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# **An Investigation on Pasifika Students' Attitudes Towards Reading Comprehension**

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*A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of [Masters of Education], The  
University of Auckland, 2012.*

## Abstract

*Attitudes towards learning in education are considered as both determinants and consequences of learning experiences. In school settings, a student's attitude towards learning can influence their entire experiences of education affecting their overall achievement levels and hence, whole life.*

*This study investigated the attitudes of Year 3 Pasifika students and their teachers towards the teaching and learning of reading comprehension. Six students, three Samoan and three Tongan and their two teachers from one school were involved. The rationale for the study was to better understand student and teacher attitudes and implications these might have on motivation to read and understand texts. To capture these attitudes, semi-structured interviews were conducted using a Fijian methodology known as 'Talanoa' because of its qualitative, ecological, oral interactive approach to research in Pasifika culture especially in a face-to-face conversation.*

*The results from student interviews suggest that while all students were keen to read all types of texts, their choice of favourite text is very much dependent on past familiarisations and socialisations thus developing an independent ability to make effective connections with prior knowledge and experience. The second is that all students liked being read to by their teacher especially when the teacher reads with expression for understanding and motivation. From teacher interviews, teachers focused mainly on student literacy 'lacks' including those of their parents rather than on what students bring to classroom teaching and learning. Their interpretations of student and parent attitudes to teaching and learning of reading comprehension suggest that teachers knew their students and their parents well. However, they did not know them well enough to decipher student and parent preferences for learning and academic success. In the student case studies, it was found that while both students liked reading, the high achieving student, taught by one teacher was a more avid and independent reader preferring more informational texts than the low achieving student who was taught by the other teacher.*

*The findings reinforce the importance of student attitudes and student voice in their learning and success of reading comprehension and, equally important the beliefs and attitudes of their teachers towards the teaching of reading comprehension.*

## Acknowledgements

The writing of this thesis could not have happened without the help and support of a number of people.

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Your words of encouragement, sharing your professional knowledge, guidance and support is greatly appreciated and valued. Every time I was overloaded with emotional stress and slowing down in my studies, you reminded me by saying this quote to me to keep me going and to help me succeed.

*Don't let satan steal away the seed that God has planted in you to teach ~ Malcolm B Heap*

I wish to acknowledge and thank the principal, teachers, parent and students who consented to and participated in this study.

A special acknowledgement to my two children for their support and putting up with all things during this study. Thank you Ronish Sharma and Riya Sharma.

## Dedication

I dedicate this work to my best friend Patrick Prakash who is no longer in this world but is resting peacefully in heaven, who was an inspiration, a role model and is my guardian angel, watching over and protecting me and my two children. May you always be happy and be loved. You always guided and supported me into the pathway of education. God bless you.

*The soul at its highest is found like God, but an angel gives a closer idea of Him. That is all an angel is: an idea of God. ~Meister Eckhart*

This work is dedicated to my two children Ronish and Riya, you are the future, make every experience of your life valuable and appreciate the opportunities that life offers you, whether good or bad. Always remember to value education because education is a valuable investment.

*Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world ~Nelson Mandela*

The reason I have invested in this work is to send a message to students, educators, parents and every human being that an attitude is a little thing and it is everything that makes a huge difference in a person's life.

*Our attitudes control our lives. Attitudes are a secret power working twenty four hours a day, for good or bad. It is of paramount importance that we know how to harness and control this great force ~Tom Blandi*

With Love, Ravina Devi

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

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Reading comprehension is the key to academic success (Paris & Stahl, 2005). The ability to read and comprehend what is read, is a skill that will serve students throughout their educational life and beyond, if learned correctly (Block, Gambrell & Pressley, 2002). Reading comprehension is extremely important and is defined as the level of understanding of a text. Reading is the key element in obtaining the information required to understand a text. Through reading, we develop good communication skills and become better writers. Being a good reader is, therefore, more than just knowing the words. It means having the ability to understand these words in a given context and being able to apply that understanding to different situations (Block, Gambrell & Pressley, 2002; Amituanai-Tolua, 2005). Recent studies in New Zealand have found that students who are linguistically and culturally diverse, such as Pasifika, are good decoders but lack the understanding of what they are reading (McNaughton, MacDonald, Amituanai-Tolua, Lai, & Farry, 2006).

