

# Additive bilingual education: Unlocking the culture of silence

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**Abstract:** Pasifika parents who attend education consultations do not normally challenge the dominant discourses of New Zealand education and the constructions of their identities in those discourses. This article explores some theoretical perspectives on why parents do not speak out, and reveals a Samoan perspective on “the culture of silence” which may be described as ways of knowing when to speak and when not to speak, and its relationship to education. Also explored are the social, political and educational factors in Aotearoa that contribute to the “silencing” of Pasifika peoples. Research into an additive bilingual education programme, structured within a collaborative empowerment process of partnership with parents and communities, enables the paper’s author to employ Pasifika voices in challenging educators to support the unlocking process of their silence and silencing.

**Keywords:** additive bilingual education; culture of silence; discourse; Pasifika

## **Definitions:**

*Pasifika:* refers to Pacific Island peoples in New Zealand, their languages/cultures, values, activities and perspectives.

*Pasifika additive bilingual education:* taken from McCaffery & Tuafuti (2004, p. 2), “A holistic programme with collaborative empowerment processes of genuine partnerships with parents and communities. It is not just a translation in a different medium of instruction.”

*Culture of silence:* refers to knowing when to speak and when not to within the context of Pasifika cultures.

*Silencing:* refers to Pasifika peoples’ behaviour of being silent, caused by either the culture of silence or social, political, educational or other environmental factors.

*Discourse:* taken from Corson (2001, p. 16): “The full range of meaning-filled events and practices that we encounter in life, which covers all sign systems, including those that are not usually regarded as part of natural language itself.”

## **Introduction**

One of the author’s primary concerns during the initial process of her PhD in 2004 was the reluctance of Pasifika parents to voice their opinions in educational meetings, especially when meetings were conducted in English. An assumption was made that Pasifika parents did not speak out in meetings because of English language barriers. From that assumption, a plan was then designed to investigate the reasons why some parents and students keep their silence in educational meetings and/or classrooms. This investigation was conducted as part of the doctoral study and as a basis for the topic of a speech at the Community Languages and English Speakers of Other Languages (CLESOL) conference in 2004.

A brief investigation was undertaken with the Samoan parents who had agreed to be participants in the study. This was a deliberate action so that the participants could express their ideas naturally in Samoan and within a culturally appropriate Samoan context. However, during one of the meetings in May 2004 friends of the participants from other Pasifika ethnic groups learned

about the investigation and enthusiastically volunteered to voice their opinions. Non-Samoan parents expressed their opinions in English.

Adapting a critical applied linguistics base (see Pennicook, 2001), the author aimed to draw cooperatively and collaboratively on the experiences and expertise of the various Pasifika parents who showed enthusiasm for the topic, and a small group of New Zealand-born Samoan Form 7 students. The intention in using this approach was to gain relevant and natural stories in two language modes, 'oral' and 'written'.

An important linguistic feature amongst the research participants was that the non-Samoan parents were all second language (L2) learners of English. Taking that factor on board, the author carefully analysed the participants' stories using Halliday's (1985a, 1985b), and Derewianka's (1990) systemic functional linguistic approach. This approach is based on a theoretical approach that positions spoken discourse as 'culturally and socially' motivated and varying according to the social 'context and situation'. Stories or responses to questionnaires and interviews can also be examined within the values of the participants' cultural practices. Stories can be unfolded in stages, each having their own social and cultural purpose. This was clearly in evidence during participants' responses, in which the relationships between language and context were clearly emphasised.

## Methods

The author used questionnaire and semi-structured group interviews to conduct the research. During an initial discussion with the group, the participants highlighted that there is a Pasifika 'Culture of Silence.' Hence, the three major open-ended questions asked in the questionnaire and as guidance for group interviews were:

- What is the Pasifika 'Culture of Silence'?
- How did it come about?
- Give at least 4 reasons why some parents and students do not speak out in educational meetings and/or classrooms.

