hala fononga ki he lea faka-Tonga* in Aotearoa?
- Did I reject my Tongan language at a young age?
- How did my parents help me with my *hala fononga ki he lea faka-Tonga*?

These questions were developed to assist me in this autoethnography of my linguistic identity through narrative writing and poetry. Both narrative writing and poetry tell a story that will express emotions, feelings and practises, which I can re-live and re-experience (Hung & Law, 2015) which will foster self-reflection. Reading the narratives and poems and having these questions will help me understand my linguistic identity, and *talanoa* about my *hala 'o e fononga* ('Alatini-Vite, 2022) with the Tongan language. I can further understand why I chose not to learn the Tongan language and recognise ways my parents helped me with this journey.

1.4 Overview

1.4.1 Chapter two

Chapter two is the context chapter, which focuses on the *hala fononga ki he lea faka-Tonga* in Aotearoa. Additionally, it discusses the early migration of Tongans to New Zealand and how the Tongan language was introduced and then maintained.

1.4.2 Chapter three

The third chapter is the literature review where I critically review literature on linguistic identity with factors that helped shaped it. In this chapter I will also review literature on incidental language learning, autonomous language learning and

motivational language learning, as these are important to understanding my linguistic identity journey.

1.4.3 Chapter four

This chapter addresses the research methodology, which includes the methods I will follow to generate the data needed. There is also attention to the analysis that I have used and why I chose this narrative analysis for this research.

1.4.4 Chapter five

Chapter five is the findings and discussion chapter, which include the narratives and poems chosen for this study. These narratives and poems are significant for my *siofi*, *siosiofi* and *sio loto* of my personal experiences. Then the discussion section will analyse these narratives and poems using three *lotos* which include *lotolotoua*, *loto-fekumi* and *loto-feinga*.

1.4.5 Chapter six

Chapter six is the conclusion where I will summarise the research including limitations, implications, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2 Context

This chapter will discuss the history of the Tongan language and the people in Aotearoa to how it is now. This is important to understand how the language started from the early migration of Tongans to New Zealand and how it was introduced into the community. I will also address the Tongan language hierarchy as it connects to this research with regard to being able to understand the different levels of formality in the language. Finally, I will consider how Tongan is practised currently in the community and in education. This chapter is relevant to this study as it connects to my research question of how my Tongan linguistic identity has been shaped in my life. Therefore, this is the journey of the language in New Zealand, in connection to my experiences with the Tongan language throughout my life.

2.1 Tongan migration to Aotearoa

Tongans have visited Aotearoa for over a century. The late Queen Sālote frequently travelled to Aotearoa in the 1950s with a few Tongans who were her kāinga or people who took care of her. Several of Queen Sālote's cousins went on to education in New Zealand together with some of the chief's children. Queen Sālote's helpers got married here in Aotearoa and others found employment (Taumoefolau, 2015) as it was a gateway to a better life. In 1960, the New Zealand Government encouraged Pasifika people to migrate to Aotearoa to fill labour market shortages in industrial and manufacturing work (Matika et al., 2021). From 1960 – 1970, there is an estimation of 2251 Tongans migrating to Aotearoa on a work permit (Statistics NZ, 1964). At this time, New Zealand's industrialisation and manufacturing were increasing and national development projects were in the early stages of being planned (Cowling, 2002). Subsequently, Tongan males' focus was on agricultural and forestry work, while the females were domestic workers (Auckland Council, 2023). Tongan people born in Tonga saw New Zealand's calls for migration as an opportunity for a better life and particularly for the education of their children (Fatani, 2019), which the Tongan people perceive as the key to success in life (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2021). Moreover, Tongans chose to migrate to New Zealand as the income was much higher than in Tonga (Stillman et al., 2015). In New Zealand, immigrants were given the opportunity to study professions in tertiary institutions (Taumoefolau, 2015).

Therefore, Tongan immigrants took this opening to establish their lives in Aotearoa for themselves and their families.

However, Tongans who migrated to Aotearoa for work or study long-term projects were given very short visas of only 3 to 6 months (Ahlburg & Brown, 1998), which resulted in many overstaying in Aotearoa for work or to complete their studies. In the early 1970s, the New Zealand Prime Minister at the time had estimated 2000 Tongans staying illegally (De Bres & Campbell, 1975), which then led to the 'dawn raids' of police doing random checks of Pasifika people to make sure their work permit was still valid (Cobley, 2013). However, later in the 1970s, there was a *tala'ofa* which granted permanent resident visas for Tongans (Taumoefolau, 2015) and they took the chance to gain the resident visa. By 1986, there were 13,611 Tongans (refer to Figure 1) in Aotearoa (Statistics NZ, 2010). With these larger numbers, they were able to form churches, which were led in the Tongan language.

Figure 1 *The Tongan population in New Zealand 1971 – 2001*

Year	Male	Female	Total	Percent increase
1971	590	683	1,273	
1976	2,085	1,781	3,866	203.7
1981	2,700	2,532	5,232	35.3
1986	6,969	6,642	13,611	160.1
1991	11,727	11,445	23,172	70.2
1996	15,699	15,690	31,389	35.5
2001	20,421	20,292	40,713	29.7

Copyright 2005 by R. 'Esau from Statistics NZ (1976)

2.1.1 Tongan language hierarchy

When Tongans migrated from Tonga to Aotearoa, they carried with them their language and culture, which is their *koloa*. This is important to address because I was exposed to different levels of the Tongan language when I was young and did not understand some of the words being spoken. The Tongan language has levels known as the Tongan language hierarchy (Kalavite, 2020). The three levels of the Tongan language hierarchy are *lea faka tu'i* – the language of the monarch, *lea fakahou'eiki* – the language of the nobles, and *lea tu'a* – the language of the commoners (Otsuka, 2007). Attending social gatherings or events with other people necessitates familiarity

with these three levels of speech. For instance, when addressing the *tu'i* or his family, one must *faka'apa'apa'i* them by acknowledging their presence and then *fakahihiki'i* them with compliments and praises, as it is an honour to be in their presence (Taumoefolau et al., 2013). In addition, *lea fakahou'eiki* is used when speaking to a noble or village chief in Tonga when using the language of the nobles. The nobles or chiefs are chosen descendants of the monarch and have a lower status than the king (Völkel, 2021); however, they are still addressed with respect. Then, there is *lea tu'a*, also known as the language of the commoners or *lea 'oe tatau* (Taliai, 1989), which is a language of equality. This vernacular is used among commoners and individuals of equal status. This is the language proficiency level at which Tongans converse on a daily basis. Learning about this hierarchy made me feel that there should be a way for Tongans in New Zealand to acquire the more prestigious levels of Tongan. We learn and teach the commoners level of Tongan, but it is important to learn the other two levels as it will enrich our Tongan language knowledge and confidence when speaking with others.

2.2 Tongan language history in Aotearoa

As the Pacific and Tongan population in Auckland grew, there was more demand in schools for Pacific languages and cultures to be recognised (Māhina, 1999). Several key initiatives that have supported Pacific languages and cultures are detailed here. The first is Polyfest, in 1976, Sir Edmund Hillary College held its very first Polynesian Festival in its school hall (Williams, 2022), which was first called the ASB Bank Auckland Secondary Schools Māori & Pacific Islands Cultural Festival (Manu'atu, 2000) and later changed to ASB Polyfest. This festival has gone from strength to strength and is now known as Polyfest. Polyfest now is a festival where schools come together and showcase their ethnic dances and cultures and is also a place to socially interact with others of the same ethnicity (Homolja, 2019). Polyfest first started on October 20th 1976 with four schools joining; Sir Edmund Hillary College, Mangere College, Aorere College and Seddon College (known as Western Springs College) (Manu'atu, 2000). Although the Tongan language was not yet taught at schools, the Polyfest offered an opportunity to learn the Tongan language and culture as students prepared for this event with Tongan practice, singing and dancing. Hence, programmes like the Polyfest enhance students language and culture encouraging a deeper meaning of their Tongan

knowledge (Kēpa & Manu'atu, 2008). Polyfest, which is now held every year, was the beginning of incorporating the Polynesian languages and cultures into the Aotearoa education system.

2.2.1 MASPAC

Simultaneously, the Māori And South Pacific Arts Council (MASPAC) was established in 1978 as a part of the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council (Maspac Progress, 1978). This council was founded to help Māori and Pacific people living in Aotearoa preserve and promote their cultures. Although language was not explicitly mentioned, as with all cultures, the Tongan culture cannot be discussed in separation from Tongan language (Toetu'u-Tamihere, 2014) and vice versa, as language and culture are interconnected (Sepora et al., 2012). Shortly, after its inauguration in 1980, the MASPAC group was granted \$6000 for the Tongan community to promote their language using dances, handicrafts, and Tongan traditions. Therefore, the grant was used for promoting and developing the practice and appreciation of the arts and crafts of the Tongan community (Tu Tangata, 1983).

2.2.2 Talanga newspaper

Additionally, when the Tongan immigrants were settling into Aotearoa they started using more of the English language for work and study purposes. Overtime, they started noticing the loss of the Tongan language from continuing to learn and use the English language, whilst others did not know the English language. In the 1980s, the very first Tongan newspaper was published in Aotearoa called '*Talanga*' which was to assist in communicating with the Tongan people in Aotearoa (Talanga, 1980). Mr 'Ilolahia endeavoured to promote the Tongan language and the Tongan people wanted to preserve their Tongan knowledge as it is an important aspect of the Tongan identity (Holmes et al., 1993). The *Talanga* newspaper was published fortnightly in the Tongan and English language and distributed nationally and internationally through Aotearoa, Tonga and the Pacific (Talanga, 1980). Unfortunately, there is no update on how long the *Talanga* newspaper lasted and when it ended. However, the term '*Talanga*' is now a Tongan Research Framework (Ofanoa et al., 2015) which means "interactive talking with a purpose" (p. 335).

2.2.3 Tongan language in New Zealand schools

In 1996, records held by the Ministry of Education (P. Monahan, personal communication, June 13, 2023) show that Akoteu Tokaima'anga early childhood centre is the oldest currently active early learning service of Tongan cultural character. This early childhood centre was established in October by the Otara Tongan Methodist Church, which is still effective today with a license for 35 children aged 0 to 5 years (Education Review Office, 2019). Sir Edmund Hillary Collegiate offered the Tongan language to their students from 1995 in Senior level, which is year five to seven (McCaffery & Tuafuti, 2003). Although the Tongan language was not officially part of the curriculum, there were some schools that were teaching the Tongan language prior to this. For example, K. Fakana'ana'a-ki-Fualu (personal communication, June 13, 2023) has advised a group that the Koloa Language Fono, Mangere College was one of the first to teach the Tongan language in the 1980s as his mother was the Tongan language teacher at the time. It was not recorded in the 'system'; however, Kennedy is ecstatic in letting others know of his mother's great work being one of the first in teaching the Tongan language in school.

