ENGAGED ETHNOGRAPHY AT A SAMOAN COMMUNITY LANGUAGE CENTER:
CULTURALLY-BASED LITERACY AND LEARNING

EMILY GAZDA PLUMB

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

INTRODUCTION

Community language schools, which are also called *complementary schools*, *supplementary schools*, *heritage language schools*, or *Saturday schools*, occupy an important role in minority language communities around the world, particularly in the United States (Fishman, 2001) and the United Kingdom (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). These schools "are often created out of a community's desire to pass on their language and culture from one generation to the next in order to maintain connections within families and communities" (Kelleher, 2010, p. 1) through a "focus on language, culture, and heritage teaching" (Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 103). They generally operate privately, outside of the state-sponsored educational context. Therefore, there is no official listing of community language schools in the United States, but Fishman (2001) was able to document more than 6,500 heritage language schools during his research in the early 1980s. For the past decade or so, the Center for Applied Linguistics has been building a database of heritage language programs in the United States (http://webapp.cal.org/heritage/). However, this database is far from complete because there is no systematic way to gather data about these programs; instead, it depends on grassroots efforts to collect data from language schools around the U.S.

The students at community language schools are predominantly heritage language learners (HLLs). One of the most commonly cited definitions of an HLL comes from Valdés (2001), who defines an HLL as someone who is "raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken" and who "speaks or at least understands the [heritage] language and who is to some degree bilingual in that language and in English" (p. 38). However, there is a wide variety of contexts in which HLLs are exposed to and learn their heritage languages and sometimes learners cannot be easily characterized as HLL or non-HLL according to Valdés' definition. Some HLLs have only

a receptive knowledge of the heritage language and others are quite fluent; some can read and write easily in the heritage language and others cannot. Although HLLs have a wide variety of proficiency and literacy levels in the heritage language, they tend to share certain characteristics as language learners. In particular, they tend to have an instinctual knowledge about what "sounds right" in the heritage language that gives them an advantage in certain aspects of language acquisition (Wang, 2011). Valdés' definition, alongside most of the scholarship on HLLs, is oriented towards majority-English-speaking countries. However, heritage language learners, and the community schools that serve them, exist in an enormous range of contexts around the world (for example, see Zielinska, Kowzan, & Ragnarsdóttir, 2014, for a comparison of Polish complementary schools in both Iceland and England).

Increasingly, research has shown that multilingual people in general, and HLLs in particular, do not develop *parallel monolingualisms* (Heller, 1999) in their multiple languages. Rather, they engage in complex, flexible, and dynamic languaging practices that reject the socially-imposed borders between languages (Pennycook, 2010). These practices, called *translanguaging* (Garcia, Zakhenia, & Octu, 2013), go far beyond code-switching. Rather than switching between discrete linguistic codes, multilingual people who engage in translanguaging draw from a single, flexible repertoire of their linguistic resources. Translanguaging represents the everyday sociolinguistic reality of multilingual individuals and communities (Farr & Song, 2011) and has been shown to be effective as a pedagogical tool for the language and literacy teaching of multilingual learners (Creese & Blackledge, 2010).

The study described in this report investigates the ideologies of literacy at Le Fetuao Samoan Language Center,[1] a Samoan community language school located on the island of O‘ahu, Hawai‘i. I was invited to do research at Le Fetuao by Elisapeta Tuupo-Alaimaleata, the executive director and founder of Le Fetuao, when we were in a graduate seminar together at the University of Hawai‘i. I expressed interest in conducting research about the development of multilingual literacy and Tuupo-Alaimaleata invited me to visit her school because she was interested in exploring the role of literacy in Le Fetuao's program implementation.

Following Davis and Phyak (in press), this study takes an engaged ethnographic approach to community research by placing members of the community at the center of data collection, analysis, interpretation, and application. An engaged approach to language policy and practices

---

[1] At the request of the executive director, the real name of the school is utilized in this report.

promotes community engagement in language policy-making at the micro, meso, and macro levels, raising awareness about marginalizing ideologies and empowering communities to take charge of their own educational practices (Davis, 2014). Taking an activist stance, engaged ethnography aims to empower community members by positioning them not only as research participants, but as co-researchers and agents of change. At Le Fetuao, my role as a researcher was not to empower the community to resist and transform marginalizing ideologies; they had been doing that for years. Rather, I aimed to document and raise awareness of the ideologies that were operating with respect to teaching and learning literacy. This report documents these processes of engagement.

In this report, I first present a conceptual framework that draws on theories of language ideologies, literacy, and cultural values. I briefly describe the cultural and historical background of Le Fetuao and describe my engaged approach to research methodology and data analysis. I then present my findings, which I draw from six months of observations at Le Fetuao and interviews with Samoan community leaders and language teachers. Ultimately, I discuss implications for community language schools and an engaged approach to community research.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Ideologies in Community Language Spaces

Farr and Song (2011) demonstrated that two of the most compelling ideological forces in contemporary North America and Europe are *language standardization* and *monolingualism*, which promote the exclusive use of a single, standardized language and the marginalization of other languages and language varieties. Lo Bianco (2000) pointed out that, in a world characterized by globalization, the use of a single standardized language represents national solidarity and group identity. In the United States, these ideologies serve to marginalize people who use languages other than English. In spite of the tremendous linguistic diversity in the United States, languages and language learning are not valued for use within the country. Ironically, learning a foreign language is promoted in the United States as a valuable skill, but only in the context of international communication and travel. These ideologies of standardization and monolingualism contrast sharply with the flexibility and fluidity that tend to characterize multilingual identities and language practices (Farr & Song, 2011). This contrast

causes tension when standardized monolingualism is imposed on multilinguals, particularly in educational settings. Farr and Song (2011) argued that the ideologies embedded in educational policies and spaces should reflect the multilingual, multicultural identities and language practices of the communities they serve. Similarly, Hélot (2011) argued that most classrooms are indeed multilingual because an increasing number of students speak languages other than the one(s) used for instruction. Thus, all teachers should be taught to "explore the literary world beyond national borders" (p. 43) and incorporate the different languages represented in their classrooms into their literacy instruction.

Because community language schools operate independently from the state, they are frequently able to operate based on ideologies that reflect the multilingual communities they serve, even when they are located in places dominated by monolingual ideologies. For example, Creese and Blackledge (2010) investigated the translanguaging practices in four complementary language schools in the United Kingdom. These schools educated heritage learners of Gujarati, Turkish, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Bengali. The researchers found that students, teachers, parents, and administrators used their linguistic repertoires in flexible ways and that translanguaging facilitated teaching and learning in the classroom. The ideologies operating in the space were distinctly multilingual, rather than imposing an artificial monolingualism on teaching and learning. Ultimately, the authors used their findings to advocate for flexible multilingual pedagogy in community language schools, naming a number of specific strategies to incorporate a translanguaging into the teaching of language and literacy. The current study aims to contribute to the limited amount of scholarship about linguistic ideologies in community language schools, particularly in the under-researched context of Pacific Island languages and communities.

Multilingualism/Multiliteracies

Postmodern theoretical approaches to literacy have moved far beyond the traditional realm of reading and writing, and instead emphasize the inseparability of literacies from the social contexts in which they are learned and practiced (Blackledge, 2000). Literacy functions as a tool through which identity and cultural values are communicated and practiced (Wang, 2011) and the development of heritage language literacy depends on the extent to which HLLs act on, and negotiate, their ethnic identities (Lo-Philip, 2010). A multiliteracies approach to pedagogy (New

London Group, 1996) was developed in order to address issues of educational inequity and increasing diversity in schools and stands in opposition to traditional approaches to literacy that are based on a set of prescriptive, stable ideas about reading, writing, and assessment. Rather, a pedagogy of multiliteracies acknowledges the plural nature of modes of communication, such as email, art, oracy, and mass media. These modes are dynamic and constantly changing in use (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000), particularly in a world marked increasingly by globalization and connectedness.