The study started off with 20 participants divided into six small groups. There were twelve Samoans including two New Zealand-born Form 7 students, three Tongans, two Niue, two Cook Islanders and one Fijian. The two New Zealand-born Samoan Form 7 students were put in a different group from the other Samoan participants.

The process of collecting stories involved recording, transcribing and analysing both responses to the questionnaire and the spoken discourse that occurred during interviews. The two Form 7 students expressed their opinions through 'rap' music. All the other participants completed both the questionnaires and interviews.

## Theoretical perspectives on silence

Silence is not passive. It is an active behaviour that conveys culturally appropriate, meaningful messages that cannot be expressed through verbal communication, or that are best expressed through silence. Such significance and values of silence are often reflected in cultural proverbs and sayings, such as the Finnish proverb "a loud noise shows an empty head" (Sullinen-

Kuparinen, 1986, cited in Sunkim 2002, p. 135) and the Japanese saying “the cat that does not meow catches rats” (Klopf, 1995, p. 17 cited in Sunkim, 2002, p. 135).

The little research on silence in the ‘Western context’ tends to have taken personality perspectives of silence and looks at silence as a “malfunctioning of the ‘human machine’” thus using a machine metaphor (Fieldstein, Albeerti & BenDebba, 1979; Scollon, 1985; both discussed in Sunkim, 2002, pp. 132–135). In the machine metaphor, silence means that when the machine stops the “steady buzz with hesitation or silence ... indicates trouble and difficulty.” The drawn assumptions are that people who do not speak out in conversations or consultations are “suspicious, insecure, reserved and tend to produce longer pauses” (Sunkim, 2002, p. 132).

There are, however, some theorists whose views of silence are more positive, reflecting their research experience as socio-linguists, anthropologists and discourse analysts. These include Dauenhauer (1980), Goldstein (2003), Hall (1981), Jaworski (1993), Samovar and Porter (1997), Sunkim (2002) and Tannen and Saville-Troike (1985).

Hall’s (1981) study of peoples from diverse cultures and the ways they ‘talk’ to one another without the use of ‘words’ concluded that monolinguals need to understand what silence is and what it does for peoples of diverse cultures. Hall quotes that “silence can shout the truth where words lie” (p. 1) and that one has much to learn about one’s “own system of learning by immersing himself in those that are different” (p. 1) thereby learning from others and vice versa. Hall’s research implies the importance of cross-cultural understanding and moves away from the machine metaphorical connotation of silence.

Dauenhauer (1980), in his study of the silence phenomenon and its ontological significance, discusses three kinds of silence: “intervening silence, fore- and-after silence, and deep silence” (p. 204). The common characteristics of these types of silence are that: silence is an active performance in connection with an utterance; silence is an act of ‘mitigated autonomy’ (an act that we call in Samoan *musu*), refusal or resistance; silence as an act of surrender and guilt; and silence as a demonstrator in a ‘peculiar’ manner in that its “yielding binds and joins participants” (p. 204).

Likewise Goldstein (2003), Jaworski (1993), Samovar and Porter (1997), Sunkim (2002) and Tannen and Saville-Troike (1985) all provide some useful insights and advice to educators in that special attention must be paid to the range of possible silences. Particular care is required because silences carry meanings that can be misinterpreted as discussed in the machine metaphorical interpretation. Goldstein (2003), in particular, gives a comprehensive report of her research on responding to the silence of Asian students in some Canadian schools. Goldstein’s research revealed that many students from Hong Kong were often quiet in class and considered burdensome, and resented by their non-Chinese and Canadian-born classmates. Goldstein asked her interviewees to talk about some of the differences between schools in Hong Kong and schools in Canada. From my reading and interpretations of the research interview transcripts, the Asian students’ reasons of silences in Canadian education are similar to Pasifika peoples’ silences in the New Zealand educational context. Cultural factors, feelings of intimidation and low self-esteem are frequently expressed as the main causes of silences as Goldstein’s research reports.