Evidence also showed that the development lag in reading comprehension, particularly for Samoan bilingual students, from Year 4 to Year 5 before they 'catch up' to mainstream students at Year 6 might be attributed to this lack of skills in reading to understand texts at that level (Amituana-Tolua, 2005). These two studies, however, did not examine students' attitudes towards their learning of reading comprehension although the latter study examined teachers' pedagogical beliefs about the topic. It would perhaps have been valuable to have ascertained students' reactions to their learning in order to know the factors which motivate them to develop better reading comprehension skills. This study therefore is predicted to add further information to what is already known about student voice and their ideas about learning to understand.

In a more recent study, students were interviewed on their preference of teachers (Amituanai-Tolosa, McNaughton, Lai, & Arini, 2009). The researchers found that student preference is not only for 'firm' and 'strict' teachers but also for ones who have a 'sense' of Pasifika humour. While that study did not particularly focus on attitudes of students towards reading comprehension, it is these kinds of attitudes, that can reveal more of what students think, are the best ways for them to learn. It is these attitudes towards the teaching of reading comprehension that are more the focus of this study because students do not just 'make up their minds' about a particular teacher and their attitudes. Students characterise and judge teachers based on what they have observed of their teaching.

Researchers have found that when children begin primary education, it is during the early years at primary school that their positive or negative attitudes towards reading is greatly influenced or motivated by the values, attitudes and educational expectations that teachers have towards reading (Richardson, Anders, Tidwell & Lloyd, 1991; Wang, 2000; Zygouris-Coe, 2001). In other words, a teachers' attitude is the most important factor in encouraging children to read. According to Jalongo (2004), children benefit from reading with an enthusiastic adult. The love of reading and an interest in books cannot be taught by teachers, but teachers reading to their students everyday will encourage them to enjoy and appreciate the gift of reading. Teachers are able to express their enthusiasm and enjoyment of literature through shared reading. As a result, teachers help students develop positive attitudes about reading. Most importantly a teachers role as an active participant in teaching and showing their students that reading is an important and worthwhile activity (Jalongo, 2004). It is important to note that our attitudes are formed by our actions and our perception on reading will impact on our students that they will carry throughout their lives.

Seitz (2010), in her research in the field of reading discovered that student's engagement with literature needs to begin with enjoyment. This means that teachers need to expose their students to an environment that is flooded with print. But not just any print, teachers need to provide a selection of books that are significant to the students own interests apart from the books that are aimed towards achieving reading level. The need for students to be exposed to a wide variety of interesting and comprehensible material means that it will give them an opportunity to learn to read. This in turn will help students build a positive attitude towards reading and arouse their interests in reading (Wang, 2000; Zygouris-Coe, 2001). Reading then becomes an activity in which students can engage themselves and can be perceived as being both interesting and enjoyable.

Reading is the key to knowledge and wisdom and this makes reading a foundation of lifelong learning in education (Zygouris-Coe, 2001). In the early years of primary school, a student's ability to read is important to gaining success in both school and life. Undoubtedly, the acquisition of children's reading skills will be dependent on the teacher's knowledge of literacy and literacy development but more importantly, in this case, their commitment, enthusiasm and attitude towards reading (Ministry of Education, 2006).

One of the arguments in this study is that attitudes of students towards reading comprehension and more specifically the learning of reading comprehension is very much dependent on the attitudes of their teachers towards children and their learning of reading comprehension. Historically, Pasifika student underachievement in reading comprehension has often been explained by a view of Pasifika languages and cultures that is based on deficit thinking (Ministry of Education, 2009). Past research has focused much attention on identifying reasons why Pasifika students are constantly underachieving in reading comprehension in schools in New Zealand and these studies have provided much information about some of the reasons behind Pasifika student underachievement

levels in reading comprehension. In other words, the way teachers teach or pedagogical practice is a key determinant of a student's success in all curriculum areas which can dictate the rise or fall of a student's academic life. According to Alton-Lee (2004), the most important determinant of student success is teacher effectiveness. This study would be able to reveal and predict more of the features and factors relating to or influencing students' attitudes towards learning and particularly reading and reading comprehension by gathering from students about their likes and dislikes of reading and learning of reading comprehension in addition to teachers' attitudes to their students' learning and reading comprehension instruction.