Lo Bianco (2000) extended the framework of a multiliteracies pedagogy to incorporate the cultural and linguistic diversity that characterize a globalized, multilingual world. Multiliteracies are socially and culturally embedded practices, so English-based literacy assessments of multilingual children invariably fail to capture the complex multiliteracies practiced by children with diverse language backgrounds. Monolingually-oriented instruction and assessments marginalize and devalue linguistic diversity, even when they purport to take a multiliteracies approach to pedagogy; the only logical conclusion is that "a Multiliteracies pedagogy cannot but be multilingual" (Lo Bianco, 2000, p. 102). This expanded notion of multiliteracies has practical applications for the education of heritage language learners; Wang (2011), writing for an audience of parents and teachers of multilingual children, utilizes a definition of literacy that emphasizes its role as a socially-embedded, context-specific practice that is relevant to "different communicative practices in children's lives, such as drawings, songs, sports, cartoons, movies, and talking while playing video games" (p. 11). Thus, Wang encouraged parents to situate their children's developing multilingual literacy skills in the kinds of everyday practices that are meaningful to them.

Much of the dominant educational discourse about multilingual students' literacy development focuses exclusively on academic English rather than considering those students' additional linguistic resources. For example, in her introduction to an edited volume about multilingual learners, Molle (2015) briefly acknowledged that multilingual learners develop multilingual literacies. However, the rest of her argument focused exclusively on multilingual learners' development of monolingual English academic literacies, disregarding a variety of linguistic resources available to multilingual learners as they acquire academic literacy. This particular introduction by Molle reflects a general trend in education in the United States in which multilingual students who are characterized as English Language Learners (ELLs) are

taught and tested exclusively in English, and particularly in the variety of English that is deemed to be academic.

Challenging the ideological stance towards English-only instruction and assessment, researchers have increasingly documented and advocated for translanguaging and valorization of home languages in the multilingual classroom, particularly for literacy instruction (see Davis, 2009; Duran & Palmer, 2014; Fitts, 2009; Garcia, 2011; Hélot, 2011; and Martinez, 2010). In one such study, Cummins (2006) argued that a single-minded emphasis on building English literacies is problematic for multilingual learners because it devalues the development of home language literacies. To counter this trend and explicitly valorize multilingual literacies, he documented the creation of multilingual "identity texts" in an English-dominant classroom with a linguistically diverse population of learners. These texts, which were created by students with the support of community language groups, developed and showcased children's multilingual multiliteracies over their whole linguistic repertoires. Crucially, he concluded that "even in an English-medium instructional context, teachers *can* create an environment that acknowledges, communicates respect for, and promotes students' linguistic and cultural capital" (p. 63); that is, the success of the identity text project countered the common misconception that a monolingual teacher cannot provide multilingual students with opportunities to develop their home languages.

Out-Of-School Literacies

The way that literacy is taught in school frequently differs from the way that young people engage with it outside of school (Heath, 1983; Knobel & Lankshear, 2014). Studies about new literacies (Knobel & Lankshear, 2014), digital literacies (Haddix & Sealey-Ruiz, 2012), alternative literacies (Cook-Gumperz & Keller-Cohen, 1993), and out-of-school literacies (Burnett & Myers, 2002; and Dickie, 2011) have described the differences between the literacy that children experience at school and in other spaces, hypothesizing the presence of multiple, interacting forms of literacy. When multiliteracies interact, "the spoken and written word are dialectically related in literacy interactions" (Cook-Gumperz & Keller-Cohen, 1993, p. 283); the relationship between literacy and oracy both overlapping and heavily embedded in cultural context. In their summary of research on "new literacies," Knobel and Lankshear (2014) asserted that "as practices, literacies – *all* literacies, 'new' or conventional – involve bringing technology, knowledge, and skills together within contexts for social purpose" (p. 98); that is, all literacies

are negotiations of different facets of one's experience that come together in order to make meaning.

The differences between school literacies and out-of-school literacies are particularly striking in communities that have been traditionally marginalized by those in power. In her groundbreaking book about class-bound literacy practices, Heath (1983) found that white middle-class children experienced literacy practices at home that were closely aligned with those at school, while children in a working-class African American community experienced literacy that was more closely aligned with their church communities. More recently, Haneda (2006) reported on the multiple sites of literacy experienced by children who are designated in school as English Language Learners, ultimately deeming it "essential that educators reexamine their own assumptions of what being literate means" (p. 343) so that students have the opportunity to engage with a wide variety of literacy practices that are meaningful to them. Similarly, Martinez (2010) found a connection between the literacy practices involved in sixth graders' use of Spanglish, which utilizes linguistic resources from Spanish and English, and the kinds of literacy skills they were expected to use at school. However, this pedagogical resource was not leveraged in school, leading to further marginalization of Spanglish as a languaging practice. This study stands in contrast to Haddix and Sealey-Ruiz's (2012) report of urban African American youth learning to use digital literacies in school. These youths are frequently not allowed to express themselves in school "in ways that are authentic to them" (Haddix & Sealey-Ruiz, 2012, p. 191), so their school implemented a program teaching digital literacies. The program was found to be so effective it was characterized it as emancipatory.

There is comparatively little literature about the literacy practices of Samoan youth, especially those living outside of Samoa. In a rare example of such a study, Dickie and McDonald (2011) investigated literacy practices in a Samoan community in New Zealand, asking whether a mismatch like the one reported by Heath (1983) could be causing disproportionately low academic achievement among Samoan youth. To investigate their question, they trained Samoan children to take photographs of the various ways in which they engaged with literacy outside of school. However, the definition of literacy utilized in the study was traditional and narrow, focusing exclusively on reading, writing, and text. The study's findings indicated that there are strong parallels between school literacy and out-of-school literacy, especially church literacy, in the Samoan community in New Zealand. The current

study, which investigates a similar community located in Hawaiʻi, aims to add nuance and complexity to these findings by taking a multiliteracies approach.

Cultural Values and Community Language Spaces

Literacy is a culturally-based means of expression that invariably communicates the cultural values of its users (Wang, 2011), so an exploration of those particular values is fruitful. Language education is an inherently value-laden practice (Edge, 1996) and community language schools are invariably explicit about the central role of cultural values in their pedagogical models (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). For example, Garcia, Zakharia, and Octu (2013) describe several community language schools that have the transmission of religious knowledge and values as a primary purpose. In particular, they highlighted the religious and cultural values associated with Yiddish, Hebrew, Punjabi, Arabic, and Greek language schools in the U.S. These language communities all have sacred texts in the heritage language, and community language schools play an instrumental role in teaching children to read these religious texts. Similarly, Park (2011) pointed out that Korean churches are an ideal location for community language schools because of their prominent role in both religious and secular life in immigrant and second-generation Korean communities. Values that are important to the members of a language community will necessarily be reflected in that community's language schools.

The cultural values practiced and taught in community language spaces are rarely the primary focus of sociolinguistics research, although they frequently emerge in studies as an important concern. For example, in Creese and Blackledge's (2010) study about translanguaging in British community language schools, the authors argued that "complementary schools' particular concern with community values… requires a pedagogy that responds to young people and teachers who have experience of the diaspora in particular and distinct ways" (p. 104). That is, the critical role of values in complementary schools makes it necessary to investigate different models of pedagogy and teaching in these spaces. This argument acknowledges the centrality of cultural values in a community language school context but it stops short of any sort of substantive analysis about these values.

In the case of Samoa, cultural values have been documented and analyzed by academics since the publication of Margaret Mead's (1936) book *Coming of Age in Samoa*. There is a great deal of controversy surrounding the validity of Mead's work (for critiques, see Freeman, 1983,

and Goodman, 1983), but it is one of the first scholarly accounts of *fa'a Samoa*, which is usually translated into English as the Samoan Way.[2] More recently, Samoan cultural values have been examined from the perspectives of both education (see Tupu Tuia, 2013) and theology (see Fa'afouina, 1980; and Moreli, 2007). Limited research has been done about the values systems of ethnically Samoan communicates located outside of Samoa, although Dickie (2011) investigated the role of cultural values at the various sites in which Samoan students experienced in-school and out-of-school literacies. He found that these various sites all had unique, and sometimes contradictory, values systems, but they all contributed to the children's multi-faceted repertoires of literacy practices. No research to date has been done about literacy and values in Samoan community language schools or in ethnically Samoan communities in the United States.