### ***A Samoan perspective of the Pasifika culture of silence***

*E tasi ae lasi!* The interpretation of this Samoan saying in this paper is: We are one nation but made of many peoples of diverse cultures. Within these diverse cultures sits an essential mechanism of silence, which makes the Pasifika cultural package complete, as Tagaloa (1996) talks about such a cultural package as “a complete circle of the moon-ua atoa li’o o le masina” (p. 31).

Unlocking the Pasifika culture of silence in educational contexts requires an understanding of the discourses between the dominant education system and Pasifika communities. Hence, it is significant to discuss the 'complete whole' and review how the fraction of silence fits within the whole Pasifika cultural package so that the unlocking process is beneficial rather than a subtractive and negative effort.

Silence is an active and a living component of Pasifika culture. One of the basic components of cultural and communicative competence in the Pasifika is to know when, where and how to speak or be silent in various contexts. Silence is a symbolic and fundamental structure of communication. Pasifika peoples, especially elders, comprehend the whole framework that constitutes its (silences) meaning. Many Pasifika elders describe the culture of silence as a mechanism, with much spiritual, sacred and supernatural power, that can make anything possible. Tupua's (2002) story of Gaopoa, the *matua* (elder) of his family who was 100 years old when he passed away, reminds us of the spiritual power of silence. When Gaopoa massaged Tupua's arm he looked into his eyes in a way that seemed to suggest that he knew Tupua's mental turmoil and that he was going to leave the country.

Tupua relates:

Gaopoa was not talking to me. He was talking to the gods of my fathers who inhibit my psyche. He was talking to my ancestors, living and dead, who murmur admonition to my soul. He was talking to the land, the sea, the skies, and the antecedents of Polynesian man. (p. 5)

Silence is structured within an interdependence model and is an extreme manifestation of indirectness, as Tanner (1995, cited in Sunkim, 2002, p. 137) states "[if] indirectness is a matter of saying one thing and meaning another, silence can be a matter of saying nothing and meaning something." Hence, the Pasifika culture of silence comes from being understood, and that understanding may result from empathy rather than from one's verbal communicative convention, as demonstrated in Tupua's story of Gaopoa.

The examples illustrate three basic forms of silence: intervening silence, silence to attract attention and silence as a last resort to yield and bind participants together. The spiritual links between Gaopoa and his ancestors reflect silence as yielding and binding participants, which punctuate, polish and iron a non-verbal discourse. This type of silence is also practiced through *ifoga*, a Samoan act for forgiveness and reconciliation of a serious offence. *Ifoga* is always performed with silence during the early hours of a day. It is a powerful act of asking for forgiveness from a serious crime. Hence, silence is sometimes more powerful than the spoken word.

Fai mai le aganuu a Samoa

'O le tama a le manu e fafaga i ia ma fuga o laau, ao le tama a le tagata e fafaga i upu ma tala.'

The above Samoan proverb says that 'Animals and birds feed their young with fish and blooms or berries of trees but the young of humans shall be fed with words.' Le Tagaloa (1996, p. 16) describes this as the 'verbal diet' of the Samoans. This verbal diet includes the culture of silence because the Samoans' discourses contain a "full range of meaning-filled events and practices in life" (Corson, 2001, p. 6).

Tupua's (2000, 2002) and Le Tagaloa's (1996) stories, reflect traditional pedagogies. The pedagogy of the land and ocean that Tupua's explained in his story of Gaopoa and the pedagogy of universe, the moon, sun and stars that Le Tagaloa talked about as the "complete circle of the

moon” illustrate the wholeness of the Samoan cultural package. Le Tagaloa metaphorically explained the pedagogy of humans as a ‘verbal diet’. Samoan traditional pedagogies remind us of the significance of making connections of the Pasifika past and present so that the future is planned accordingly, without assimilation into the dominant discourses.