2.3 Tongan language in the 2000s

By the 2000s there was more determination aimed at sustaining the Tongan language in Aotearoa as the language shift to English was increasing. In the year 2000, the Ministry of Education published a guideline for Tongan language programmes (Ministry of Education, 2000). This guideline is for teachers or adults to use when teaching Tongan. It includes the Tongan alphabet, pronunciation and activities that promote the Tongan language. It is necessary to learn and teach the correct alphabet and pronunciation because some words have multiple meanings depending on pronunciation. It can be used from Early Childhood Education to Secondary School as a guideline, however, teachers can create their own Tongan language learning resource. In 2004, there was a Tongan language curriculum draft for preschool to high school, which was later officially launched in 2007 (Laban, 2007). This Tongan language curriculum offers the opportunity for students and teachers to encourage using the Tongan language with their peers and others speaking the Tongan language. Also, in June 2005 the Tongan language was registered by New Zealand Qualifications Association (NZQA) and it became a National Certificate of Educational Achievement

(NCEA) school certificate subject. NCEA is a qualification for secondary starting from level one for year five to level three for year six, which is the last three years of secondary (NZQA, 2023). Therefore, these were guides that are mainly used in schools but are also available for the public to explore the Tongan language in Aotearoa, as well as encouraging the Tongan language to others.

2.3.1 Tongan language in education currently

A report on Education Counts named Pacific language in schooling (2022) gives a brief overview of the use of the Tongan language in New Zealand schools as of July 1, 2022. This includes a table which consists of the level of learning of schools in Aotearoa using a language. From this table, I have selected the Tongan language in schools of Aotearoa to carefully explore, as it is relevant to this research. Pacific medium education and Pacific Language as separate subjects are described as two ways of learning the Pacific language, which is found in the Education Counts website (Education Counts, 2022). The results of the report are as follows: there is only one school that teaches Tongan, a primary school in Auckland that has 86 students and is a level one Tongan language medium school (refer to Table 1 for the language: level of learning). Also, eight schools in total—five primary schools in Auckland, one primary in Hastings, and two secondary schools in Auckland—teach the Tongan language to a total of 464 students for level two. Next, there are 86 pupils studying Tongan at level three in two schools, one primary and one secondary, both in Auckland. Then, level four Tongan language is taught to 311 students in five schools, including one specialised school in Tauranga, which caters to students with special needs from the ages five to twenty-five. Then we have four secondary schools in Auckland also providing learning in the Tongan language at level four. Finally, 895 pupils are taught the Tongan language in 13 schools, 11 of which are in Auckland, one each in Christchurch and Porirua at level five. This data indicates that Auckland has the majority of Tongan language teaching and learning compared to other cities of Aotearoa. The number of schools that teach and learn the Tongan language is progress into sustaining the Tongan language throughout youths schooling years.

Table 1 Education Counts Language: Level of Learning

Level of Learning describes students being taught at different levels of Pacific instruction. Each level is defined by the proportion of time the student is taught using a Pacific Language	
Level 1: 81-100%	Pacific language is the medium of instruction for 81-100% of the time (more than 20 hours per week)
Level 2: 51-80%	Pacific language is the medium of instruction for 51-80% of the time (more than 12.5 and up to 20 hours per week)
Level 3: 31-50%	Pacific language is the medium of instruction for 31-50% of the time (more than 7.5 and up to 12.5 hours per week)
Level 4: 12-30%	Pacific language is the medium of instruction for 12-30% of the time (more than 3 and up to 7.5 hours per week)
Level 5:	As a separate subject is where students are learning a Pacific language, at the Primary level (Years 1-8) for a minimum of 15 hours a year or at Secondary level (Years 9-15) for a minimum of 20 hours a year

Note: Copyright from educationcount.govt.nz/statistics

2.3.2 First Tongan language week in Aotearoa

One of the ways New Zealand has chosen to focus on languages other than English, particularly Te Reo Māori and the other Pacific languages is to promote the languages via language weeks. The first *Uike Katoanga'i 'o e Lea Fakatonga* (Tongan language week) was launched in 2011 (Parata, 2012). The Tongan language week was launched during the Rugby World Cup (RWC) in 2011, which was hosted in Aotearoa and the Tongan language committee thought it would be a good idea to launch the Tongan language week together with the RWC. They saw this as an opportunity to celebrate the RWC in Aotearoa as well as the first Tongan language week together. Additionally, the themes for the Tongan language week started in 2012 when Dr. Linita Manu'atu was appointed as chairperson. Those themes focused on '*Koe fakakoloa 'o Aotearoa 'aki 'a e...*' which translates to, 'Enriching Aotearoa with...' (Manu'atu & Tu'itahi, 2021). The main idea was to enrich Aotearoa with the Tongan language in a variety of ways

(refer to Table 2). This technique of giving a theme to each Tongan language week assists in new Tongan language learning each year that is an extension from the year before, which becomes *loloto and mahu'ingamālie* for all Tongan language learners. Dr. Linita then withdrew from the Tongan language week committee due to other commitments that she had taken interest in. The overarching theme in 2022 is *tu'uloa* which means sustainability (New Zealand Parliament, 2022). Therefore, the theme was '*Ke Tu'uloa 'a e lea faka-Tonga 'I Aotearoa*', which means 'Sustaining the Tonga Language in Aotearoa'.

Table 2 Tongan language week themes from 2012-2021

2012	<i>Ko e Fakakoloa 'o Aotearoa 'aki 'a e lea faka-Tonga</i> (Tongan language)
2013	<i>Ko e Fakakoloa 'o Aotearoa 'aki 'a e Hiva 'a e Tonga</i> (Tongan music)
2014	<i>Ko e Fakakoloa 'o Aotearoa 'aki 'a e Kai 'a e Tonga</i> (Tongan wisdom)
2015	<i>Ko e Fakakoloa 'o Aotearoa 'aki 'a e Faiva 'a e Tonga</i> (Tongan arts)
2016	<i>Ko e Fakakoloa 'o Aotearoa 'aki 'a e Loto'iTonga</i> (Tongan spirit)
2017	<i>Ko e Ta'u 'o e Fakakoloa 'o Aotearoa 'aki 'a e Nofo- 'a-Kāinga</i> (family values)
2018	<i>Ko e Ta'u 'o e Fakakoloa 'o Aotearoa 'aki 'a e 'Ofa Fonua</i> (love of duty and service to country community and people)
2019	<i>Ko e Ta'u 'o e Fakakoloa 'o Aotearoa 'aki 'a e Tāuhi Fonua</i> (Tongan perspective)
2020	<i>Ko e Ta'u 'o e Fakakoloa 'o Aotearoa 'aki 'a e Lotu Mo'oni</i> (prayer & faith)
2021	<i>Ko e Ta'u 'o e Fakakoloa 'o Aotearoa 'aki 'a e Ako Lelei</i> (holistic education)

Note: Copyright from Tonga Koloa'ia 2021

According to the 2006 Census, there were over four million people living in Aotearoa, with over 50,000 people of Tongan descent (Statistics NZ, 2006). With this number, there were approximately 28,000 people using the Tongan language in all of Aotearoa (Statistics NZ, 2018). With the number of people of Tongan descent growing each year, I would like to think the Tongan language spoken would be growing also. However, the Tongan language spoken from 2006 to 2013 increased by two percent, while the Tongan population increased by 10% (Statistics NZ, 2018). Consequently, the celebration for the first Tongan language week was also an encouragement to learn, to know and to apply (Thaman, 1995) the Tongan language with the *kāinga*, whānau and community. The Tongan language week still continues the yearly celebration in Aotearoa.

2.4 Tongan language in Aotearoa today

Finally, according to the New Zealand statistics (2018), the Tongan population in Aotearoa grew from 2006 to 2018. However, the Tongan language used is less than the amount of Tongan people living in Aotearoa. In 2013 there was a population of 60,333 Tongan people in Aotearoa with 30,807 using the Tongan language. Lastly, in 2018 there was 82,389 people of Tongan ethnicity in Aotearoa with 33,072 using the Tongan language. Though the Tongan language data has shown increases in numbers with each census, the increase is by two percent, which is a small percentage of growth especially in comparison to the growing Tongan population. Whereas the Tongan population is growing by 10-20 percent (see figure 2 below). Unfortunately, K. Nakayama (personal communication, May 30, 2023) informed me through email that the census 2023 data will not be out until the second quarter of 2024 for any further updates on the Tongan language in Aotearoa.

Figure 2 Tongan language dataset

Tongan Language Dataset		Tongan					
Ethnic group	Languages spoken	Total People			Tongan language used		
Year		2006	2013	2018	2006	2013	2018
Area							
New Zealand Total		50478	60333	82389	28188	30807	33072

data extracted on 30 May 2023 01:02 UTC (GMT) from NZ.Stat

Note: Copyright from Stats NZ 2018

In 2022, Leo Moana o Aotearoa held a survey for Pasifika willing to join, collecting data about their attitudes towards Pasifika languages in Aotearoa (Wilson-Uili et al., 2022). From this data, they found that 90% of Pasifika parents want their children to learn their home languages. The thought of their language as their *koloa* has been passed down by descendants to be taught to the younger generation to cherish and pass on also. Thus, languages are the intercommunication between history, music and education (Kēpa & Manu'atu, 2008), which is a few of the intercommunication language is used in.

2.4.1 Tongan language in early childhood education

With the Tongan language in Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Aotearoa, the ECE Census (Education Counts, 2022) has reported 217 early learning services teach the language. While 16 reported Tongan use in teaching ranging from 51 to 80 percent, 31 services claimed full Tongan immersion. Additionally, the current definition for Tongan language nest would be Pacific bilingual education, which means at least 51% of the medium of instruction is in a single Pacific language. A language nest, as P. Monahan (personal communication, June 13, 2023) understands, is a service focused on embedding a language and culture, typically at least bilingual-level education. Therefore, 47 services self-identified as Tongan language services in 2022. Conversely, 149 services reported Tongan language teaching from one to 11 percent and 21 services range from 12 to 50 percent (Education Counts, 2022). There is a higher number of Tongan language use and teaching in the one to 50 percent than there is in the 51 to 100 percent.

2.4.2 In the community

In the Tongan community of Aotearoa, the main focus of learning the Tongan language will be anywhere the Tongan language is present (Fa'avae & Faoliu-Havea, 2023; Pulu, 2023; Si 'ilata et al., 2023) for instance, at home, church or Tongan events. Additionally, there are courses, online and face-to-face, that offer Tongan language learning for young adults and older. For example, Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT), University of Auckland (UoA) and The Centre of Pacific Languages, to name a few, offer Tongan. These places offer the Tongan language to young adults starting at NCEA level three. There are many available spaces for those who want to enrol but there may be fees that need to be paid to take these courses. When it is Tongan language week there are advertisements on the television in the Tongan language, there are Tongan words or phrases heard on the radio and also social media is full of Tongan language content encouraging others to learn and use the Tongan language. There are also websites that provide Tongan language activities for all ages that will promote the *lea fakatonga*, particularly Twinkl and Pinterest amongst others. These websites provide only the most elementary levels of the Tongan language, but they are a good starting point for learning and communicating in Tongan. There is a problem that most courses teach at a low level, which makes learning Tongan to a higher level

from an instructed setting quite difficult. There needs to be ways to teach the Tongan language in higher levels that is interactive and enhances Tongan language knowledge.