RESEARCH SITE: LE FETUAO SAMOAN LANGUAGE CENTER

In this section, I describe the context and history of Le Fetuao Samoan Language Center, drawing from data collected during observations at the school and a semi-structured interview with Elisapeta Tuupo-Alaimaleata, the school's founder and executive director. Tuupo-Alaimaleata started Le Fetuao in 2008 when she was selected as the director for the Sunday school at her Samoan church. As an experienced educator in American Samoa and a researcher in Hawaiian language maintenance at the University of Hawai'i, she recognized a need for language maintenance in the Samoan community in Hawai'i, saying, "I don't want my kids to lose the language, lose the culture, lose their Samoan identity because we're living in a different location." She asked the church's minister if she could start a Saturday school and started teaching one class of twenty students to read Samoan using the Bible. She said that at the program's inception, "the focus was on the reading, the literacy." In 2008, Tuupo-Alaimaleata was the only teacher at Le Fetuao. The school's adult class developed soon after when the parents started calling her with questions about their children's language lessons. Her response was to say, "Well, I think it's time for you guys to come and learn." The instructor for the adult class is a faculty member in Samoan at the University of Hawai'i.

---

[2] The current study does not investigate *fa'a Samoa* because it is concerned with cultural values in a single community language school located in Hawai'i, not Samoan culture in general. However, the literature about *fa'a Samoa* is helpful for contextualizing the values system of the school in the current study.

By 2013, Le Fetuao had evolved into its current form, with an adult class and four classes available for children: beginning language, elementary language, intermediate language, and art. At the time of writing, there are about 80 students enrolled in classes at Le Fetuao. In addition to classroom language instruction, the school offers cultural field trips, technology camps, and art and music classes. When Le Fetuao was founded in 2008, teachers and administrators volunteered their time and resources; in 2013, the school was awarded a federal grant by the Administration for Native Americans (ANA), allowing it to pay its faculty and staff while continuing to provide free instruction to the community. The grant runs out in July 2016 and Tuupo-Alaimaleata has applied for new funding, but the faculty at Le Fetuao has agreed to keep teaching even if they stop getting paid. Le Fetuao has never charged tuition, but Tuupo-Alaimaleata said she would consider charging a nominal amount of tuition to cover the cost of the classroom facilities if the school does not get funded; the school rents space from a local church.

The Literacy Class

During the Fall 2015 semester, which also happened to be the first semester of my observations, Le Fetuao offered a literacy-oriented class taught by Tuupo-Alaimaleata in addition to the five regular classes. This class, which focused primarily on creating books, was designed to accommodate children from the program's waitlist who had lower levels of Samoan language proficiency. Students used a storyboard to map out their ideas for a story, worked with their families and teacher to translate their ideas into Samoan, and used iPads and laptop computers to illustrate and design their books. Tuupo-Alaimaleata did not continue teaching the class after the Fall 2015 semester in order to devote more time and energy to teacher support and program administration, but instead worked with students and families on a one-on-one basis to help them finish their books.

Language and Literacy Curriculum at Le Fetuao

Le Fetuao is a school that is intended to serve as a role model for other Samoan language schools in Hawai'i and beyond. As a part of the ANA grant, Tuupo-Alaimaleata and the team at Le Fetuao are developing curriculum, starting new schools, training and supporting teachers, and doing community outreach in addition to teaching classes to the 80 students enrolled in its

classes. Tuupo-Alaimaleata considers Le Fetuao to be a seed she has planted and one of her goals is for the school to be self-sustaining in the community if she leaves. Financially, she hopes that this sustainability will soon involve generating income for the school by selling the resources they have developed to other Samoan community language schools, including their curriculum and teaching materials. Tuupo-Alaimaleata said that, if she ever moves from Oʻahu, she would start a new Le Fetuao in her new home.

The structure of Le Fetuao has its roots in an educational model that Tuupo-Alaimaleata experienced growing up in American Samoa. She described "the minister's *aʻoga Samoa*" (in English, the minister's Samoan school) that took place after the regular school day. The minister would hit a wooden drum called a *pake* and children from the village would come to his house for lessons. Tuupo-Alaimaleata said, "We learned the numbers, we learned the language, we learned Bible stories, values of being a Samoan kid," and the neighborhood children thought of the minister's house like a playground. Now, she said, "The minister is hitting the wooden drum and nobody comes by."

Le Fetuao does not have a *pake*, but it aims to achieve many of the same functions as the minister's *aʻoga Samoa* from Tuupo-Alaimaleata's childhood. Le Fetuao's mission statement and vision statement are stated on the organization's Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/lefetuao/info) bilingually in English and Samoan. The mission statement is to "increase literacy in the Samoan language for our youth and understand the Samoan culture to build a Samoan identity [and] to serve as a model for other Samoan church communities." The vision statement is "to create a Samoan Language school that incorporates church, family, and youth" and "to empower our youth to be productive and contributing citizens with a strong self-image and knowledge of their Samoan heritage." These statements represent the core of what Le Fetuao aims to do in the Samoan community, emphasizing the roles of community, identity, religion, family, and empowerment.

RESEARCH PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Due to the flexible nature of ethnography and grounded theory analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), the research questions for this study are not identical to the questions that motivated the study at its inception; rather, they evolved based on the data that I collected, including feedback

from teachers and administrators at Le Fetuao. Ultimately, the study considers the following questions: How do Samoan heritage language teachers think and talk about literacy? How do they incorporate literacy into their teaching? And what are the most important Samoan cultural values that inform these ideologies of literacy?

The data from this report comes from observational field notes during six months of observations on Saturday mornings, semi-structured interviews with Samoan language teachers, several informal conversations and one semi-structured interview with Tuupo-Alaimaleata, and documents provided to me via email, in person, and on Le Fetuao's public Facebook page. I observed classes taught by all of the Le Fetuao teachers I interviewed, as well as community assemblies, teacher reflection time, curriculum development meetings, and a paddling field trip at a local beach. I took field notes during my observations and typed them several hours later. Semi-structured interviews were conducted after four months of observations; questions focused on the participants' ideologies of literacy, cultural values, and culturally-bound ways of teaching and learning. Interview questions were written in collaboration with Tuupo-Alaimaleata to reflect both key themes from my ethnographic observations and her goals for improving the program. When the teachers gave consent, I audio-recorded the interviews and took notes, and then I transcribed the interviews electronically. When teachers did not consent to be audio-recorded, I took extensive notes and typed them several hours later. Teachers at Le Fetuao were compensated by the school for their participation in interviews. Per the requirements from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, all teachers acknowledged their consent to participate in this project by reviewing and signing an informed consent form.

The participants in this study are six teachers and administrators who are part of the Le Fetuao school community. In addition to Tuupo-Alaimaleata, five teachers participated in the study: Iliganoa, Deborah, Gwen, Maka-o-Sau, and Eva. I asked teachers which name they would like me to use in this report; some provided a pseudonym and some elected to use their real names. Iliganoa, Deborah, Gwen, and Maka-o-Sau are teachers at Le Fetuao and Eva is a Samoan language teacher at a local high school who regularly visits Le Fetuao to observe classes and participate in curriculum development. Table 1 shows the teachers' names, the classes they teach, and the context in which they teach.

Table 1

Participant Information

Teacher Name	Class Taught	Teaching Context
Iliganoa	Beginning Language	Le Fetuao
Deborah	Elementary Language	Le Fetuao
Gwen	Intermediate Language	Le Fetuao
Maka-o-Sau	Art	Le Fetuao
Tuupo-Alaimaleata*	Literacy	Le Fetuao
Eva	Beginning and Intermediate Language	Local high school

Note: * indicates the teacher is also the Executive Director and founder of the program

The teachers all had different paths towards teaching Samoan. Iliganoa, who went to church with Tuupo-Alaimaleata, taught with the program from its inception because she was passionate about helping children develop a Samoan identity. Deborah grew up in American Samoa and had no prior teaching experience, but applied to teach when a friend told her that the school was hiring because she is passionate about the Samoan language and culture. Gwen has fourteen years of teaching experience in American Samoa; like Deborah, she heard from a friend that Le Fetuao was hiring teachers and applied because she is passionate about teaching. Maka-o-Sau also has teaching in experience in American Samoa, and he was recruited as an art teacher "by accident" when he was enrolling his grandchildren at the school. Eva put in hours of unpaid time running an after-school club before her administration approved an official Samoan class at her school.