### ***What is the relationship of the culture of silence and education?***

This relationship is expressed through discourses in all levels of education, from the policy-decision level to the curriculum level to the students and communities. The discourses of such relationships must be coercive, power-free consultations, ranging from discussions with parents to pedagogical practices in classrooms, and to the policy and decision-making processes at the macro level of education. For example, decisions made within Board of Trustees and Ministry of Education need to be non-coercive and power-free.

### ***Hegemony: “Raise your hand if you have a question?”***

What does the above discourse mean to Pasifika students? How does the role or status of a dominant authority affect a Pasifika student’s reaction to such discourse? The culture of silence is not without risk. A school or college might be the first context for some Pasifika students and parents to hear such discourses. I have no doubt that one or two Pasifika students might ask questions, but the majority will probably be sitting at the back of the classroom in silence (for example see Jones, 1991). In certain circumstances, it is culturally inappropriate to ask, and if you want to convince a Pasifika student to ask, then you have to use the student’s language, not “language in the narrow sense of word, but the language of the mind” (Corson, 2001; Cummins, 2000; Jones, 1991; Samovar & Porter, 1997) because to Pasifika peoples silence has volume; it speaks meaning.

Traditionally, children are to be seen but not heard. To listen and obey without question is the traditional dictum and to question an authority is a sign of disrespect and impoliteness. Pasifika children are often introduced to societal norms in a religious context where they learn biblical verses and rules to honour their parents. When children challenge their parents, such discourse is considered unacceptable and seen as disrespectful. Thus, when children go to school they are often reminded to honour thy teacher and do as they are told. The origin of such behaviour lies in people’s cultural relationships, and children’s behaviour is a consequence of being responsive to the parents or elders of the family. In other words, a child’s behaviour does not reflect him as an individual, but reflects the whole *aiga* (extended family). A common saying in Samoa is *E iloa lava le tamalii i lana savali ma lana tautala*, which means the aristocrat of noble birth is recognised through his or her respectful and noble way of walking and speaking.

Pasifika students show respect when they lower themselves and walk with silence in front of seniors. Students bow their heads in silence, which is an act of respect when they are reprimanded. Sometimes bowing heads is a request for forgiveness and reconciliation if a student is considered to be in the wrong by someone with a powerful status and authority, such as a principal or teacher.

### ***Silencing***

Coercive relations of power between the dominant culture and minorities encourage silencing. Corson (2001) and Cummins (1996, 2000) discuss coercive power and discourses that cause silencing of minorities and resist the operation of the dominant system. This is illustrated in the story of three nuns who visited a Spanish family and encouraged the parents to use English in their home. The parents dared not to challenge authorities and agreed to give up their language; but as soon as the nuns left the family switched back to Spanish (Cummins, 1996, p. 165).

Other examples of resistant performances include the Samoan language teachers' association boycott in 2003—a response to seniorities' decisions—and Savaiinaea, Pita Williams' article in the New Zealand Weekend News on the 19 February, 2000, cited in Anae et al. (2001, p. 20) from which the following quote was taken, “They send in people, who know nothing about Otara, they try to use methods that they believe work in the slums of London, but they will never work in Otara.”

### ***School and parents genuine partnerships***

McAllister Swap's (1993) fourth model is called the 'New Vision Partnership model'. The model is about collaboration, empowerment, intervention and envisioning of the whole school environment to accomplish a common mission: generally for all students in school to achieve success. The discourse of this model allows the community to voice their expectations and aspirations and it is the school's responsibility to listen and do something about them. The two important assumptions of the New Vision Partnership model are:

- Accomplishing the joint mission requires a re-visioning of the school environment and a need to discover new policies and practices, structures, roles, relationships and attitudes in order to realise the vision.
- Accomplishing the joint mission demands collaboration among parents, community representatives and educators. Because the task is very challenging and requires many resources, none of these groups acting alone can accomplish it.