2.5 Conclusion

In summary, Tongan people migrated to Aotearoa for labour and manufacturing jobs, which was seen as a better life for their families. The *koloa* that Tongans brought with them was their Tongan language and culture that they can keep and pass on to others. As early as the 1980s, the Tongan language was declining in Aotearoa which encouraged the MASPAC group to give a grant for promoting the Tongan language. This led to the *Talanga* newspaper, which was the very first Tongan language newspaper in Aotearoa. Over time in Aotearoa, the Tongan language became a school subject with the curriculum launch in 2007 and the Tongan language week starting in 2011. This supports people to learn and use the Tongan language to their families and others. The next chapter will focus on the literature discussing linguistic identity and the factors that contribute to that.

Chapter 3 Literature review

3.1 Introduction

This study focuses on my changing linguistic identity over time as I acquired Tongan in Aotearoa. In order to do this, I will address the environmental factors that helped shape my linguistic identity. Therefore, this chapter critically reviews the literature on linguistic identity, including changing linguistic repertoires. Within the framing of linguistic identity, I will review the literature on a) incidental language learning, b) autonomous language learning, and c) motivational language learning. Reviewing this literature helps to explain what I experienced during my linguistic identity journey and how my linguistic identity has been shaped.

3.2 Linguistic identity

Linguistic identity is the term used to refer to a component of our identity. It is an essential component (Kulyk, 2011), which holds especially true for people who speak more than one language. Linguistic identity is a subject that has received a great deal of attention recently due to its significance in fields such as language education, sociology, and anthropology (Duranti et al., 2023). Language not only facilitates communication and interaction but also plays a crucial role in the formation of a person's sense of self, belonging, and identity. Linguistic identity refers to an individual's sense of connection through language and can take a variety of forms, for example, the possession and use of a native or heritage language and participation in language-sharing networks. People who are part of language-sharing networks communicate with one another through a figurative or spoken language that they either learned as children or picked up later in adulthood. The ability to speak several languages is one of the unique characteristics of different cultures, along with a culture's heritage, religious practice, and historical record. In addition, language has a fundamental impact on the growth of a nation and the development of its identity (Bamgboṣe, 1991). As one of the most individualistic characteristics, language represents and contributes to a defining aspect of human identity (Küün, 2011). The formation of linguistic identity can be influenced by both language use and distinctive linguistic forms associated with particular identities.

Some distinctive linguistic forms South Auckland English (Starks, 2005). Starks has researched the Pasifika community in South Auckland and has found that they speak a distinctive form of English, which he has called Pasifika South Auckland English (Starks, 2006). South Auckland is recognised for its diverse population (Taumoefolau et al., 2002), with a large proportion of residents having Pacific Island descent. Pasifika South Auckland English is distinguished by a distinctive combination of linguistic characteristics that reflect the influence of Pasifika languages with English. These characteristics may include specific vowel and consonant sounds (Bell & Gibson, 2008). Bell and Gibson study Pasifika English through the television (TV) series 'Bro Town' that used to air on channel two. Bell and Gibson discover that the language used in this TV series is relatively unvarnished representations of Pasifika youth New Zealand English. They explain the vowels may be pronounced longer than needed without the interruption of a consonant, which they see as a Pasifika language feature. South Auckland English is a part of my linguistic identity as it is what I grew up hearing, learning, and using. In relation to this autoethnography, South Auckland English is evident in my narratives and poetry.

Additionally, social, and cultural factors, as well as individual factors like language acquisition and use in the family, have an impact on the development of linguistic identities. Slabbert and Finlayson (2000) explore the connection between languages, speech types, and ethnic identities in the community. This includes where the boundaries between ethnic identities and those assumed by urban residents become blurred, which affects the lifestyle and sociocultural characteristic of the community. Similarly, in another study using the sociocultural lens, Faez (2011) studied multifaceted linguistic identities, addressing the native and non-native dichotomy. In this study, the distinction between native and non-native speakers is re-examined, serving as a useful lens for linguistic identity analysis. This sociocultural viewpoint emphasises how different language identities are navigated in a variety of social contexts, highlighting how identity is dynamic, dialogic, multifaceted, and situational. Linguistic identity is something that can be influenced by communities as active agents of their language repertoire (Djité, 2006). This can be done through family language practises, educational policies and pedagogies, media portrayals of languages and cultures, and societal attitudes towards various languages and language varieties. In

addition, an individual's linguistic identity may be formed, at least in part, as a result of their engagement in a number of different language groups or as a result of their interactions with individuals who are proficient in a number of different languages. These studies examine linguistic identity in connection to sociocultural factors, which relate to this research about being a Tongan born and raised in Aotearoa and reshaping her linguistic identity. These linguistic factors play a part in understanding your identity.

3.2.1 Identity has a double logic

Identity has a double logic, where it can be social identity or personal identity, as outlined by Fearon (1999). Social identity is closely linked to the language we speak, which is tied to our culture, ethnicity, or background. Social identity relates to the language we use in society and who we want to be identified by, which is similar to Gee (2010) referring to identity as the kind of person you want to present in a given context. Personal identity is the identity we are most comfortable using and identifying ourselves with. Past research shows that language assists in constructing a sense of ourselves, or 'our subjectivity' (Weedon, 1989). Weedon refers to 'our subjectivity' as part of a person's self-concept that determines who they are and where they fit into the world. Furthermore, newer research agrees that language reflects who we are as it is who we are (Watt et al., 2010 p. 271) which is co-constitutive to 'language is who we are and we are our language'. Similarly, Block (2007) contends that linguistic identity is a connection between one's sense of self, the communities we are a part of, and the language that one uses, which relates to a 'form of self-representation (Miller, 2003) through the language we use and speak. These studies examine linguistic identity from a Western perspective. However, this autoethnography incorporates linguistic identity from a Pasifika perspective, more specifically from a Tongan viewpoint.

3.2.2 Pasifika identities

Linguistic identity for the Pasifika community has not been given much attention, considering the relationship between Pasifika language and how it impacts the construction of identity (Kennedy, 2019). Kennedy notes that there is a body of research about Pasifika language maintenance, Pasifika language revitalisation and sustaining Pasifika languages in Aotearoa (Hill, 2017; McCaffery & Tuafuti, 2003; Seals,

2017; Starks, 2006; Taumoefolau et al., 2002; Vita, n.d.); however not so much about the relationship between Pacific languages and Pacific identities. The topic of linguistic identity tends to be subsumed under cultural identity and ethnic identity as language is seen to be an important part of culture (Jiang, 2000; Kēpa & Manu'atu, 2011). It is important to maintain, sustain or revitalise your language to understand your linguistic identity. I consider the importance of knowing your linguistic identity as a form of who you are, and the language used to identify yourself with. For Pacific people, language reflects and shapes one's culture and vice versa (Jiang, 2000), which is what I will link to Pasifika linguistic identity.

In past research, Anae (1998) studied the Samoan culture where she found that Samoans viewed the Samoan language as a symbol of their Samoan identity. If a Samoan does not know their Samoan language, they are deemed as *fiapālagi*. The elders say this because the language is important in identifying that you are of Samoan descent. Similarly, in 'Aipolo and Holmes (1990) study about the Tongan language the Tongan elders had also responded that those who do not know the Tongan language are seen as *fiepālangi* because no matter where you are in the world, the Tongan language marks your identity as a Tongan. The elders felt this way because they know a Tongan from the language that they speak. This form of conversation is still prevalent among this generation and the elderly through intergenerational language transmission (Wilson, 2017). Conversations between the elders and younger generation connect through speaking the same language, and this is where elders can pass on the language to the younger generation (Kircher, 2022). In recent research, Samu et al. (2019) discuss how language is essential to one's identity and sense of belonging. To have the competence of speaking, understanding, and using your language is an indicator of your identity and your well-being. Samu and her colleagues pointed out that language gives one identity security and the ability to achieve in the English language as well. Additionally, Taufe'ulungaki spoke on the radio about language being a strong indicator of identity for Tongan people (Hopgood, 2021). If the language is not conveyed to our future generations, it will likely be lost. These studies above explain the significance of language as a symbol of identity and the belief in the importance of knowing the Tongan language from past research to recent is similar.

This specifies that there are changes that still need to be made for the Tongan language to be valued and used through all generations and the community.

3.3 Shaping linguistic identity

Building on the variety of studies about linguistic identity above, this section will address how linguistic identity is shaped by various environmental factors. Shaping linguistic identity is the process by which a person develops and expresses their distinctive linguistic characteristics, which contribute to their sense of self. Language plays a role in shaping and reflecting culture (Rampton, 2017), where Rampton centres that one can shape their linguistic identity through regional, ethnic, and social interactions. Factors that can shape linguistic identity include the native language, which is the first language a person learns (Khan, 2020) as Khan focuses on the native language as a powerful tool, and the familial language, which has a significant impact on linguistic identity. It can shape one's accent, vocabulary, and grammatical patterns and serves as the basis of peoples' linguistic skills. Also, languages are frequently linked to specific cultures or regions. Certain dialects, accents, idioms, and vocabulary may reflect a person's cultural or regional background. Someone who grows up in a multilingual community, for instance, may develop a linguistic identity that incorporates elements of multiple languages. Bilingualism and multilingualism (Bernstein & Hamman-Ortiz, 2019) as well as exposure to and proficiency in multiple languages, can shape a person's linguistic identity. Individuals who are bilingual or multilingual may develop linguabridity, incorporating characteristics of multiple languages into their speech patterns and vocabularies. Socioeconomic factors can also have an impact on linguistic identity, where there may be variations in language usage based on social class, level of education, or occupation (Fowler et al., 2018). Individuals may acquire particular linguistic characteristics to signal their social status or to identify with a specific group. Television, films, music, and the Internet, among other forms of media and technology, can have an effect on linguistic identity (Bouvier, 2015). Exposure to various linguistic patterns through the media and online platforms can affect language use, vocabulary selection, and even accent preferences. It is essential to recognise that linguistic identity is dynamic and subject to change over time. In connection to this autoethnography, reflecting an individual's relationship with language and culture can be expressed and shaped in different contexts. For

instance, my interest in the Tongan language and culture were shaped and articulated during my senior year of high school and continue to be shaped and expressed as a mother and professional teacher.

3.4 Incidental language learning

Incidental language learning is a result of acquiring language as a result of hearing it (Saffran et al., 1997) on a regular basis and starting to use it oneself. I want to introduce and critically discuss the literature on incidental language learning because it is the key way I learned Tongan and so has informed my narrative writing. Incidental language learning involves grasping onto an unknown word from hearing it from someone without realising you are doing this (Hulstijn, 2013), which is similar to subliminal language learning (Quesada Mora et al., 2017). Subliminal language learning is the concept of picking up a language without trying; even if you are not paying attention, your brain will remember frequently repeated words and form relationships between those words and their definitions. Similarly, Rogers et al. (2016) also suggest that overhearing language being used frequently is a part of incidental language learning. Incidental language learning connects to this autoethnography as it explains how people develop their language abilities outside of instructed language learning, in a more naturalistic setting like the workplace, the home or the playground. Learners can acquire an understanding of the language and its unique features by being exposed to real-world situations and everyday language use.