Engaged Data Collection and Analysis

The project took on an engaged approach from its inception when Tuupo-Alaimaleata invited me to do research at her school because she wanted to understand better how literacy can be implemented in the curriculum. Thus, this study started out as a collaborative effort between a researcher and a program and community leader. My initial interest in multilingual literacy stemmed from my role as an ESL reading and writing teacher at the University of Hawai'i and a former teacher of Spanish as a foreign language to first graders. As a researcher and an outsider,

I positioned myself as a learner of language, culture, and community education. I had no specific interest in Samoan language or culture prior to this project, but I had been exposed to issues surrounding language advocacy and community education in Hawai'i through my graduate coursework and was eager to learn more. From my first visit, teachers helped me practice my language skills and seemed genuinely excited to share with me what they were doing in and out of the classroom to support the Samoan community in Hawai'i.

In my role as a learner of Samoan education and culture, I supported and facilitated community engagement around the issues I raise in my research questions: the role of literacy and cultural values in the teaching and learning that happen at Le Fetuao. As I raised questions about literacy and identity, teachers engaged in self-reflection thought more deeply about issues that are central to their teaching practice. The connection between teaching and research was facilitated by Tuupo-Alaimaleata, who regularly asked me to update the teachers about the progress of my research at weekly teacher reflection meetings. During these meetings, she emphasized to the teachers that it was important to participate in research so that Le Fetuao can continue to improve its community outreach and program implementation. She further underscored the relationship between teaching and research by compensating teachers at their regular hourly rate for any time they spent interviewing with me or otherwise participating in my project.

Data analysis also took an engaged approach in the form of many informal conversations with Le Fetuao teachers about the data I had collected, as well as frequent and cyclical member checking. I began to inductively identify themes in my field note data from my class observations on Saturday mornings using a grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), and those preliminary codes guided the notes that I took during subsequent observations. Themes and codes identified during observations, together with feedback and suggestions from Tuupo-Alaimaleata, guided the development of my interview questions for teachers. After conducting and transcribing interviews with teachers, I read over all my data several times, highlighting key elements that resonated with my conceptual framework and further refining my coding system. I talked about my interpretations and coding scheme with the teachers during their reflection meetings and got their informal feedback. This process continued cyclically and allowed me to develop an analytical system that is consistent both with my conceptual framework and the perspectives of the Le Fetuao teaching community. Rather than simply reporting on the findings

of a research project, this paper reports on the processes of engagement as teachers at Le Fetuao and I investigated questions about literacy, ethnic identity, cultural values, and community engagement. These co-constructed data from this report contribute not only to the body of academic research on community language programs and multilingual literacy, but to the continued improvement of Le Fetuao as a school and a community organization.

LITERACY IDEOLOGIES AND PRACTICES

When I first asked the teachers at Le Fetuao to describe what literacy means to them, they responded with a broad range of ideas. However, one dominant ideology connected all of their answers: the fundamental importance of reading and writing, particularly in the context of books. In this section, I explore a framework for conceptualizing literacy at Le Fetuao that incorporates this emphasis on reading and writing alongside multimodal literacies, particularly technological literacy, oral storytelling, traditional art and handicrafts, and music and dance. This framework is consistent with a multiliteracies approach to literacy (New London Group, 1996), acknowledging the complex, dynamic ways in which teachers and learners understand the world and express themselves. The whole framework of multimodal literacies is underscored by the idea that teaching and learning in the Le Fetuao community should always be culturally relevant and meaningful for the learners.

One of the themes that connects all forms of literacy in the multimodal framework is their relevance to the cultural context in which they are practiced. Here, Tuupo-Alaimaleata describes the connection between what she calls practical and abstract ways of defining literacy.

Literacy is… learning [to] deal with words. You deal with [the] meaning of words, and you deal with compiling words to put a thought together in the… what is the theme of that whole thought. And how would you be able to use that thought and apply to your living condition, or to whatever you're doing? Because you can… and I can say that that's the practical way of defining literacy.

The abstract way, of course, is having the children learn to read and be able to comprehend. Initially, Tuupo-Alaimaleata describes literacy as the process of understanding the meaning of words, using them to express a thought, and relating that thought to a particular context. She contrasts this practical, expressive literacy with an abstract literacy that is focused exclusively on

receptive skills. Her definition of practical literacy is focused on processes and the child's personal context for using literacy. Crucially, it does not focus exclusively on writing; an oral approach to literacy fits neatly into Tuupo-Alaimaleata's practical literacy. On the other hand, abstract literacy focuses exclusively on reading and is not necessarily related to a specific cultural context.

After setting out the distinction between practical and abstract definitions of literacy, Tuupo-Alaimaleata links practical literacy to the domain of indigenous and community-based education. She continues to expand on the definition of literacy so that it explicitly encompasses culturally relevant modes of expression:

> For me, as a… in indigenous education, from the perspective of community-based development, you want to make sure that the child is able to apply all of that into its learning environment or living condition. And a lot of our people, most of our people, they learn by doing things hands-on. They're very visual, as well. Our culture was based upon oral language, so speech is very important as well as… you know, it was never a written language.

By positioning Le Fetuao as an indigenous, community-based school, she moves away from an externally-imposed definition of literacy and towards one that is appropriate for her educational context. Learning at Le Fetuao is hands-on, visual, and speech-oriented, so literacy must be as well.

At the end of this excerpt, Tuupo-Alaimaleata mentions the history of the Samoan language, saying that Samoan "was never a written language." A multimodal understanding of literacy at Le Fetuao is strongly associated with the cultural and historical context of the Samoan language, which was purely oral until Christian missionaries developed a writing system in the mid-nineteenth century in order to publish religious texts. Prior to the development of written literacy, other multiliteracies were practiced and these literacies remain important in the culture of teaching and learning at Le Fetuao. When I asked her about the beginnings of written Samoan, she said, "Well, of course the missionaries are… developing the letters and formalizing the language. And that's how everything began and how our language was put into words." This response characterizes the deep reverence that Tuupo-Alaimaleata has for written literacy, and this respect for the written word is deeply linked to religion. Le Fetuao has its roots in religious

education and its mission and vision statements are deeply intertwined in Christianity, so a religious focus is deeply relevant in the Le Fetuao community.

Culturally relevant literacy practices set the tone for all of the teaching and learning at Le Fetuao, particularly with respect to the curriculum that teachers develop for their classes. When I asked Tuupo-Alaimaleata if the teachers at Le Fetuao were comfortable with teaching reading and writing in Samoan, she said:

> If it's something relevant to the purpose, for example, *a'oga Samoa* [Samoan school], I'm sure they are. And it's always empowering for indigenous educators to implement something that is familiar to them. If it's familiar to them, they're comfortable teaching reading and writing. If it's unfamiliar to them, then I don't think they're comfortable.

In this excerpt, Tuupo-Alaimaleata again positions Le Fetuao providing indigenous education, emphasizing the need for curriculum and instruction to come directly from the community. Not only does it make the teachers comfortable to use methods and techniques that are familiar to them, but it empowers them by connecting them to their community roots. For example, Deborah uses choral reading, in which students read aloud in unison, in her elementary language class. I asked her why she uses choral reading and she connected her own teaching methods to her experiences learning how to read in church schools in American Samoa. She said, "It's more of an automatic thing. This is how we learned it," and then explained that reading aloud together helps students learn to connect written with spoken words. As an indigenous educator, Deborah uses teaching strategies that are connected to her cultural heritage and her own personal literacy development.