This model aligns with Cummins' (1989, 1996, 2000) Collaborative Empowerment model, the additive bilingual education approach and the Samoan strategy of empowerment called *soalaupule*, which I will explain later in this paper.

### ***Collaborative empowerment model***

Cummins' (1989, 1996, 2000) empowerment model has four major characteristics: the minority child's language and culture must be incorporated into the school curriculum; the parents' participation and contributions must be encouraged; the promotion of the minority child's learning as an active seeker of knowledge rather than a passive receptacle; and that assessment needs to focus on making changes and new learning rather than blaming the child. Cummins (2000) elaborates that “empowerment can be defined as the collaborative creation of power,” and such power is not a “fixed quantity but is generated through interaction with others” (p. 44). It is a collaborative power that is ‘created’ with others. It is not ‘imposed on’ or ‘exercised over’ others. Cummins continued by saying that this power is “created and shared within the space that minds and identities meet” (p. 44). The discourses within that space, between the dominant powerful and the powerless will constitute more silence and silencing of the powerless. Such action is the “most immediate determinant of student academic success or failure” (p. 44).

When collaborative empowerment is practised in discourses of all levels of education Pasifika children and parents feel secure, and blessed that their language, culture and power are shared, as Cummins (2000) states:

Students who have experienced collaborative power relations with educators are confident because they know that their sense of identity is reaffirmed and extended in their interactions with educators. They also know that their voices will be heard and respected. Schooling amplifies rather than silences their power. (p. 44)

Pasifika peoples value their languages and cultures and therefore their identities. Unfortunately these identities are becoming confused within the dominant power of the school system. Cummins suggested that by using collaborative creation of power, students can develop the

“ability, confidence and motivation to succeed academically” (p. 45). The success is a result of being valued in the classroom and knowing that their identities are secured. As Adriana and Rosalba Jasso (1995; quoted in Cummins, 1996) say “Our school was full of human knowledge. We had a teacher who believed in us? He didn’t hide our power, he advertised it” (p. 1).

### ***An additive Pasifika bilingual education approach***

A long-term additive Pasifika bilingual programme is what parents want, especially Samoan parents (McCaffery et al. in Barnard & Glynn, (2003); McCaffery and Tuafuti, (1998); Tuafuti and McCaffery (2005); Tuafuti (1997, 2000). There are now over 100 major research studies on additive bilingual education since Peal and Lambert (1962) conducted the first one of its kind (see also May et al., 2004; McComish, May & Franken, 2007). An additive programme promotes bilingualism, biliteracy, academic success and language maintenance. In additive bilingual contexts learners are empowered to learn when their languages are valued and used as mediums of instruction. Such learners show definite advantages over monolinguals in learning areas such as cognitive flexibility, metalinguistic awareness, communicative sensitivity and field independence (see McComish et al., 2007 for further discussion).

The rationale of an additive bilingual approach reflects Cummins (2001) Collaborative Empowerment model, the New Vision parent–school partnership model and the Samoan pedagogical empowerment strategy of *soalaupule*. In the word ‘soalaupule’, *soa* means share and *lau-pule* means power and leadership. Soalaupule strategy is used by Samoans to empower people to make contributions in decision-making processes and procedures. It is about collaborative empowerment. It is practised both as a process and as a product. It is practised regularly within the chiefs’ *matai* system, extended families and church meetings when people share their ideas in a decision-making process. Hence when Samoan parents play an active role in decision-making in an additive bilingual programme, their dreams for their children to succeed academically and maintain their heritage language will no doubt be fulfilled.