Incidental language learning can also lead to intentional language teaching. Learning can also take place through exposure to particular, linguistic landscapes (Van Mensel et al., 2016). Linguistic landscape is the visibility of language displayed in public places and over time the research around linguistic landscapes has broadened (Gorter, 2018). Gorter studies linguistic landscapes in public domains and educational settings and considers how this encourages learners to acquire a language without realising it. Similarly, Van Mensel et al., research linguistic landscapes in public places but also how people interact with these signs which encourages learning. These studies indicate how languages are learnt through linguistic landscapes both incidentally and intentionally by noticing the signs and interacting with these signs. I do believe that linguistic landscape does not have to be in public places alone this idea can be used in

homes. Because of this autoethnography, I intentionally place Tongan language signs around my home for my children to incidentally learn the Tongan language.

3.5 Autonomous language learning

An autonomous language learner is one who can self-direct their own language learning (Çakici, 2015). From past research, Holec (1979) defines the autonomous language learner as one who undertakes responsibility for their learning situation by determining their objectives, defining the course material, and deciding the course progression. They decide on methods and techniques in accordance with their communicative requirements and internal and external constraints. Autonomous learning requires a redefinition of knowledge by learners from objective universal to learner-determined subjective individual knowledge. Nunan and Richards (2015) take the position that learners can learn for themselves if they are willing to become independent learners. In classes that promote autonomous learning, the instructor assumes the role of facilitator and encourages students to learn independently, make decisions, and develop their own learning styles. This prevents reliance on the instructor as the primary source of knowledge and encourages learners to rely on themselves (Nunan & Richards, 2015). Correspondingly, Godwin-Jones (2011) states autonomous language learning will significantly develop as learners' interest in language learning increases for personal and professional reasons. To enable autonomy in language learning, students must develop effective strategies for individual study and be willing to modify and improve them over time. Writing learner diaries is an older technique for developing metacognitive knowledge (Godwin-Jones, 2011). Whereas Palfreyman (2014) focuses on autonomous language learning from an ecological perspective, where he uses a metaphor to describe an autonomous language learner as a 'surfer, someone who is not only being "swept along in the stream of schooling or work life," but they are also making an "effort to float, swim, and navigate" (p. 4) by autonomously wanting to learn a language(s). These studies demonstrate that there are two sides of this area that relate to my language learning experiences. One is that I have developed into a somewhat independent Tongan language learner outside of instructed settings. The other side is that I can benefit from discussing with others how they can alter their own language acquisition methods beyond relying solely on formal instruction.

Autonomous language learning can be fostered in different ways (Lee, 2016). Lee reveals from her study that structured tasks allow students to create learning content autonomously, whereas open-ended tasks gave them greater freedom to explore their comprehension of a topic through social interaction. Therefore, we assume that learning autonomy was influenced by personal commitment and cognitive engagement with the learning material. Little (2020) asserts that the term 'language learner autonomy' refers to an instruction and learning dynamic in which students independently plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate their individual learning. With continuous practise in the language, the learner progressively acquires reflective and communicative proficiency, and the language becomes part of their linguistic repertoire and identity. These studies explain autonomous language learning in a way that connects to this autoethnography. For example, I developed a plan for myself to use the language, monitor my language learning, and evaluate my language use. I also autonomously crafted my language learning and explored the language through social interactions with others.

3.6 Motivation for language learning

Finally, the field of motivation for language learning is important to this study because successful language learning is unlikely without motivation. Motivation can be an interest in an additional language, the desire to learn another language, or the desire to interact with others who use the same language in the community (Gardner & Glikzman, 1982). McDonough (2007) refers to motivation for language learning as a desire to integrate with the community of the language and to appear successful. Oakes (2013) discusses motivation for language learning in relation to the desire to benefit from knowing a language of one's own culture. Therefore, longing for a sense of belonging to the language and to the community can motivate people to learn a language.

In recent studies, MacIntyre and Serroul (2015) defined motivation as the ability to self-regulate and produce changes in behaviour due to feedback loops between internal and external contexts. Consequently, having a positive attitude towards a language and receiving positive feedback from the community will increase motivation to learn the language (Cohen & Henry, 2019). In connection with this study is the

motivation I had to learn the Tongan language to gain a sense of belonging to the Tongan community as well as the community that speaks English. The English language is used in schools, out in public, and in the community; however, the Tongan language is not widely used like English in Aotearoa. Therefore, the motivation to learn the Tongan language relates to my linguistic identity and shapes my identity as a proficient Tongan and English language speaker.

In addition, motivation plays a critical role in shaping an autonomous language learner, which is significant for learning a language successfully (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). Another important factor in motivational language learning is 'self-efficacy' (Lyons & Bandura, 2019), where an individual believes that they are capable of learning a language. Learners will be motivated when they realise that they hold responsibility for their language learning development (Al Asmari, 2013), which links to Al Hoorie et al. (2022) focusing on 'intrinsic motivation', where the language learner has the desire to learn for achievement, enjoyment, and value (p. 3). The studies above indicate beneficial ideas as they focus on intrinsic motivational language learning. Additionally, intrinsic motivational language learning encourages 'creativity and high-quality learning' (Lin & Wang, 2021 p. 4490) which also supports the learner's learning. However, these studies do not suggest ways that language learners can stay motivated to continue learning a language. For example, the desire to continue to learn the language may diminish due to a loss of motivation. Therefore, responding to the motivation for Tongan language acquisition with what is of interest and preventing the motivation from becoming extrinsic, as this could lead to demotivation, are crucial.

3.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, I have reviewed the literature on linguistic identity, which included characteristics of linguistic identity. There is still a need for more research on Pasifika linguistic identity, despite the abundance of research on linguistic identity, more generally. In this review there was also mention of environmental factors influencing the formation of linguistic identity. Hearing the language as a child exposed me to incidental language acquisition, which developed into implicit knowledge. Autonomous language learning occurred when I wanted to learn the Tongan language at my own pace, which in turn motivated me to learn the Tongan language and impart it to my

children. The following chapter will describe the research methodology selected for this study.

Chapter 4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the research methodology known as autoethnography, which is the approach that seems to fit this study. I will also discuss the methods that will be followed as well as the process by which the data for the findings will be generated. Finally, I will analyse the data generated using narrative analysis, which will then be discussed with Tongan terms of the *loto*.

4.1.1 Autoethnography

Autoethnography is a form of qualitative research that is a subfield of ethnography (Stanley, 2019). Ethnography is a research method where an anthropologist or other researcher studies a specific group or culture and collects data through observations, interviews and other means. While ethnography often involves observations of others (Gobo & Marciniak, 2011), autoethnography focuses on recalling, reflecting and analysing personal cultural experiences, beliefs and practices (Ellis et al., 2011). Therefore, the difference between autoethnography and ethnography is in the way data is collected for research and the person or participants involved. Additionally, autoethnography is a process of self-exploration (Reed-Danahay, 1997), allowing the researcher to broaden their understanding of their life. Autoethnography uses the researcher's personal experience to gain an understanding that is *loloto* and *mahu'ingamālie* to them and, by extension, to others in the future. It allows researchers to write about themselves in a way that they can reflect on and learn from to practise or make changes to their current life, including perhaps their professional life.

4.1.2 Why autoethnography

I decided on autoethnography as my methodology because it allowed me to explore and evaluate my changing linguistic identity as I learned the Tongan language and culture in Aotearoa. I have conceptualised this autoethnography as my '*hala 'o e fononga*' (Alatini-Vite, 2022), which means the journey or path. Alatini-Vite focuses on *siofi*, *siosiofi* and *sio loto*, which are Tongan concepts for reflecting on the past, present, and even future practices. I found that these concepts were relevant to this

autoethnography because they relate to reflecting on my past and present experiences that assist with my understanding of my *hala fononga ki he lea faka-Tonga*. Similarly, Iosefo, Jones and Harris (2021) describe autoethnography as ‘wayfinding’, which is parallel to ‘navigation’ (Fa’avae, 2020). Iosefo and her colleagues are authors of their own chapters, however, they overall focused on a critical autoethnography that centres on using personal experiences to critique cultural experiences. Therefore, autoethnography will assist me in wayfinding or navigating an understanding of my *hala fononga ki he lea faka-Tonga* in Aotearoa and how it has changed over the years.

Furthermore, an autoethnography provides a lens through which to reflect on my linguistic identity and how it has been shaped in my life with English as the dominant language. Starting with my personal life, paying attention to feelings thoughts and language practices has aided me in examining the experiences I have lived through (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Analysing personal experiences to understand my values, actions and interpretations may resonate with others (Ellis et al., 2011) and, in turn, this can help them if they are experiencing the same situation where they can reflect on their past and apply it to their present life.

4.2 Methods

4.2.1 Narrative writing

One method of generating data in an autoethnography is narrative writing (Benton et al., 1995), which is essentially story writing or in the Tongan context *talanoa’i*. Bolton (2006) describes narrative writing as taking responsibility for our professional and personal lives through writing. This is through choosing which experiences I want to write about and share. Bolton also suggests that narrative writing expresses the value of the narrator and their stories. In the Tongan context, narrative writing is similar to *Talanoa he vā māfana* (Paea et al., 2023). *Talanoa* means to talk or communicate (Cammock et al., 2021) and *vā* denotes ‘to tend or nurture’ (Ka’ili, 2005) whereas, *māfana* represents warmth or heat, and great emotion (Sanga, 2013). This is a metaphor I will use as it is a communication within myself to nurture or tend to the emotion of the narratives I have written. Therefore, I will write these narratives to express the *māfana* behind these experiences. Narrative writing will include

storytelling from my *loto* of my linguistic journey with the support of poetry as a component.

4.2.2 Poetry

I will also use poetry as a method of generating data to begin and end my linguistic journey. Poetry has the ability to express long held feelings and memories in a more rhythmic and intimate way (Furman, 2006) compared to prose. The first poem is an overview of what I remember when I was younger. In this poem, I express the emotions of attending Tongan events and being around Tongan people. The second poem is similar to the first poem however it is how I see myself now at Tongan events and around Tongan people with Tongan as an integral part of my linguistic identity. The reason I chose to express these experiences through poetry was that the creativeness captures the *mālie* and *māfana* (Fa'avae et al., 2016) of the storytelling. I felt strong emotions when I read the poems over and over again and I did not realise how affected I was until my memories and feelings were written in a reflective poem (Bolton, 2006).

4.2.3 Similarity of methods

Both narrative writing and poetry are simultaneously both the purpose and the act of writing. Some of the commonalities include expression of thoughts and emotions, creative exploration, personal interpretations and reflection or self-discovery, to name a few (Connolly Baker & Mazza, 2004; Kerner & Fitzpatrick, 2007). These two forms of writing express feelings, thoughts and practices while engaging in imagination, experimenting with language, and discovering new perspectives. Additionally, these two methods encourage individual voice through the writing and self-exploration from these personal experiences. Writing stories allow us time and space to re-live and re-experience (Hung & Law, 2015) and reflect on our lives daily. Being able to write about lived experiences fosters self-reflection, self-exploration, and self-discovery, which succour linguistic identity awareness. Moreover, writing about lived experiences will help the writer in recognising issues that may have been unrecognised before (Attard, 2012).