CULTURAL VALUES

The values operating within and around literacy practices at Le Fetuao interact with each other dynamically, overlapping and shifting and occasionally even contradicting each other. A central component of this complex system is the possession of a Samoan ethnic identity, which is embedded in every aspect of teaching and learning. This valorization of identity interacts fluidly with the other values at Le Fetuao, and accounting for all of them is outside of the scope of this report. Rather, I focus on exploring the interactions between ethnic identity and multilingual language use, religious values, and the Samoan value of *fa'aaloalo* (in English, respect). These

individual values are not discrete, separate constructs; rather, they are multiple facets of the system of values that underlie teaching and learning, and particularly literacies, at Le Fetuao.

The importance of a Samoan ethnic identity is reflected in the mission of Le Fetuao, which is to "increase literacy in the Samoan language for our youth and understand the Samoan culture to build a Samoan identity [and] to serve as a model for other Samoan church communities" (https://www.facebook.com/lefetuao/info). This mission statement positions Samoan culture and identity as key features that are only second in importance to literacy development. Students at Le Fetuao are predominantly heritage language learners and their Samoan heritage plays an important role in the development of their ethnic identity. In Deborah's class, students introduce themselves in Samoan every morning, first saying their name and their age and then tying themselves to their ethnic heritage by naming their parents. She describes the role of the school in her students' identity development, saying that "one of the goals of Le Fetuao is… learning the language to identify with your culture, your heritage as a Samoan person." By identifying themselves and naming their parents using the Samoan language, students in Deborah's class tie their ethnic backgrounds to their linguistic and cultural identities.

In this interview excerpt, Eva describes the connection between language, culture, and genealogy that she has cultivated in her high school Samoan language classes:

> To me, what's been successful is definitely integrating the cultural aspects within the language. It has to be connected. There cannot be a disconnect. […] How do you know where you're going if you don't know your past? You know? How do you share? Our culture is very connected to lineage. Where do you come from? Where is your village? And I said, that is your claim to treasures of Samoa. I said to [my students], it's not just the material things. We consider beautiful mats as a treasure, we consider *siapo* as a treasure. We also consider the language a treasure and we consider the land we come from as a treasure. If you don't know your genealogy, you don't know what you can claim. […] If you don't know your language, then you're missing out on your inheritance, which is your language and your culture.

Here, Eva describes Samoan lineage as a component of culture. She emphasizes the importance of her students' ethnic heritage, telling them it is their "claim to the treasures of Samoa." However, she clearly acknowledges that heritage is not enough: if her students do not learn the language that is their birthright, they are "missing out on [their] inheritance."

Although Samoan genealogy is valued at Le Fetuao, it is insufficient for claiming an ethnic identity. In this interview excerpt, Iliganoa talks about the inseparability of identity, culture, and language:

> A lot of kids say, "Okay, my parents are Samoan, but I don't know crap about it. I can't speak the language." To me, you don't have an identity. You're basically just someone that's out there. But… building the language will eventually have them being proud of themselves, want to know more about the culture. So that's why they say language and culture, they go together. Because without the language, there's no culture. Without the culture, there's no language.

Iliganoa describes an ethnically Samoan person who has no knowledge of Samoan language or culture as "just someone that's out there," rather than someone who has a Samoan identity. Using Eva's framework, that person is missing out on a fundamental part of their inheritance as an ethnic Samoan. Similarly, Maka-o-Sau told me in an interview that it is impossible to practice language without culture or culture without language: "or else forget it." Having Samoan parents is not enough to claim a Samoan identity, which is dependent on knowledge of both language and culture.

Multilingualism

The community at Le Fetuao is bilingual and teachers engage in flexible translanguaging practices for a variety of communicative purposes at their reflection hour and during curriculum development. Rather than teaching monolingually in Samoan, teachers draw on the connections between Samoan and English in order to teach the Samoan language to their students. In this interview excerpt, Iliganoa describes how she uses her students' emergent bilingualism as a resource in her beginning language class:

> It… is somehow related because then they can correlate between the two [languages]. You know, making the language make more sense to them… You say chair and you relate it to *nofoa*, and they have that sense. So in a sense it's just teaching the language in the Samoan form. But it is related. It's all tied together. You say go get your *se'evae* and you say go get your shoe. They understand. They can put two and two together.

Rather than starting from scratch as her students learn Samoan, Iliganoa uses her students' knowledge of English to develop their knowledge of Samoan. At the most basic level of

language learning, she wants her students to draw connections between their repertoire of languages so that they can participate bilingually in the world around them, which is a highly relevant skill for the heritage language learners at Le Fetuao.

The knowledge of both English and Samoan, and the ability to use both languages in a flexible way, is a value at Le Fetuao that is closely associated with ethnic identity. As ethnic Samoans living in Hawaiʻi, teachers and students at Le Fetuao have flexible, multilingual linguistic repertoires that combine elements from all of the languages they know. Rather than keeping their languages separate, teachers acknowledge the benefits of multilingualism and drawing connections between their languages. In this interview excerpt, Gwen reflects on the connection between language and identity:

> All over the world people have their own language, and I would love to have the children know that they have a language. [...] English is a language that the Lord has blessed us with because it is the language that we can communicate with all over the world. I would say that English is the passport language. And we have our own language. [...] God gave them that language that they can speak so [I want to] have them know that there is a language and that they have that language and that language is their identity, you know? And that it should be important and sacred to them. Be proud of it.

Here, Gwen acknowledges the distinct benefits of both English and Samoan: English facilitates global communication and connection, while Samoan is the language of identity. English is useful and Samoan should be a source of pride. In her teaching she uses both languages, using as much Samoan as possible to facilitate her students' language development while using English to make connections and clarify instructions.

Respect

When I asked teachers what Samoan cultural values were most important to them, the most dominant theme that emerged was *faʻaaloalo*, or respect. Respect is inseparable from a Samoan ethnic identity and teachers consider it important to teach respect to their students. In this interview excerpt, Eva makes an explicit link between respect and her students' Samoan ethnic identities:

Those are the defining things that make you a Samoan: your respect for the people, you know, where you are, your language, and knowing certain things about your culture. That's what makes you Samoan. And that's what I want to teach.

According to Eva, more than language or identity, respect is "what makes you Samoan." Respect allows students to gain access to knowledge about their language and culture, which in turn allows them access to a Samoan identity.

Every teacher at Le Fetuao has a laminated poster of *tulafono*, or rules, for the school. The poster has a list of eleven rules, with the Samoan word on the left side and the English word on the right side. The list starts with *fa'aaloalo* (be respectful) and ends with *feavata'i* (respect each other), and the nine rules in the middle describe the actions students should take to respect themselves and their teachers. In Gwen's class, the students read the rules together at the beginning of class every Saturday morning. They first read the Samoan word and then the English, moving bilingually through the list. Here, Tuupo-Alaimaleata describes the process of creating the rules list:

I actually came up with the list and we came in discussed it in our teacher reflection hour… Instead of saying, "Don't do this, don't, don't, don't," we have to word it in a very positive way. […] A lot of these children… a lot of the children, or a lot of Pacific Island kids, um, some of them live in and around negative environments. So one of the things that we have to build is a positive learning environment. An environment where children are saying, "I can do this," you know? That positiveness can really help them to say, "Oh, I'm important, you know? I can do it."

The traditional Samoan value of *fa'aaloalo* is emphasized and interpreted in the context of the students' living situations. Tuupo-Alaimaleata recognizes the need for a positive educational environment at Le Fetuao because of the negative environments in which some of the students live and she adapts traditional Samoan values to be relevant to the students' needs. The system of values at Le Fetuao is oriented towards cultural relevancy, which in turn affects the culturally specific way in which literacies are taught and practiced.

By "discussing [the rules list] in our teacher reflection hour" Tuupo-Alaimaleata co-constructed community norms with the teachers at Le Fetuao rather than imposing her interpretation of values in the community space. In this interview excerpt, Tuupo-Alaimaleata talks about introducing the school rules to the youngest group of students:

You have to discuss [rules] with the children because your interpretation of what you're thinking might be different from the kids'. So I did that with the beginning level, when I asked them, "What is respect, what is *fa'aaloalo* in Samoan?" And they all said, "Oh, respect, is, no, I'm not supposed to be taking away the pencil from somebody without asking permission, yeah, that's respecting your neighbors." Respecting your neighbors is, you ask them politely if you want something. Respecting your teacher is giving your teacher your whole attention, or you say "excuse me" when you walk in front of them. So you can identify those aspects when you see the learning environment where the child raises up their hand before they speak, when they walk they say *tulou* [excuse me], just practical things that you see with the kids. How they talk, how they socialize, how they act around people, and how they respond.