The outcomes of a long-term additive Pasifika bilingual programme are bilingualism, biliteracy, academic success and language maintenance. The integration of all the models is a must to fulfil parents’ expectations for their children, enabling them to succeed in both worlds: in their world as Pasifika and in their world as New Zealanders. The models are dual medium, that is, they use two languages as mediums of instructions; for example, these could be English and Samoan. The use of the two languages can be separated by time, person, curriculum, place and/or activities. If the languages were separated by person, for example, then one teacher may use Samoan to deliver the curriculum and the second teacher may use English. If the languages were separated by time, then Samoan could be used for 50% of each day’s programme and English for the other 50%. If the use of the languages were separated by curriculum area, then maths could be taught in Samoan and English used to teach physical education (see Baker, 2000, 2001; Cummins, 1989, 1996, 2000 for further discussion).

Cummins’ (2000) collaborative empowerment model is about empowering minorities to empower each other and to be actively involved in decision-making processes. It is aimed at achieving a long-term vision of building capacity and being in charge of one’s own destiny. The collaborative empowerment model is discussed by Cummins as both a process and a product.

The new vision partnership (McAllister Swap, 1993) is about creating and/or initiating new-shared vision between schools and communities, based on aspirations, expectations, cultural and prior knowledge of children and their parents. The Samoan empowerment strategy of *soalaupule* is discussed earlier in this section.

### ***Relationships between teachers and children***

Interactions between educators and students either reinforce coercive power or promote collaborative relations of power (Cummins, 2000). In the section, “Intervention of Collaborative Empowerment” Cummins (2000, pp. 43–46), discussed a framework to reverse school failure which highlighted the importance of developing collaborative empowerment within interactions between educators, students and communities. Cummins’ intervention framework is about transformative and intercultural orientation (p. 45). The framework’s goal is to challenge the operation of coercive relations of power in school and wider society and foster empowerment. Challenging such coercive relations of power might be an obstacle for Pasifika students, hence they keep their silence or reluctant to participate in class. I am well aware of the limitations of established and traditional theories on Pasifika culture of silence within educational contexts. There is considerable research devoted to Pasifika students’ achievement in New Zealand but the focus of such work is mainly on second language (L2) acquisition with very little reference on how L2 acquisition link to students’ L1 literacy (see McComich et al., 2007 for further discussion). Cummins’ intervention theory can be used as a critical framework to develop understanding of interconnections between additive bilingualism, academic achievements and identity.

### ***How can we as teachers put Cummins’ framework into practice?***

Teachers of Pasifika bilingual learners need to use the combination of the following models with strategies on how to include each model in pedagogical practice. The following simplified version of Cummins’ framework does not give the teacher all the answers but it could be used as a guide when planning work for Pasifika bilingual learners (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Examples of how to put Cummins’ framework into practice,**

Models	Examples of some basic pedagogical strategies
Additive bilingual education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start an additive bilingual programme.</li> <li>• School newsletter to be available in Pasifika languages.</li> <li>• Allow students to use first language (L1) in academic tasks.</li> <li>• On-going professional development on additive bilingual education.</li> <li>• Availability of L1 resources Use of L1 signs in schools including front office.</li> <li>• Make an effort to learn Pasifika basic greetings.</li> </ul>
Collaborative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run empowerment workshops for parents.</li> <li>• Allow parents to choose books for school library.</li> <li>• Use parents’ expertise and include them in academic planning and/or tasks such as reading, art/crafts etc.</li> <li>• Use the new vision partnership model to promote bilingualism.</li> <li>• L1 is accepted, respected and valued in all school contexts.</li> </ul>
Reciprocal teacher–student interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a Pasifika language support person in class to work alongside with teacher.</li> <li>• Use culturally appropriate resources.</li> <li>• Use constructive and collaborative academic based</li> </ul>



	<p>group tasks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect children's silence. They will speak when they are ready. Look beyond long period of silence. Seek help.</li> <li>• Awareness of culture of silence behaviour and cultural learning styles.</li> </ul>
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## Results

First, the two questions asked were: What is the culture of silence? How did it come about?

The majority of parents said that they were born with the culture of silence; silence is within their families and communities and has been passed on from generation to generation. The parents' responses strongly reflect the importance of 'respect' of elders and people with high status or authority (for example, see Table 2). The two Form 7 students expressed their understanding in their own composed 'rap'.