4.2.4 Differences of methods

Poetry and narrative writing are two distinct types of literary expression. Narrative writing, for instance, concentrates on telling a story or recounting events to convey a story that engages the reader with the characters and settings (Sandiford & Macken-Horarik, 2020). Poetry focuses on story writing in a creative or artistic way (Arnold, 2000), which is similar to prose however slightly different language is used. Poetry is not bound by a certain structure as the poet is free to write in many different forms. Poetry can use a wide range of creative literary device, for example, metaphors, rhyme and symbolism to create a story that is captivating to the reader (Short, 2018). Therefore, narrative writing and poetry have distinct forms of expression, each with its own unique characteristics and purposes.

4.3 Reliability

Autoethnography and narrative writing are reliable ways for me to articulate my personal Tongan language experiences (Adams et al., 2017). Autoethnography offers an opportunity for the researcher to be the primary source of presenting their experiences (Cooper et al., 2017). Additionally, autoethnography engages in reflective writing recording emotions and thoughts as they navigate their personal experiences (Romero-Hall, 2022). Narrative writing is reliable because it provides a depth of understanding and exploration of personal experiences (Foss, 2017), which is significant for the research questions and objectives. Autoethnography and narrative writing provide valuable insights and a *loloto* understanding of my lived experiences and my personal perspectives.

4.4 Narrative generation and selection process

I have documented a total of 25 experiences that I considered to be part of my language journey in Aotearoa. From these 25 written experiences, I chose 15 that were pertinent to my investigation as they included more about the Tongan language and is significant to this research. I then grouped these experiences into a total of four distinct categories. These categories were determined by the location and temporality of the language experience. Categorising the stories into groups enabled me to locate or extract (Miles et al., 2018) the experience that I believed best illustrated my journey and my research questions. Consequently, the four categories I have range from my

childhood to my adulthood, and include home, community, school, and employment. From these four categories, I selected a total of five narratives and two poems, as I believe they represent significant moments in my linguistic development. I chose these five narratives because they were from distinct time periods in my life, but also because they recaptured previous times and how I felt about the Tongan language. In addition, I believed that two poems were sufficient for me to reflect on and evaluate my linguistic experiences. I arranged the data in chronological order to illustrate my linguistic development from the past to the present. These methods of data assemblage and sorting have helped me comprehend my research questions and understand how my linguistic identity as a Tongan born in New Zealand has been shaped.

4.5 Analysis

To make sense of my personal experiences, I have chosen narrative analysis to interpret the narratives and poems I have constructed (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2015). A narrative analysis approach focuses on the content and context of narratives in order to obtain insight into how I perceive and communicate my lived experiences (Josselson & Hammack, 2021). It is important to consider the narrative's social, cultural, and historical context and how it constitutes broader societal influences (Bamberg, 2020; Sharp et al., 2019). Through the narratives, I investigate how I construct and present my sense of self, values, and beliefs (Bolton, 2007) and the societal and educational context I grew up in.

4.5.1 Loto as a discussion

Additionally, I will also be using the Tongan concept of the *loto* (Vaka et al., 2016) to further reflect on the narratives and poems. As mentioned above, the *loto* means the heart, inside or centre (Philips, 2004) and as a Tongan concept the analysis becomes *loloto* as it is reflected on holistically. This includes reflexively reading the narratives and poems and feeling the experience mentally, spiritually, socially and also physically. *Loto* has virtues that foster problem-solving, inventive thinking, and performance (Paea et al., 2023). Moreover, the *loto* concept will help with reflexive understanding of my experiences. In the Tongan dictionary there are a total of 139 definitions of *loto* (Churchward, 1959) and from the 139 *lotos* I have chosen three that best describes

each story. The three I have chosen will illustrate the spirit and joy (Manu'atu, 2009) of what was encountered during the time. Also, this approach will assist in understanding how I feel now about those experiences. Therefore, using these *lotos* will support me in my self-reflection and analysis in this study.

4.6 Relevance

Autoethnography is relevant to my research because the generation and analysis of the narratives, and poems support me in understanding the development of my linguistic identity. Writing the autoethnography through narratives has allowed me to critically reflect on when I started to value the Tongan language and how I have shaped my linguistic identity through my life journey in Aotearoa. Through autoethnography, identity construction can be documented as a *loloto* personal process (Parry, 2007). I am able to see where I stood before with my Tongan language in Aotearoa, and I am now able to consider where I am now and where I want to be in the future with my Tongan language in Aotearoa. Reflecting on these narratives and poems helps me appreciate my sense of linguistic belonging being born and raised in Aotearoa but being of Tongan descent.

This autoethnography has encouraged me to promote change for the Tongan community in Aotearoa, or New Zealand-born Tongans to also reflect on their linguistic journeys. Many New Zealand born Tongans do not realise the value of their language until they are older. Some New Zealand born Tongans do not understand linguistic identity and how it is useful in Aotearoa for the sense of belonging to a community through language. Subsequently, this has helped me realise how valuable our *koloa* of the language is to learn, to know and to use (Vaiioleti, 2013) with others. It has also supported me in accepting my past linguistic identity and shaping then reshaping my linguistic identity (Gordon, 2011) today into being an active Tongan language speaker interacting with others in the Tongan speaking community (Denzin, 2014).

4.7 Conclusion

To conclude, I have chosen autoethnography as my methodology to understand my *hala fononga ki he lea faka-Tonga* in Aotearoa. Using autoethnography assisted me with self-reflection on my personal experiences that becomes *loloto* and

mahu'ingamālie to me. The methods I am using to generate data are narrative writing and poetry. Narrative and poetry are both writing to tell a story of experiences and events in life; however, narratives engage with the reader to convey the character and setting, and poetry tells the story in a creative and artistic way. Additionally, I will be using narrative analysis to analyse the narratives and poetry, which will focus on the content and context of my lived experiences while learning Tongan in non-instructed settings growing up in Aotearoa. In this way I have been able to describe and analyse my changing linguistic identity. It is important for New Zealand born Tongans to understand their linguistic identity and to reflect on their personal experiences because it forms a connection within the community. Therefore, the next chapter will present the findings using narrative writing and poetry whilst using narrative analysis to analyse these texts, then a discussion drawing on the Tongan terms of the *loto* will follow.

Chapter 5 Findings & Discussion

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will present my findings and then the discussion. These will include my narratives that indicate how my linguistic identity has been shaped throughout my life. I describe my *hala fononga ki he lea faka-Tonga* in Aotearoa by sharing some stories about how I may have rejected the Tongan language at a young age and later embraced my language and culture openly. There is also my narrative regarding how my parents assisted me with my *hala fononga ki he lea faka-Tonga* in Aotearoa. Each piece of writing will be followed by an analysis of my narrative and later discussed using some of the *lotos* that relate to these experiences.

Firstly, as I have noted in the methodology chapter, I have generated my data through narrative writing and poetry. My data consisted of about 25 narratives that I regarded as part of my linguistic journey in Aotearoa. I reduced this down to 15 narratives which are key points in time in the shaping of my current linguistic identity. I subsequently classified these into four categories based on the location of the language experience and the time frame. The time frame stretches from when I was a youngster to my adult life now, and the four categories are as follows: at home, in the community, in school, and at work. I have decided to select five narratives and two poems, as emblematic of my language learning experiences and attitudes towards Tongan. The data is presented in chronological order to highlight my language journey. Adopting this approach to data generation has helped me comprehend my linguistic identity as a Tongan born in New Zealand. Therefore, let me take you on a linguistic journey through the life of Lupe.

5.2 Findings

5.2.1 Proud Tongan Girl

There is a proud Tongan girl wearing her Tongan attire sitting at a Tongan event

Most of the ceremony is done in Tongan, yet not one word is understood

She sits there yet she feels that she is not sitting there

When everyone claps, she does too
 But still, she understands very little
 Everyone is chatting in Tongan and she feels left out
 Looking around for someone to talk to in English
 It gets lonely sometimes being at these Tongan events
 A proud Tongan girl telling the world she is a Tongan
 Yet a proud Tongan girl who can hardly understand or talk in Tongan
 This proud Tongan girl wearing her Tongan attire at a Tongan event
 Is only that, a proud Tongan girl

This is a poem written about my childhood in general, with no specific date or time, but about my younger self. The poem is named 'Proud Tongan Girl' (PTG) because this little girl attends Tongan events in her *pule taha* and *kiekie*, expressing that she is a Tongan; however, only she is aware that she does not know the Tongan language. Although she is present physically, she does not feel present mentally, spiritually, or emotionally (Luanaigh & Lawlor, 2008). All she can do is imitate what the others are doing by clapping. She knows she's a Tongan, but she also knows she cannot understand or speak Tongan. This poem is an insight into my childhood, from which I have many memories of attending social gatherings that were in the Tongan language, for example, church, birthdays, and weddings, to name a few. As a sign of *faka'apa'apa*, Tongans are required to wear a mat called a *kiekie* or *ta'ovala* (Faleolo, 2020). Wearing the *kiekie* or *ta'ovala* is another form of communication for Tongan people, as it represents *faka'apa'apa*, *tu'unga* and *anga fakatonga*. This form of communication is much simpler than speaking the language; it involves displaying that you are a Tongan through clothing. Tongans who attend celebrations and ceremonies continue to wear traditional attire as a means of communication. Additionally, they smile to feel a sense of belonging, as the majority of people smile back. However, not understanding what is happening during an event can make one feel isolated.

PTG has shown me the 'loneliness' of not being able to speak and participate in the Tongan language with others, which is analogous to Slagter and Pyper's (2019) research where they studied 76 participants and found that they felt lonely not using their native language but instead using the dominant language to communicate. Although I was surrounded by other people, I did not feel much of a social or emotional connection with them. The poem's emotional content transports me back to my childhood. Hearing a language that seemed somewhat foreign to me was challenging, as I had become habituated to speaking English at home and in the community. I was also hearing and learning Te Reo Māori at school or in the community, which I had become comfortable with.

Children are aware of the linguistic and cultural differences between home and school and will most likely opt for the school language over their native tongue (Kaveh, 2020). This could be due to the fact that some students are secure with the school language, which is probably English because it is spoken everywhere. In addition, children may experience the emotional challenges of feeling awkward or tongue-tied when required to communicate in their native language (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017). Meanwhile, they may speak and use English with confidence and satisfaction. To feel less 'lonely' when attending celebrations and ceremonies, a Tongan will continue to dress as a Tongan, as it is a form of communication (Todorović et al., 2017) that they are of Tongan descent. We will also smile to signal a sense of belonging within the Tongan culture, as most people are likely to smile back. However, we may not speak because English is the only language in which we feel secure.

Also, reading through this poem reminded me of the Tongan language variations that were spoken during the event. I started hearing words and phrases that I was not familiar with, which I later found out is part of the Tongan language hierarchy (Kalavite, 2020), as mentioned in the context chapter. I did not understand the complexity of the Tongan language at the time (Fa'avae et al., 2016), which resulted in me trying to belong through action – clapping and smiling, and clothing – *puletaha* and *kiekie*. During these events, I was not aware that I was incidentally absorbing the Tongan language, which became passive rather than active knowledge at the time.