Here, Tuupo-Alaimaleata describes the process of co-constructing cultural values with the students in the beginning language class. She allowed the children to interpret *fa'aaloalo* in the context that is most relevant to them, thus giving them ownership over their community space. By asking the students how they interpret *fa'aaloalo*, Tuupo-Alaimaleata makes Samoan cultural values relevant for the students at Le Fetuao in their heritage language space.

Religious Values

Religious and ethnic identities are deeply intertwined in the values system at Le Fetuao. Religious symbolism plays a significant role in the school culture; the school is located at a church and religious imagery is visible in all classrooms and communal spaces. Teachers lead prayers before class, before snack, and at the end of class. Le Fetuao started out as an extension of a Sunday school at a Samoan church that taught reading using the Bible and teachers use pedagogical methods that were used in the Samoan church schools. The religious foundation on which Le Fetuao was founded is also present in the school's mission and vision statements, which emphasize the school's role in the community of local Samoan churches (https://www.facebook.com/lefetuao/info). Maka-o-Sau suggests that Christianity is so deeply embedded in Samoan identity because the traditional Samoan values system, which centered on respect, was similar to the values being taught by the missionaries. Christianity was a natural extension of traditional Samoan culture because it gave new words to the same core ideas.

The important role of Christianity in Samoan culture has an effect on the kind of language used in formal situations, which has implications for written and oral literacies. In this interview excerpt, Eva describes the process of teaching her high school students about connection between teaching literacy, culture, and religion:

We talked about proverbs that are associated with the culture. So each of [the students] selected a proverb, and then they went and selected pictures that can express what this proverb meant. So, proverb is called *alaga'upu* in Samoan and I wanted them to understand that Samoan language and culture is a lot of proverbial talk… Biblical, you know, because we're very religious. Our culture is very intertwined in religion. They had to understand that when the orator or chief speaks sometimes it's not straightforward speaking, it's proverbial, you know?

Proverbial language is a characteristic of Samoan and Eva considers it an important element to teach her high school students so they can understand how the language is used. She refers to the "Biblical" talk by "the orator or chief" and contrasts it with "straightforward" language that does not involve proverbial references. Later in the interview, she described the posters that her students created to describe their chosen proverbs. These posters required students to use visual literacies as they learned about an element of Samoan more closely associated with oral literacies and religious values.

LITERACY LEARNING AS PROCESS

Oral Literacy: Storytelling

One of the clearest ways in which Samoan language teachers at Le Fetuao connect their pedagogy with their cultural backgrounds is through the telling of traditional Samoan legends. During my time at Le Fetuao, I observed teachers using three legends in their teaching: the legend of the shark and the turtle, which explains why these two animals swim together in the village of Vaitogi; the legend of Sina and the eel, which explains why the coconut appears to have three holes that look like an eel's face; and the legend about the origins of tattooing in Samoa, which explains why women and men get different types of tattoos. Each legend was linked to the content of that day's lesson: the legend of the shark and the turtle was told during a lesson about Samoan geography, the legend of Sina and the eel was told before students did a

craft using the sennit rope from a coconut, and the legend of the tattoo was used in a unit about the motifs that make up traditional Samoan art. In Tuupo-Alaimaleata's bookmaking class, she used legends to teach her students about the parts of a story. One of the activities she taught in that class was a group retelling of a legend, in which she prompted students with "what happens next?" until they had retold the legend from beginning to end. The purpose of the literacy class was to create a book and the focus on oral storytelling connects these written and oral literacies dynamically, while also tying the bookmaking activity to Samoan heritage and culture.

Similar to the relationship between written and oral storytelling, oral storytelling is also connected to the expression of visual literacies. One of the characteristics of storytelling at Le Fetuao is the use of visual props. For example, when Tuupo-Alaimaleata told the legend of the shark and the turtle to her literacy class, she spread out a large map of Samoa on a table and talked about the village of Vaitogi, where the story takes place. As she told the legend, she used a stuffed shark and turtle to act out the story, moving them through the air like they were swimming. In the beginning level class, Tuupo-Alaimaleata set up dolls at a storytelling station and used them to act out the story of Sina and the eel. The act of storytelling is first and foremost an expression of oral literacy, but the way in which it is practiced at Le Fetuao incorporates visual literacies as well by connecting physical props to the stories.

Visual Literacy: Traditional Art and Handicrafts

Maka-o-Sau told me that in Samoa, there are no beautiful drawings. Rather, art in Samoa is functional and used for cultural events; the beauty of the art depends on the skills of the craftsman. These arts and handicrafts contribute to a set of visual literacies that are older than written literacies; Maka-o-Sau told me that Samoan art has "been there all the time," unlike Samoan writing, which is comparatively newer. The importance of art at Le Fetuao is evident in the structure of the curriculum, where art is the next level after intermediate language. During the second semester that I observed at Le Fetuao, the theme for the school-wide curriculum was *fa'alelegapepe*, a showcase of traditional arts and handicrafts. During this semester, students in all the classes learned how to create designs with *mamanu,* artistic motifs that decorate *siapo* (bark cloth) and tattoos, and *laufala*, mats that are woven from dried pandanus leaves and used in all aspects of traditional Samoan culture.

During the *fa'alelegapepe* unit, teachers introduced several *mamanu* to their students. In her class, Gwen started with the starting with the *fa'a tumoa*, which represents the budding banana leaf. She introduced the *mamanu* by drawing the geometric shape of the design on a white board, writing the word in Samoan, and displaying a photo of the natural element that the design was derived from. After introducing the *mamanu* she showed her students how they are combined to create designs for the *siapo* and had them paint their own designs with an authentic Samoan paintbrush. As her students were painting their designs, she told me a story about a time she saw someone with a Samoan tattoo. She asked him if he knew what the designs meant on his tattoo and he said he did not. She told me that, while it is fine to appreciate *mamanu* for their aesthetics, it is better to understand where they come from.

Maka-o-Sau compared art to writing, saying that artists express their feelings with strokes and colors, whether they are expressing aggression or calmness. Artists, like writers, communicate through their craft by using moments, rhythms, shapes, and forms, and *mamanu* help to put art into words. Maka-o-Sau says that people use language to talk about art and there is no art without language. Rather, the knowledge of language is contained within the art. Here, Maka-o-Sau sees art as a form of expression that is complementary to language and writing. The techniques associated with traditional art, and in particular the *mamanu,* represent a semiotic code with which artists can communicate with those in their cultural community and with which community members can interpret the art created by their community members. Visual literacy was present in Samoa long before written literacy and it maintains its importance in the community of teachers at Le Fetuao.

The importance of Samoan traditional art in the curriculum at Le Fetuao is related to the use of visual aids for learning, which also serve to develop students' visual literacies. Visual aids for learning at Le Fetuao are present in all areas of curriculum and instruction, from the visual props used in storytelling to the posters that teachers use to introduce and review the alphabet, shapes, colors, days of the week, months, and class rules. During a technology camp, Gwen's students created posters about *folauga* (navigation) and she used these posters extensively in her teaching during that unit. In the majority of these posters, the written word is accompanied by a picture or another visual aid, and in class the students read the words aloud together. These posters were created using computers and thus allowed students to develop technological literacy, while simultaneously allowing them to work on their visual, written, and oral literacies.