**Table 2: Samples of parents' perspectives on research interviews and questionnaire**

We were taught to be good listeners. The rights to speak belong to church and community leaders.
<i>E ave le faaaloalo i tagata maualuluga e saunoa muamua</i> We respect people with high status so they speak first
We were born with this culture! It is within our families and communities and we cannot get away from it. Our people have too much respect for the chiefs and <i>palagi</i> (white people) who come with big ideas and with that respect we cannot challenge those ideas.
Fijian culture of silence is about respect. We respect our elders.
Silence does not mean I am stupid. If we keep our silence we are not progressing but we want to be polite.
We are not quiet when we talk in our own language, but there is a culture of silence and people respect the elders.

Participants were then asked to give at least four reasons why most Pasifika parents keep their silence in educational consultations. Because I wanted as many reasons as possible, I approached more parents if they were interested to respond to the second question. A total of 150 responses or reasons were collected from 70 Samoan parents, 6 Tongans, 6 Niue, 3 Tuvaluans; 3 Cook Islanders and 2 Fijians. The Form 7 students were not included in this part. The majority of parents gave more than four reasons.

Responses were grouped into five categories according to the reasons of silencing that parents expressed. The five categories of reasons are: low self-esteem, difficulties with the English language, lack of understanding of the issues discussed in the consultations, respect, and resistance. Samples of illustrative answers are provided in Table 3 along with respective percentages for each category.

**Table 3: Reasons for silencing**

Reasons	Samples of answers	%
Low self-esteem	<i>Ou te ma e tautala nei aamu mai latou ona ou te valea</i> I am shy to speak—people might mock because I am stupid	47%
English	<i>E le o sau gagana le Igilisi e le mafai la ona faamatala ou manatu</i> English is not my language so I can't express my ideas.	20%
Lack of understanding of the issues discussed	<i>Ou te le fia tautala pe a ou le malamalama poo a mataupu la e talanoa iai</i> I don't want to speak if I don't understand what is going on.	16%
Respect (culture of silence)	<i>Ua tele naunau le faaaloalo i palagi ua le finau ma fesili</i> There is too much respect for the palagi, so they don't ask or challenge.	10%
Resistance	<i>E foliga na ona o mai e faataunuu. O lea ua fafaga tatou pei o tatou e nao meaai ae leai se lumanai o fanau o maua mai ai.</i> It seems that they are just doing their duties. Now they are feeding us like we are hungry or greedy but there is nothing about the future of our children.	7%

### **Effects of coercive power**

Although the Pasifika culture of silence has powerful spiritual and sacred meanings, silence and silencing on the other hand, do have challenges. The consequences and effects of the culture of silence, and the dominant culture discourses have huge impacts on children and adults' participations and contributions in the mainstream education system. There is still ambivalence from few Pasifika parents regarding the place and role of their language and culture in education, and such parents believe that the best education for their children is to be assimilated into English. Hence, they devalue their languages and cultural identities. As Cummins (2000) says, such behaviour of a minority group is caused by being "shameful of its language and culture as a result of internalising the critical or scornful views of the majority group" (p. 42).

Corson (2001) discusses such behaviour by non-coercive minority groups as an "agreement to do things under the pressure of invisible cultural power" (p. 18). The less powerful groups do this without realising that they are being "voluntarily coerced" (p. 18). Cummins (2000) discusses how minority students in schools who use coercive power are unable to negotiate their 'own identities,' and they lose their "identities as human beings before they ever gain it." (p. 40). Hence, the students "identities are shaped or trimmed by the pressure of the environmental context they are in" (p. 42), which causes voluntarily negative attitudes towards own language and culture.

However, there has been a significant change in parents' attitudes towards their language and culture since the early 1980s. Through face-to face and radio empowerment programmes, parents,

especially Samoans, have started to understand how important their language is in their children's education. Through the Samoan radio programme *Talkback* that I have been involved with for the last 15 years, parents ask demanding questions about why Samoan language is taught in some schools but not in others.