5.2.2 Tongan only in this house

Today was a normal day going the way it usually goes. I woke up and got myself ready and left for school. Then after school, I came home and changed out of my uniform, did my chores, put the meat in the pot and left it to cook. Now the best part is chilling with my brothers! At the time we had a computer in the lounge, the type of computer that had a big back. We would take turns on the computer laughing and joking, downloading music on LimeWire that took 10 – 15 hours (bruh). However, that was me every day, the same routine every day. My parents get home from work, and they sit in the lounge with us watching us roasting each other, that turned into fights then back to laughing. All of this was happening in English. Then my dad stops us and says, “Okay from now on I don’t want to hear any more English, there will be Tongan only in this house” (all in the Tongan language). Man, the look on me and my brother’s faces that day because we didn’t know how to speak Tongan, I mean we were barely understanding the Tongan spoken to us. Our roasting and laughing turned to SILENCE. The only sound you could hear was the game of solitaire on the computer. I remember needing something next to one of my brothers and instead of using words, I used facial expressions and hand gestures before I got what I needed. Let’s just say that was the first day the house was so quiet and the Tongan only in this house rule didn’t last long before we were all back to speaking in English again.

In this narrative, I felt that it was important to state the ‘normal’ day, as there is comfort in sticking to a routine and what you know. The detail in the computer that I had, together with how long we waited for the music to be downloaded, will help the reader picture the type of life I was living in my childhood. I remember the conviviality of being open and happy with my brothers when we were free to speak in the English language to each other. I also am aware of the silence that came straight after the ‘rule’ was put in place. Being a competent speaker of the English language, I was able to show positivity towards English. However, once the ‘rule’ was announced, I think I and my brother’s lost confidence and security in the little Tongan language we had started to understand (De Bot, 2001). This was the reason for the silence because I was certain that my Tongan language was not as fluent as my English. Having that insecurity can really cause doubt in one’s mind. If one thinks they cannot speak the Tongan language, they are less likely to try. We were similar to many first-generation

immigrant children who preferred to use the societal dominant language and language of schooling rather than our own. Children of immigrants are subject to strong discourses expecting them to use English in order to ‘fit in’ and can therefore lose their home language (Chaudhry & Zeeshan, 2019). Although my father did have good intentions to preserve and maintain the Tongan language within my household, I think the confidence to speak the Tongan language would have been more effectively gained through constant and continuous use. The use of the Tongan language in the home could have been practised during our ‘normal’ day routine. This could later change from Tongan words a day to a full sentence the next day or the next week. Through this, we might have become comfortable speaking the Tongan language to each other and have learned and used the Tongan language more each day.

In the ‘Tongan only in this house’ narrative, I felt that we could not go from using and speaking the English language every day to suddenly being Tongan only at home. Usually, as a child, you do not realise how important language is because, in my case, the Tongan language was never taught at home, school, or in the community. Although the Tongan language was spoken to me as a child, I never learned how to respond in Tongan because I always replied in English. Nevertheless, I regularly heard the Tongan language spoken by family members using it to communicate with each other during church services and events or functions that brought the family together. McCarty et al (2009) refer to my listening practise as ‘overhearing’. An overhearer is someone who listens and hears the language being spoken around them and not directly to them. However, in order to be able to actively communicate in a language it is important for children to have opportunities to interact in the language and not only be overhearers. In most cases, multilingual children understand more of their native or home language than they can speak (Reese et al., 2015). This was the situation for my brothers and I because the language was not taught to us directly but was spoken around us.

5.2.3 Labelled? What do I do?

I am sixteen and loving the freedom of life! I have friends who understand me, and a family that loves me and I feel good about myself. I’m chilling with my friends at school when a girl walks past and speaks to me in Tongan “Hey, ke fēfē” (Hey, how are you) and of course when someone talks to me in Tongan, I’m gonna reply in Tongan.

Me: "Hi kou sai pe, fēfē koe" (Hi I'm good, how are you)

Her: "lo sai pe, toki sio eee" (yes good, see you later)

Me: "Okay, bye"

Man, I remember turning around and one of my friends looked at me and asked "ew you FOB why you talking in Tongan for". I felt embarrassed to be speaking in Tongan with a lot of English speakers around and I just laughed it off and didn't want to speak in Tongan again. However, being around family is another thing because when I am around my family, we need to speak in Tongan, so everyone understands each other. Though I am not comfortable talking in Tongan because I know I don't make sense. When I do try talking in Tongan, I always remix my speaking with English. Nek minute I hear my nena "tuku ho fiepālangi pea ako e lea fakatonga ke mahino e ta talanoa" (stop being a wannabe pālangi and learn the Tongan language so our talk connects). Bro, I didn't wanna talk anymore. I stayed quiet when I was with family because I know I will speak in English, and they would call me a fiepālangi. Then with my friends if I even attempted speaking in Tongan, I was called a FOB. So, with my friends, I stuck to speaking in English just using the usual Tongan slang that everyone is familiar with and with my family I used the very basics of the Tongan language when I am asked something. I didn't want to be labelled so I chose to use the language that those I was surrounded with were using. That was English and very little Tongan because I was shy of being called a FOB but then I was also shy of fluent Tongan speakers hearing my Tongan and calling me plastic, which is similar to fiepālangi.

This narrative depicts the period in which I gradually began to use the Tongan language I knew with others. I would only speak Tongan if compelled to do so by my parents or other relatives. With my family, I frequently used translanguaging, which is speaking a mixture of the Tongan and English languages in a sentence (García, 2009), whereas with my peers, I focused more on speaking English than Tongan. I disliked the term Fresh Off the Boat (FOB) so much, especially after being dubbed a FOB myself, that I refrained from using the Tongan language at school. However, I did not want to be referred to as plastic, which was a derogatory term for Tongans who lacked proper Tongan pronunciation but were fluent in English. These negative labels undermine the sense of self-identity that young people have in their current environment (Linz et al.,

2022). Consequently, I struggled with my linguistic identity and how I wished to be perceived as.

Moreover, language rejection is a result of being made to feel different from others, particularly companions and classmates (Hinton, 1999). This causes humiliation in young people who are trying to learn their language and culture. Consequently, they make the decision not to learn or use their home language, especially in public settings. I found this similar to using Te Reo Māori to others and I would get laughed at because I knew Te Reo. This led to only learning and using English because of these labels. FOB and plastic, (which is akin to whitewashed), is still used to describe the identity of others in contemporary Aotearoan society. When I am being labelled as a foreign-born individual or a synthetic can hinder a person's desire to learn their native language or become bilingual. Also, being called whitewashed or plastic for not knowing much about your native language can either encourage you to learn the language so you are not plastic or cause you to abandon hope in your efforts to learn and use it. When you hear someone refer to you as a FOB, speaking in your native language will be unpleasant to the ear, thereby encouraging you to speak English. If only I had taken ownership of these labels (Radclyffe et al., 2023), I would have continued to learn and use the Tongan language. However, I was insulted by these derogatory terms and as a result, I did not comprehend the significance of knowing my Tongan language when I was an adolescent. I allowed the opinions of others to influence me because I did not want to be categorised.

5.2.4 Last year of high school

In high school I would never join the Polyfest or attend fiefia nights, I was such an introvert. I loved being comfortable and hated doing new things with new people. That included actually having to learn Tongan when my English language was good enough. In my mind, I didn't need another language messing up my English. Even though I had my friends, I still wouldn't join. Then the last year of high school I finally decided to join Polyfest, and I think this was because it was my last year, so time to be a rebel and get outta my comfort zone.

When I kept going to Tongan practice I started mingling with other Tongan students and found it pretty cool that I could connect with them because I didn't really talk to

them at school (apart from my usual friends). This activity made me confident in talking with others and not shying away. During classes I could openly converse with these 'new' friends because of the connection we had from the Tongan practice. I remember talking with a group of girls in Tongan (usually banter) and the teacher wouldn't fuss that she didn't understand but instead would give us the 'look' as if to say 'I'm trying to teach a class here' LOL. The only time we spoke to each other in Tongan was when we were being ngutu-lau (haha smh). Our teachers didn't mind us talking in Tongan because our school was diverse with Polynesians and Asians. We even had teachers who would wait for us to stop then carry on with the lesson. Come to think of it, they just started Tongan language classes at fifth form when I was seventh form, but I know I would've been like 'meh' because I probably wouldn't have taken the classes. I mean who wants to learn Tongan when we don't even use it in education here? I was fine with going to Tongan practice and talking the little amount of Tongan I knew. Polyfest was a doorway to meeting other Tongan students outside of my circle and connecting to them in a Tongan context. Even the fiefia night was bomb I felt so free being around 'my people'. Polyfest came around and we didn't get first place, but I know the family I gained during those intense practices, and the comfort to speak in Tongan in class, on the field and with others was worth much more.

This narrative is about my senior year of high school, when I wanted to experience new things, including participating in Polyfest. After being labelled a FOB and a plastic, I was conflicted about where I belonged and where I came from (Grimshaw & Sears, 2008). This resulted in my unwillingness to participate in extracurricular activities and my discomfort with the Tongan language. However, after joining the Tongan group and beginning to converse with others in the Tongan language, I began to feel these concerns gradually dissipate. In addition, previously I believed that acquiring the Tongan language would hinder my English proficiency. I also presumed the teachers would be offended by the use of our native tongues and would instruct us to speak only English. However, this was not the case, as we were permitted to openly speak our home languages and express ourselves through cultural song and dance. Polyfest allowed me to openly acknowledge who I was and how I wished to be known. As a direct result of this, I've realised that while knowing English is crucial, knowing the language of your culture is equally essential.

5.2.5 Yay, my first job! No! It's full Tongan!

“Mum, I want to work! I need some money to buy me things” Those were the words to my mother because I didn't know how to get a job at the age of 18. I was still relying heavily on my parents for everything. So, my mum made some calls and what do you know, I have an interview tomorrow at an early childhood centre. SCORE!

The next day, I'm ready to go to the interview in my casual black pants with a casual top that I can't remember exactly what it was, but I know now that it was so inappropriate to wear. The whole outfit was not the right choice for the setting of the early childhood centre but of course, being so naïve I still wore it and went anyway. I get to the centre and enter the wrong gate that is used for emergencies only AND it had a sign (smh). Then one of the workers had to show me the actual entrance, which was around the corner, again more signs (bruh). I finally make it inside the centre and the manager is waiting for me with a big smile and a huge hug. We introduce ourselves (me in English and her in Tongan) and we make our way to her office. As we sit down the first question asked is “how good is your Tongan?” I literally blushed and said, “not good at speaking but I understand the language” and I guess that was good enough because I'm starting work the next day. Yay, my first proper job but no it's a Tongan immersion centre which means I HAVE TO speak in Tongan.

A week went by in a flash, and I must say I am shocked at the amount of Tongan nursery rhymes I have learnt, the words I have been putting into practice each day and especially the conversations I have with the other teachers. Everyone here knows my Tongan language is not good at all but the encouragement to keep talking in Tongan and the growling every time I switch back to English because they don't know what I'm saying is what pushed me to speak in Tongan. The real motivation was the roasting sessions when the teachers would flat-out mock me in Tongan and I couldn't have a comeback in English because that's just meaningless if they don't get it, so I had to learn more Tongan words so I could have a fire comeback to let them know wassup!