Musical Literacies: Traditional Songs

Like art, music is used throughout the whole curriculum at Le Fetuao to reinforce the topics being taught and draw connections to Samoan culture. In the beginning level class, Iliganoa uses the alphabet song to reinforce their knowledge of the alphabet and help them learn how to pronounce the letters through frequent repetition. At the elementary level, Deborah leads her students in singing a song whose lyrics translate to "hello, friend" at the beginning of every class. She says she chose the song to build community in her class, but also because "it's… a child song that I knew [from my childhood] that I wanted to pass on to them too." During the school-wide unit on navigation, Gwen's class learned a song about navigating that incorporated the vocabulary they had been learning in class. In all of these cases, singing songs in class allow students to practice their pronunciation, learn by repetition when they sing the song again and again, and develop a connection to Samoan culture by singing songs that their teachers learned when they were young. By reading printed lyrics, students also developed their written literacy skills in connection with their musical literacies.

Music also plays an important role outside of the classroom at Le Fetuao. At the beach during the paddling field trip, teachers formed a circle and sang together as Gwen and Maka-o-Sau played the ukulele. Singing was also common during the teacher reflection meetings, where sometimes a teacher would lead the whole group of teachers in a song they had used in their class. During one meeting, Tuupo-Alaimaleata had taught Gwen's class how to sing the Amerika Samoa national anthem and all the teachers sang it together at the reflection hour. During November and December, the whole school got together to learn to sing songs that they would perform together at the end-of-semester event. Songs included popular Samoan songs, a Samoan translation of a Korean pop song that they called "Le Fetuao Style," and Christmas carols in both Samoan and English. During the rehearsals, which were led by Iliganoa and Tuupo-Alaimaleata, students read the lyrics from a printed sheet, reinforcing written literacies as they practiced musical literacies.

Written Literacies: Processes of Development

Teachers at Le Fetuao talk about written literacies as processes, rather than end goals or final products. In this interview excerpt, Iliganoa describes the process of developing written literacy in her beginning language class.

Literacy is being able to first of all recognize through the basics of the alphabets. And then taking it another level of where you're recognizing words, spelling them. And after recognition of words, kind of putting words together and making more sense to add verbs… With building from a basic of just recognizing words, spelling out the words, putting them into small sentences, you then develop your sense of being able to write sentences, paragraphs, and so forth. And it's then building them into reading lengthier books with the age that I work with.

In her definition of literacy, Iliganoa stresses the importance of the alphabet, which serves as the foundation of that leads to word recognition. She teaches the alphabet in her class using a chart that has each letter, a written word beginning with that letter, and a picture of that word; the other teachers use the same chart to review the alphabet and incorporate spelling into their classes frequently. Teachers teach the alphabet by pointing to a letter as the whole class reads the letter and the word aloud together, thus combining oral, visual, and written literacies from the very beginning of literacy instruction. According to Iliganoa's framework of literacy development, knowledge of the alphabet leads to recognizing words, which leads to putting words together in order to create written language, thus positioning reading and writing as two steps in the process of literacy development rather than considering them as separate skills and activities.

The valorization of written literacies at Le Fetuao interacts dynamically with the ideological value of storytelling, an oral literacy practice, resulting in the cultural importance of literature and storybooks. In this interview excerpt, Gwen explains the connection that she draws between literacy and reading books, particularly literature:

When I think of literacy, I would think of books. I love reading. I used to be a volunteer for the National American Read Aloud because I love to read, I love to create stories, and I love to read to the students aloud. I love reading.

While the literacy practices at Le Fetuao that I have described so far in this report are primarily expressive, focusing on the creation of language, here Gwen describes her love of

reading stories, which is a more receptive literacy practice. She describes reading aloud to her students, which combines written literacies with oral storytelling skills, and she mentions her love of creating stories alongside her love of reading them, further emphasizing the dynamic interaction between written and oral literacies. When I asked her if her students liked reading, she said, "You gotta be creative in such a way that they will enjoy it, to read. Because to some students, reading is very boring, so I will have to be very creative." Although her students do not all share her love of reading, she is committed to incorporating it into her class anyway, finding ways to make reading appeal to her students.

Two events in particular highlight the connection between literacy and books at Le Fetuao: the first is a visit from members of a Samoan club at a local university and the second is a talk by a well-known Samoan author. During the first event, the university students read Samoan storybooks out loud to Le Fetuao students. When Tuupo-Alaimaleata advertised the event on Facebook and introduced the university students at a community assembly, she emphasized the importance of literacy in the context of language learning. During the second literacy event, Tuupo-Alaimaleata introduced the visiting author and said that some Samoans are surprised to learn that there are ethnically Samoan authors who write in Samoan. Again, she emphasized the role of literacy in language learning, this time connecting literacy to ethnic identity and community pride. These two events, which were explicitly advertised as literacy events, were directly associated with books and literature, thus underscoring the ideological connection between written literacy and books at Le Fetuao.

The most culturally significant book in Samoan culture, and the reason Samoan became a written language in the first place, is the Bible. When I asked the teachers how they learned how to read and write in Samoan, the teachers who grew up in American Samoa told me that they learned to read at church using the Bible. In the early years of Le Fetuao, the curriculum consisted of teaching children how to read the Bible. In this interview extract, Eva talks about the role of the Bible in her beginning high school Samoan language class:

> Even though you're not supposed to teach religion, our whole culture is intertwined in it. I'm having Bibles. I'm gonna. I'm gonna teach reading through reading the Bible. So I'm getting thirty textbook Bibles delivered to me and we're gonna start reading from Genesis and that's the way we're gonna teach it. And if they need to look up words, they can get the English version and cross-reference. […] What I'm looking forward to is we'll all have the same

textbook. We can all go through it, verse by verse, together. We can do choral reading, we can do popcorn reading, we can do, you know. And if they really are curious to know what they're reading aside from the vocab that I'm identifying, they can get the English version and read it side-by-side. So I'm excited about that.

Although she is not allowed to explicitly teach religion in her public school, Eva is planning to use "textbook Bibles" to teach Samoan reading to her high school students. Because religion and the Bible play such a key role in Samoan culture, and Samoan literacy education in particular, Eva's decision to use textbook Bibles is culturally relevant and appropriate for her students, all of whom are heritage learners of Samoan. Her motivation to use Bibles in the classroom is not religious in nature but, rather, a question of literacy pedagogy; one of Eva's frustrations as a teacher of Samoan is a lack of age-appropriate curricular resources and the Bible presents a solution to that problem. She describes a range of strategies that she will apply to reading the Bible, including the choral reading, which Deborah uses as well because it was used in American Samoa when she was learning how to read. In Eva's context, using the Bible in her class is important because "our whole culture is intertwined in it," but also because it presents her students with the opportunity to learn to read in Samoan.

Technological Literacies: Using Computers

The development of technological literacy alongside other multimodal literacies is deeply relevant for the students at Le Fetuao, not necessarily because of their Samoan heritage, but because of their role as global citizens in the twenty-first century world. Le Fetuao has a technology coordinator who supports teachers and students in using computers and other technology in the classroom, in addition to putting on technology camps for the students during school breaks. Technology is clearly valued at Le Fetuao and the teachers are proud of the role that it plays in Samoan language learning. In this interview excerpt, Gwen responds to my question about whether it is important for her students to be able to use technology:

Oh yes! Of course… this world is all about that right now. So it is. It is very important that they know how to use technology. I mean, who wants to be left out? You know, as you see, everyone has a phone, everyone wants to have a phone… they should know. They should go with the flow, you know what I mean?

Gwen explains that technology is everywhere and that her students should "go with the flow" in using the tools that are available to them. When I asked if technology would help her students learn language, she said, "They will. They will. It'll help them. It'll help them learn. They can put it in and they can create it in the computer and they can know how to use the computer. Yeah, that's the best." Here, she positions technology as a tool that will benefit her students in their everyday lives just as much as it benefits their language learning.

The relationship between technological literacy and the development of other multimodal literacies is particularly evident in the bookmaking class taught by Tuupo-Alaimaleata. The purpose for the class was bookmaking, which is an expression of a wide range of oral and written literacy practices in Samoan culture. Drawing on technological resources at the school, students completed their projects using iPads to take pictures and illustrate their books. They also used the program Keynote on their MacBook Airs to construct the pages of their books, thus combining traditional Samoan literacy practices with modern-day technology skills. Traditional and modern literacies coexist in a multiliteracies framework through which students and teachers engage with their cultural and ethnic identities, and as students in the bookmaking class used computers to create stories, they utilized a whole toolkit of multiliteracies that are specific to the community of teaching and learning at Le Fetuao.