## Summary and challenges

I have discussed some theoretical perspectives on silence, and what the culture of silence means from a Samoan perspective. To unlock the culture of silence it is significant for me as a Samoan educator to look at the whole picture of what is involved and why Pasifika peoples keep their silence in educational consultations. I need to blend theoretical perspectives and the *Faa-Samoa* (the Samoan ways of doing things) on how the culture of silence can be unlocked in educational contexts and how non-Pasifika educators can support Pasifika students and communities to voice their opinions. Everyone involved in the education of students must be part of Pasifika students' educational journey. The models of empowerment, partnerships, additive bilingual education and *soalaupule* that I have discussed are all important pathways of students' and communities' journeys.

To challenge the dominant discourses in education, I argue that Pasifika children in Aotearoa/New Zealand who are being labelled as underachievers are *not* underachievers. The fact is that those students are under-prepared by all levels of the education system, through coercive and culturally inappropriate discourses.

Educators need to integrate the Pasifika students' power of expertise and knowledge that they use in preparation of cultural activities and festivals into academic classroom pedagogical practices. If students do not find that power and affirmation of their identities in classrooms, they will look elsewhere, and usually they find that on the streets (Corson, 2001; Cummins, 1996, 2000).

At present Pasifika peoples in New Zealand need to unlock their silence and their language silences in educational contexts. They need to create answers based on the past and present and invent solutions for the benefits of Pasifika students in the future. Pasifika peoples need to challenge the dominant discourses and not accept the institutional view of silence. They need to speak out and say that: '*Silence is not agreement*' so that their expectations and aspirations are heard. School's responsibilities on the other hand, are to genuinely inform Pasifika communities to ensure that people understand the issues before they are questioned for their decisions.

## Conclusions

This work clearly shows that Pasifika parents want an education system that values their language/culture and empowers their active participation and contributions. An additive Pasifika bilingual programme would give parents and students an opportunity to use their language to fulfil their needs and aspirations. Such a programme is a solution to unlock the "Culture of Silence and balance the Power Equation" (Tuafuti, McCaffery & Harvey, 2006, p. 12). Thus, educators who are involved with the education of Pasifika students at all levels need to be part of the solution or risk becoming part of the problem.

The process of collaborative empowerment used in this study has highlighted that schools need to actively listen to parents' voices and initiate new and shared vision programmes for academic success. The parents on the other hand need to be empowered to unlock their silence in educational contexts.

To acknowledge that culturally diverse students' religion, culture and language are valid forms of self-expression, and to encourage their development, is to "challenge the prevailing attitudes and discourses in the wider society and the coercive structures that reflect those attitudes and discourses" (Cummins 2000, p. 48).

It is appropriate that I conclude this paper with some of the parents' voices.

*Some people laugh and look down to us.*

*Sometimes they stop us from saying anything and to respond to what it is all about.*

*We Pasifika have too much respect for the speaker .*

*Too many meetings. We don't want to talk we want actions.*

*We Pasifika parents think, what's the use? when most of our ideas are not followed through: fallen on deaf ears.*

*Because other ethnic e.g. Palagi think what Pacific Islanders say is not important.*

*The way we were brought up stops us from talking back.*

*Maybe if the meeting is delivered in the mother tongue, it would be easier for them to voice their opinions.*

*Parents don't understand the meeting questions.*

*We do not want to start an argument. We don't have the power.*

*I don't speak if I disagree with the information.*

O le tele o sulu e maua ai figota

Through collaborative work, the most difficult challenges can be overcome.

The long history of Pasifika student underachievement in New Zealand is very disempowering for Pasifika educators, parents and communities. We still have a long way to go. Working together would provide a strong voice to challenge the coercive power and discourse of those who make decisions for our children's academic success.

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## Author Notes

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