The transition from choosing when to speak the Tongan language to being required to speak it every day was challenging. Initially, I used a great deal of translanguaging with the teachers because they were older than me and I lacked the confidence to speak openly in Tongan and use what I believed to be the correct Tongan words. Later, I

realised that I was attempting to communicate with my colleagues by speaking Tongan and forming sentences. Working with these teachers, I realised that they helped me envision ways to bring the Tongan language back to Tongans in Aotearoa in a fun and enjoyable manner (McCarty et al., 2009). Whether through nursery rhymes, conversations in the Tongan language with children, or discussions with the teachers, I became more deliberate in my efforts to acquire the Tongan language. Since I was born in New Zealand, I am fluent in English; however, pushing myself to acquire the Tongan language and use it with others has bolstered my confidence in asserting that I am a Tongan in a more profound sense. This means that I know the Tongan language and am gradually learning to communicate it with others. I acquire the best of both worlds (McCarty et al., 2009) because I can communicate in English with those who are not Tongan or who do not understand Tongan. I am also able to comprehend and participate in Tongan conversations with others. The fact that I was motivated to learn the Tongan language because my co-workers teased me was what made learning enjoyable. This reminded me of 'intrinsic motivation' (Al-Hoorie et al., 2022) where I am motivated to learn Tongan for achievement, enjoyment and value. When learning is made enjoyable, it does not become a duty or something that must be done, which can be extremely tedious for some. Suddenly, learning is something you want to do, and it does not seem necessary, but I want to do it.

5.2.6 Passing my *Koloa* on

I remember there was this day when my children were arguing about some nonsense, and I had enough. "Fe'unga" I yelled out and they stopped immediately then the eldest looked at me and asked "mum, what does fe'unga mean" and I had to say "it means enough. You were all shouting and it's annoying me, so I said enough in Tongan". I saw him smirk like he found it funny and what do you know, I hear him saying 'fe'unga' to his siblings. Haha.

That's so funny hearing him say the words I said to him, and it had to be in Tongan. I knew I had to find a way to teach them Tongan because it was cute hearing him saying Tongan and I know this will help my children communicate with their papa. So, I started printing out little labels in Tongan and English and sticking them where they belong. For example, the kitchen is peito, and I would stick that on the door where you enter the kitchen. The canisters for the milo, sugar, tea, and coffee had labels in Tongan and

also containers with different food had labels in Tongan and English. This was exciting coz my children are so curious they started reading everything and trying to say the words. The younger children heard the older ones and started repeating after them. I started thinking “wow, this is really good it’s working”. Until, of course, my fourth child hears me talking with my dad and we are full-on talking in Tongan. We are really into our talk until all we hear is a whole lot of gibberish. I look to the side and this child is standing there looking at us like “bgffufcneichabfnfph”. Yes, it was gibberish because he didn’t know what we were saying so his way of joining the convo is by babbling in a language that is made up. Man, me and my dad started laughing telling him to learn Tongan so he can actually join our talks. This is why I challenge myself to influence my children to learn and speak in Tongan.

Teaching my children the Tongan language at home is difficult as a working mother, however, I have used the idea of linguistic landscapes (Van Mensel et al., 2016) to implement the Tongan language learning. Van Mensel et al., (2016) describes linguistic landscapes as language signs visible in the surroundings. Additionally, preserving or maintaining the Tongan language; it can be done through intergenerational transmission of the language by the *kāinga* in the home (Kircher, 2022). Teaching my children the Tongan language helps them understand the language and also slowly know how to communicate with others in the Tongan language. My children are also very close with their great-grandmother, which is the mother of my mother. They usually go to their great-grandmothers after school until someone from my household can pick them up. During this wait time there is a lot of intergenerational communication (Soehl, 2016) happening. Therefore, it is important that the children understand and can speak the Tongan language to communicate effectively with their great-grandmother and for the survival of the language (Wilson, 2017).

As a Tongan mother living in Aotearoa who is actively pursuing a *loloto* understanding of the Tongan language, I want my children to know who they are at a young age. It is essential to teach your children the *koloa* of your native language so they can use it with their elders and others. Literacy development begins in the early years of a child's life (Nishanthi, 2020), making the family an essential factor in children's success. As a result, it is important to begin teaching children their native language and culture at a young age, as this provides the child with a foundation for understanding who they

are. This connects to the literature review where I mentioned the native language is the first language someone learns (Khan, 2020) as a powerful tool in shaping one's linguistic identity. In addition, the first language that children learn is the one spoken to them by their mothers, and our language functions as a bridge between us and our cultural heritage (Yadav, 2014). With this realisation, I considered that I was *loto-foaki* my children the *koloa* of the Tongan language. The Tongan language is a gift, or *koloa*, that can be retained in your *loto* and shared with others. Children may share their Tongan language *koloa* with their *kāinga* and community.

5.2.7 Proud Tongan Girl NOW

There is a proud Tongan girl wearing her Tongan attire sitting at a Tongan event

This event is done in the Tongan language and she listens to the words used

She sits there smiling because she understands the jokes from the MC

Clapping in time with everyone else because she recognises the celebration

When everyone laughs, she laughs louder because she is a Tongan with a loud laugh

Everyone is chatting in Tongan and she rudely joins the conversation LOL

Being able to speak to both Tongan speakers and non-Tongan speakers

Mingling with anyone and everyone because SHE CAN

And proudly telling the world she is a Tongan

A proud Tongan girl shouting 'Mate Ma'a Tonga' on game day

A proud Tongan girl blinging her *nifo koula* shine with a huge grin

Yes, a proud Tongan girl willing to pass on our *koloa* to others

This proud Tongan girl wearing her Tongan attire at a Tongan event

Is a proud Tongan girl who understands the Tongan language and is willing to go

further by speaking the Tongan language with you

In the poem *Proud Tongan Girl Now*, I explain how I now feel about my knowledge of the Tongan language. Reading through this poem I feel the excitement to know and use the Tongan language not only for myself but also with others in the community (Taufe'ulungaki, 1994). This poem uses symbols and metaphors about what makes you a Tongan, which is through the attire, the language, the gold tooth, and the Tongan humour. It is what makes me proud to be a Tongan through valuing the qualities and uniqueness of a Tongan. I am that Proud Tongan girl who is confident enough to join Tongan conversations because I understand the Tongan language enough to answer in Tongan. Although I am still a Tongan language learner, I have grown to be confident in speaking in Tongan with elders, family, friends, and colleagues.

5.3 Discussion

5.3.1 Introduction

This section discusses my narratives and poems generated through this autoethnography. Being a New Zealand-born Tongan, I experienced the struggles of learning my home language in a country where English is the dominant language. Therefore, I chose to learn and use the English language with the Tongan language being used around me. My aim has been to examine my *hala fononga ki he lea faka-Tonga* in Aotearoa and how it has shaped my linguistic identity over time. Moreover, I want to consider whether I rejected the Tongan language from a young age and wonder how my parents helped me with my *hala fononga ki he lea faka-Tonga*.

5.3.2 Summary of Findings

I have found that with the growth of my knowledge of the Tongan language, I have purposely shaped my linguistic identity to suit who I am as a New Zealand-born Tongan. For example, as a young child, I did not value the Tongan language but maintained the English language through continuous use with others. Whereas I am now an adult who is a professional teacher and mother actively learning the Tongan language and encouraging others to learn and use their Tongan language. From childhood through high school, the English language has always been my main language for communication with family and friends. The Tongan language was heard in the conversations of elders and other Tongan language speakers; however, I was not one to engage in speaking the Tongan language. During high school, I began to actively

reject the Tongan language due to the embarrassment of being classified as a FOB or plastic. Therefore, the laughter and name-calling of my friends and peers invigorated my choice to not use the Tongan language at home or in the community. My friends and I may have unwittingly taken on one of the discourses of mainstream New Zealand education by pathologizing people who speak other languages better than or alongside English. Joining Polyfest was the opening for me to accept that I am a Tongan of Aotearoa. After high school, when I started working with the Tongan community, I realised the significance of understanding the Tongan language and knowing how to speak Tongan. Recognising and practising the Tongan language automatically forms a connection with family, friends, and other Tongan language speakers (Latu, 2009). Therefore, this connection encourages preserving and maintaining our native language (Pasefika Proud, 2019) in Aotearoa. Thus, I found the importance of valuing my Tongan language to sustain myself, my children, and the Tongan community of Aotearoa.

5.4 Interpretations

5.4.1 Lotolotoua

After reflective thinking (Matthews, 2020), where I studiously *siofi*, *siosiofi* and *sio loto* on the narratives of my language, I noticed how *lotolotoua* I was about learning the Tongan language and chose to continue using the English language. *Lotolotoua* is a term that means "of two minds, undecided, and in doubt" (Churchward, 1989, p. 303). I was confused about the linguistic identity I wanted to craft for myself and also about where I belonged linguistically as a New Zealand-born Tongan. The confusion mainly centred around why I would want to speak Tongan in an English-dominant country and why people are called FOB for being fluent (Charsley & Bolognani, 2017) in the Tongan language but also called plastic and *fiepālangi* (Dunn, 2018) for not knowing enough of the Tongan language. These negative language experiences (MacIntyre, 2017) lead to the feeling of *lotolotoua*, which then led to the rejection of the Tongan language and continued use of the English language.

Nevertheless, growing up in Aotearoa and being around Tongan language speakers resulted in incidental language learning, where I gradually learned the Tongan language by hearing others speak, although I did not speak the language until later (Fitch et al., 2020). There were not many Tongan language early childhood centres or

schools teaching the Tongan language that my parents knew of where I lived as a child (P. Lasike, personal communication, August 13, 2023). Therefore, I was only exposed to the Tongan language when my parents were communicating with other Tongan language speakers and the elders who were our *kāinga*. When I was young my knowledge of Tongan was therefore passive but has been extended and become active in my adult years. I have thought about whether my parents could have sent me to schools in Otara teaching the Tongan language, as mentioned before, for example, Akoteu Tokaima'ananga Preschool and Sir Edmund Hillary Collegiate. If I had gone to these schools, learning of the Tongan language would have been included in my education. Thus, I may have become an active Tongan language speaker at a younger age and my Tongan language proficiency could have grown more quickly (Morris, 2021). However, I myself attributed no value of the Tongan language because of the negative impacts of being labelled feeling *lotolotoua* about using the Tongan language in public.

My language learning to begin with was incidental and resulted in some passive knowledge of Tongan growing up. Incidental language learning is when someone learns a language without trying to, which often happens when they are doing something else (Uchihara et al., 2019). Although the language was heard from elders and at events, it still took some time to learn and actively use the Tongan language. In fact, active use of Tongan required an attitude shift on my part. Moreover, the Tongan language is complex as it ideally includes learning the language hierarchy (Smith & Otunuku, 2015). Although I hear the Tongan language within my *kāinga*, it is another level of Tongan language when attending social gatherings. I would incidentally hear the Tongan language being used around me, but I did not really understand the meanings behind the Tongan words utilised.