CONCLUSION

This study investigates the culturally-based practices of literacy, teaching, and learning at Le Fetuao, a Samoan community language school in Honolulu. It takes an engaged approach to ethnography, which allowed the project to contribute equally in the community-based school space and an academic understanding of multilingual learning and literacy. Literacy at Le Fetuao is dominated ideologically by an emphasis on books, reading, and writing. However, written literacies also operate in a multiliteracies framework (New London Group, 1999) that incorporates oral, technological, visual, and musical literacies as well. All of the literacies in this framework are considered and developed by teachers in a culturally relevant way that draws from traditional Samoan culture as well as the cultural realities that the students face in Hawaiʻi.

These multiliteracies are deeply embedded in a complex system of values that centers on the importance of a Samoan ethnic identity. While research has considered the relationship between

ethnic identity, cultural values, and literacy in heritage language education and other spaces (Lo-Philip, 2010; Park, 2011), and it has considered cultural values to be a critical component in community language schools (Creese & Blackledge, 2010), no study to date has explicitly positioned ethnic identity as a cultural value. Theoretically, the findings from this study imply that more attention should be paid to the complex interactions of constructs like identity, values, religion, literacy, and multilingualism.

Drawing on engaged ethnography (Davis & Phyak, in press), this project positioned teachers as co-researchers. This approach to data collection and analysis allowed me, a cultural outsider at Le Fetuao, to take on the positionality of a learner and involve the teachers in reflection about literacies and values in their teaching. As I asked them questions about their teaching, they deepened their own awareness and expanded their understanding of the way literacy operates at Le Fetuao. On more a programmatic level, this project serves as a bridge between the work done by the indigenous educators at Le Fetuao and the Western setting in which they operate. By documenting the complex cultural literacy processes happening at Le Fetuao in academic language, this report facilitates a dialogue between indigenous educators and Western academia so that both groups can learn from each other.

REFERENCES

Auer, P. (Ed.). (2003). *Code-switching in conversation: Language, interaction and identity*. London: Routledge.

Blackledge, A. (2000). *Literacy, power and social justice*. Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire, England: Trentham Books.

Cook-Gumperz, J., & Keller-Cohen, D. (1993). Alternative literacies in school and beyond: Multiple literacies of speaking and writing. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly 24*(4), 283-287.

Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (2000). Multiliteracies: The beginnings of an idea. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis, M. (Eds.), *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures*. London: Routledge.

Creese, A., & Blackledge, A. (2010). Translanguaging in the bilingual classroom: A pedagogy for learning and teaching? *The Modern Language Journal*, *94*(1), 103–115.

Cummins, J. (2006). Identity texts: The imaginative construction of self through multiliteracies pedagogy. In O. Garcia, T. Skutnabb-Kangas, & K. Torres-Guzman (Eds.), *Imagining multilingual schools: Language in education and glocalization* (pp. 51-68). Clevendon: Multilingual Matters.

Davis, K. (2009). Agentive youth research: Towards individual, collective, and policy transformations. In T. Wiley, J. Lee, & R. Rumberger (Eds.), *The education of language minority immigrants in the USA*. London: Multilingual Matters.

Davis, K. (2014). Engaged language policy and practices. *Language Policy, 13*(2), 83-100.

Davis, K. & Phyak, P. (in press). *Engaging language policy and practices*. New York: Routledge.

Dickie, J. (2011). Samoan students documenting their out-of-school literacies: An insider view of conflicting values. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy, 34*(3), 247-257.

Dickie, J., & McDonald, G. (2011). Literacy in church and family sites through the eyes of Samoan children in New Zealand. *Literacy, 45*(1), 25-30.

Duran, L., & Palmer, D. (2014). Pluralist discourses of bilingualism and translanguaging talk in classrooms. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, *14*(3), 367–388. http://doi.org/10.1177/1468798413497386

Edge, J. (1996). Cross-cultural paradoxes in a profession of values. *TESOL Quarterly*, *30*(1), 9–30.

Farr, M., & Song, J. (2011). Language ideologies and policies: Multilingualism and education: Language ideologies, policies and education. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, *5*(9), 650–665. http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-818X.2011.00298.x

Fishman, J. A. (2001). 300-plus years of heritage language education in the United States. In J. K. Peyton, D. A. Ranard, & McGinnis, S. (Eds.), *Heritage languages in America: Preserving a national resource* (pp. 81-97). Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics & Delta Systems.

Fitts, S. (2009). Exploring third space in a dual-language setting: Opportunities and challenges. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, *8*(2), 87–104. http://doi.org/10.1080/15348430902750668

Freeman, D. (1983). *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The making and unmaking of an anthropological myth*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Garcia, O., Zakhenia, Z., & Octu, B. (2013). *Bilingual community education and multilingualism: Beyond heritage languages in a global city*. New York: Multilingual Matters.

Garcia, O. (2011). The translanguaging of Latino kindergarteners. In J. Rothman & K. Potowski (Eds.), *Bilingual youth: Spanish in English-speaking societies* (pp. 33–55). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Goodman, R. A. (1983). *Mead's Coming of age in Samoa, a dissenting view.* Oakland, CA: Pipperine.

Haddix, M., & Sealey-Ruiz, Y. (2012). Cultivating digital and popular literacies as empowering and emancipatory acts among urban youth. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacies, 56*(3), 189-192.

Haneda, M. (2006). Becoming literate in a second language: Connecting home, community, and school literacy practices. *Theory into Practice*, *45*(4), 337–345.

Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Heller, M. (1999). *Linguistic minorities and modernity: A sociolinguistic ethnography*. London: Longman.

Hélot, C. (2011). Children's literature in the multilingual classroom: Developing multilingual literacy acquisition. In C. Hélot, & M. O'Laorie (Eds.). *Bilingual education and bilingualism: Language policy for the multilingual classroom: Pedagogy of the possible* (pp. 42-64). Bristol, UK: Channel View.

Kelleher, A. (2001). What is a heritage language program? *Heritage briefs*. Center for Applied Linguistics. Retrieved from http://www.cal.org/heritage/research/What-is-a-Heritage-Language.pdf.

Knobel, M., & Lankshear, C. (2014). Studying new literacies. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacies, 58*(2), 97-101.

Lo Bianco, J. (2000). Multiliteracies and multilingualism. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures*. London: Routledge.

Lo-Philip, S. W.-Y. (2010). Towards a theoretical framework of heritage language literacy and identity processes. *Linguistics and Education, 21*(4), 282-297.

Mead, M. (1936). *Coming of age in Samoa: A psychological study of primitive youth for western civilization*. New York: Blue Ribbon.

Martinez, R. A. (2010). Spanglish as literacy tool: Toward an understanding of the potential role of Spanish-English code-switching in the development of academic literacy. *Research in the Teaching of English*, *45*(2), 124–149.

Molle, D. (2015). Introduction. In D. Molle, E. Sato, T. Boals, & C. Hedgspeth (Eds.). *Multilingual learners and academic literacies* (pp. 255-276). New York: Routledge.

Park, M. (2011). Identity and agency among heritage language learners. In Davis, K. (Ed.). *Critical qualitative research in second language studies: Agency and advocacy*. Greenwich, CN: Information Age.

Pennycook, A. (2010). Nationalism, identity, and popular culture. In N. H. Hornberger, & S. McKay (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and language teaching*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative researcher: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Valdés, G. (2001). Heritage language students: Profiles and possibilities. In J. K. Peyton, S. McGinnis, & D. A. Ranard (Eds.), *Heritage languages in America: Preserving a national*

resource (pp. 37–77). Washington, DC: The Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems.

Wang, X. (2011). *Parents and teachers' guides: Learning to read and write in the multilingual family.* Bristol, UK: Channel View.

Zielinska, M., Kowzan, P., & Ragnarsdóttir, H. (2014). Polish complementary schools in Iceland and England. *Intercultural Education, 25*(5), 405-417.