5.4.2 Loto-fekumi

Later, realising the importance of the Tongan language led to actively wanting to learn to understand the Tongan language and also speak it to others. My attitude changed as I needed to speak the language in my professional setting also. *Loto-fekumi* is the term that means 'to look for, to seek' (Churchward, 1959, p. 274). These findings suggest that in my late teenage years, in my last year of high school, is when I started to *loto-fekumi* about the Tongan language and culture, which is similar to

autonomously learning the Tongan language. Learning a language at your own pace allows for learning that will meet your desired requirements and interests while you practise aspects of your performance (Merawati, 2016).

I then *siofi, siosiofi and sio loto* to the Tongan language being taught in high school when I was in my last year, however Tongan started at year 11, which was two years lower than my last year. In the year 2000 is when the Tongan language became a school certificate subject, the launch of the Tongan language curriculum and the Tongan language week. The Tongan language week encouraged me to learn more Tongan phrases that I could use for the week but once the language week was over, I returned to speaking English. If only my school had started teaching the language earlier, I may have been interested in learning the Tongan language before my last year of high school. Joining the Tongan group in high school and participating in Polyfest is what started my motivation for autonomous language learning.

From this change in my attitude, the process of learning the Tongan language became increasingly successful but also entertaining and enjoyable; for instance, the narrative of 'Yayy, my first job! No, it's Tongan only' explains the excitement of learning the Tongan language so that I could reply to my colleagues in the same way they converse with me. When you are *loto-fekumi* of the Tongan language at your own pace creates a sense of ownership (Lee & Hannafin, 2016) over the learning experiences, which boosts motivation (Thohir, 2017) to learn since you feel like you have some control over the language learning. As one matures, acquiring more than one language can be a rewarding endeavour that supports the growth and increasing complexity of one's linguistic identity. Realising the variety of languages as you get older, you start to realise the connection to those who understand the same language as you. Despite potential obstacles, with the proper perspective, motivation, strategies, and exposure, adults can still acquire and comprehend new languages. Accepting the learning process, being patient with yourself, and actively pursuing opportunities for practice and immersion can significantly improve your language comprehension.

5.4.3 Loto-feinga

These findings present my path towards a commitment to learn the Tongan language, which is similar to *loto-feinga*. *Loto-feinga* is a term for "habitually ready to try and try

again" (Churchward, 1989, p. 302), which can mean being motivated to learn the Tongan language. *Loto-feinga* refers to being ambitious and persevering until you are pleased with the outcome. In the findings, it indicates the motivation to learn the Tongan language to be understood by myself and to use it with others. It also expresses the motivation to teach the Tongan language to my children so they can grow with the language and know of its significance to who they are in Aotearoa. Working with the Tongan community supported my interest in the Tongan language, motivating me to learn more about the Tongan language and to speak it. Knowing there are a few schools that teach the Tongan language encourages me to send my children to these schools. I teach the Tongan language at home by constructing a linguistic landscape (Gorter, 2013) utilising Tongan language words and phrases around the house and translanguaging (Seals & Olsen-Reeder, 2020) with my children, using the English and Tongan language in one sentence. I continue to *loto-feinga* to motivate myself in learning the Tongan language and also teaching my children and others the Tongan language.

Growing up not valuing the Tongan language made me quickly realise the changes I should make for my children. I am a strong believer in 'our children are our future' and the next generation of New Zealand-born Tongans who will continue to use and teach the Tongan language to the following generation. Motivation is unique (Boo et al., 2015), and it is essential to identify what drives you personally to stay focused and committed to your language learning journey. Whether it's a practical reason, personal interest, or a combination of factors, motivation will help make consistent progress in learning a new language. When you are *loto-feinga* about your language, you are motivated to undertake the learning opportunities and challenges of your content. Without consistency in learning and using the Tongan language, there will be a Tongan language loss and a loss of motivation to continue using it (Ouino, 2016).

5.5 Conclusion

To conclude, these narratives and poems are an examination into my *hala fononga ki he lea faka-Tonga* in Aotearoa. They present how I was able to shape my linguistic identity from English only to wanting to learn the Tongan language and pass this *koloa* to others. From this *sio loto*, I could relate these narratives and poems to feeling

lotolotoua, *loto-fekumi* and *loto-feinga*, which are Tongan terms that express what I feel within or from my heart. Self-reflexivity is important to understanding your linguistic identity and how you can grow in the language you choose to learn. The next chapter is the overall conclusion, which includes implementation, limitations, and recommendations for this study.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

This chapter will summarise key insights of this research, which will include some limitations, recommendations, and implications of the study.

This research has investigated the development of my linguistic identity as I acquired Tongan in Aotearoa. Generally, my Tongan language has improved vastly since I was a child. From a child to a teenager, and now an adult, I have noticed the change of not wanting to learn or speak the Tongan language to gradually learning and using the language with others. My parents helped me with my journey by introducing the Tongan only in this house rule; however, I do suppose that more could have been done for me to want to learn the language and enjoy learning it. Furthermore, I did indeed reject the Tongan language at a young age due to being labelled and not understanding where I stood linguistically as a Tongan in Aotearoa. However, with growing up and the different experiences I encountered, I realised I needed to grasp onto this *koloa* so that I can use it myself with others and pass it on to generations to come. This gave me an understanding of my relationship to this world (Norton, 2013) and a sense of belonging as a New Zealand born Tongan.

6.1 Summary of study

This study set out to *siofi, siosiofi* and *sio loto* ('Alatini-Vite, 2022) about my linguistic identity, and how it has been shaped and continues to form. I wanted to understand my linguistic identity as a Tongan born in Aotearoa and why I waited so long to accept learning and using the Tongan language. Therefore, I chose autoethnography as my methodology because it allowed me to explore my *hala fononga ki he lea faka-Tonga* from a young age to an adult (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Additionally, I decided that narrative writing (Benton et al., 1995) and poetry (Furman, 2006) is what I would use to generate data of my linguistic experiences. Reflecting on these experiences in chronological order helped me realise how I felt about the language over time and the *māfana* I felt during each experience.

I found I was incidentally learning the language (Hulstijn, 2013) at a young age hearing the elders and people in the community speak to each other. However, I was *lotolotoua* about the Tongan language because I let the dominance of the English

language in Aotearoa and the labelling of being a FOB and *fiepālangi* influenced my choice of language. Later, I began to autonomously learn the language (Çakici, 2015) after joining Polyfest in my last year of high school and then working in a Tongan immersion early childhood centre. I continued to learn the Tongan language in a non-instructed setting, which encouraged me to *loto-fekumi* so that I could communicate with others, including my work colleagues. I was soon motivated to learn more Tongan because I became a mother and it was part of my professional practice (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). I was *loto-feinga* to shift from a passive Tongan language learner and speaker to becoming active in interacting with others. This guided me to teach my children the Tongan language at a young age so they can grow with the knowledge of both Tongan and English, which results in my children being bilingual. This research helped me understand more than I knew before the study, as I was able to recognise my linguistic identity as a New Zealand born Tongan and how I can encourage others to reflect on their personal experiences to appreciate their linguistic identity.

6.2 Limitations

There are several limitations in this autoethnography of my changing linguistic identity. The first limitation was the uncertainty of memory (Chang, 2007) in a dissertation that purports to be 'academic research'. Autoethnography requires the researcher to rely on memories to record past experiences (Tewolde, 2023); however, some memories may be missing details to complete the lived experiences.

Another limitation was subjectivity and generalisability (Lucero, 2018).

Autoethnography focuses on the experiences and reflections of the researcher, which will lead to subjective interpretations and a dearth of objectivity (Ghita, 2019). You cannot generalise from the research, but the dissertation can stand as one person's recollections of growing up in the 1990s and 2000s. It serves as a testimony of the reasoning a young person employs when determining their linguistic identity in the absence of school or societal encouragement to acquire or maintain their home language.

Finally, writing about my journey will involve others that are involved in the stories (Morse, 2016). It is difficult to maintain the anonymity of certain characters in the narratives because it assists in portraying the story. This situation resulted in my

omitting narratives that I thought would be great for illustrating my journey, as I feared exposing them to others (Gibbs, 2018). Although I am satisfied with the narratives included in this research, I consider that additional narratives could have been used to express more of my *hala fononga 'i he lea faka-Tonga*.

6.3 Recommendations for future work

This study is similar to other linguistic autoethnographies that research people's linguistic journey and their linguistic identity (Peña-Pincheira, 2022; Thomas, 2018; Yazan, 2019); although I have yet to find an autoethnography of the linguistic identity of a New Zealand-born Tongan. Future research should concentrate on changing linguistic identities of New Zealand born Tongans, in hopes that other New Zealand-born Tongans will feel encouraged to speak about their *hala fononga 'i he lea faka-Tonga* in Aotearoa. This may encourage those who are born in Aotearoa to value the language without feeling *mā* of what others will say.

Further research should be done to investigate how the Tongan language can be further encouraged in the home and in society. In particular researching of the Tongan language in educational settings is a rich resource for further research. We must *pukepuke fonua* (Fehoko, 2016) by continuing to hold on to our language, culture, land, and people. Aotearoa provides spaces and opportunities where Tongans and Pasifika can learn, strengthen, and uphold their languages. Therefore, reassuring others to value their language and pass on their *koloa* to others to appreciate is important.

Additionally, future work can focus on teaching all Pasifika languages in schools and how to keep the languages alive in the homes. Although I think that maintaining the Tongan language is important, I consider other Pasifika languages of Aotearoa, which have been declining over the years, also important. The Tongan language has similarities with Te Reo Māori, Samoan, Niuean, and other Pasifika languages. With the resemblances between the languages, Pasifika people can support each other by learning their languages and using them in the community. Language and culture give Pasifika people their unique identity. "When a language dies, histories die with it, and identities"; (Pasifika Proud, 2019). In other words, if we do not nurture our languages, we will not maintain our distinctive linguistic and cultural identity in Aotearoa.

6.4 Implications

An implication of these findings is that an autoethnography and narrative writing can help us understand to explore personal experiences and emotions thus fostering a deeper understanding of ourselves and our lived experiences with language learning (Ramsay & Sweet, 2008). Understanding our lived experiences lead to the understanding of our identity.

Another implication is that maybe if I had 'met' Tongan language earlier in my schooling years, I might have had an easier road in learning Tongan. This would mean that educational support for Pasifika languages in schools help Pasifika children increase their linguistic repertoires as well as confidence in their linguistic and cultural identities (Granville & Dison, 2005).

6.5 Promoting change

This study has encouraged me and I hope will encourage others to promote change for the Tongan community in Aotearoa. I did not realise how important linguistic identity and self-reflection was until I *siofi*, *siosiofi* and *sio loto* to my linguistic experiences. I encourage other New Zealand born Tongans to also self-reflect on their *hala fononga 'i he lea faka-Tonga* and also their linguistic identities. This will assist them in understanding who they are and the languages they want to learn and speak.

Maintaining our *koloa* of the language promotes the survival of our linguistic identity as a Tongan. We need to encourage others to learn and use the Tongan language from a young age, so they are not *lotolotoua* but are *loto-fekumi* and *loto-feinga* to use the language with other Tongan language speakers. Self-reflection of personal experiences will help in understanding linguistic identity as a New Zealand born Tongan so we can be Proud Tongan Girls or Boys of Aotearoa.

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