Student attitudes to learning and teacher attitudes to teaching play a vital role in student's learning and success. For example, studies have found that low expectations displayed by teachers contribute negatively to academic success of Pasifika students (Otunuku & Brown, 2007). This is reinforced by research which show that student achievement is closely linked with student attitudes towards a particular subject. For example, Evans (1965) in a study found that an attitude can alter every aspect of a student's life including their education. Pasifika students' attitudes towards learning were found to be generally positive (Otunuku & Brown, 2007). However, it would be interesting to know if Pasifika students' attitudes towards reading comprehension in the present study are similar. This was the goal to be examined.

In relation to English as Second Language Learners (ESLL) overseas, the evidence suggests that students for whom English is a second language, have lower levels of achievement in reading comprehension than monolingual students (Tabors & Snow, 2001; Garcia, 2003). Researchers have also found that there was a significant difference in students' attitudes towards reading comprehension which affected their achievement levels (Block, Gambrell & Pressley, 2002; Merisuo-Storm, 2006).

The Pasifika group, according to the statistics from the recent census, make up 6.9% of the school population (NZ Statistics, 2006) and is the fastest growing school populations especially in the 7-15 age brackets. It is predicted that by the year 2026, 10% of the population in New Zealand will be Pasifika people. The Pasifika Education plan instigated by the Ministry of Education stated that over the next 40 years the percentage of Pasifika students is predicted to be doubled (Ministry of Education, 2009). This means Pasifika students would be facing the challenges in learning because English is their second language in their home and community. Teaching Pasifika students effectively is an increasingly important challenge for New Zealand teachers as well. The fact that Pasifika students underachievement in reading comprehension in New Zealand has dominated educational reports in the last three decades (Ramsay, Sneddon, Grenfell & Ford, 1981) and for quite some time, heightens the challenge.

The rationale behind this study was to focus on Year 3 Pasifika students attitudes towards reading comprehension. The aim was to gather their ideas by giving them a chance to share their perceptions about teaching and learning in reading comprehension. Given the low levels of reading comprehension for Pasifika, the hope was that students might voice possible strategies to enable their learning to improve and thus increase their levels of reading comprehension or other areas of learning in the classroom. The research question was: what are Pasifika students' attitudes towards the teaching and learning of reading comprehension? In an attempt to answer the research question, a Pasifika methodology was employed to gain insights from students about their attitudes to the learning of reading comprehension and their teachers beliefs on their teaching of reading comprehension to their Pasifika students. Talanoa was a culturally appropriate methodology used in this study which made fieldwork more reliable and valued. Talanoa encourages ethnic Fijians and other Pacific Islanders to talk and tell stories in a face-to-face conversation, but ideally to gain in-depth knowledge during the discussions with family members, villagers and other communities.

## **1.1. Outline of thesis chapters**

There are six chapters in this thesis. The first chapter presents a brief Introduction of the topic. In Chapter Two – the Literature on the topic is examined and critiqued. The third chapter describes the Methodology on how the study is conducted. The Results chapter four reports the Findings of the study. Chapter Five presents the Discussions of the findings and Chapter Six outlines conclusions, some implications, limitations of the study and finally, future recommendations and possible future research.



## Chapter 2. Literature Review

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### 2.1. What is an attitude?

Attitude is an everyday word that we often use but rarely defined. It is sometimes used to describe a personal view of something, and at other times an opinion or a general feeling about something. These descriptions imply that an attitude might have originated from something or somewhere which enabled these descriptions to be made. For example, if attitude is a personal view of something or an opinion or even a general feeling, how did that view come into existence? Where were they formulated and why were they formulated? In this chapter, the term attitude is examined from a historical viewpoint to understand how it is applied nowadays especially in relation to children's learning.

Attitudes, in relation to children's learning, have negative or positive reactions especially of a student towards a subject. An attitude, according to La Piere (1934), is what determines students' liking or disliking of a particular subject. According to the historical literature, the word 'attitude' is noted to derive from the Greek word "Phroneo" or "froneo" (its equivalent is 'Bin' in Hebrew). Both terms generally mean 'mind' and the 'thinking' that happens in the 'mind'. In other words, what is in the mind and the thinking process determine how a student likes or dislikes any subject. It is also this attitude that can somehow dictate the learning and what that learning should be or could be. This is because the mind and what is happening in it is also situationally and experientially affected which in turn impacts on how learning occurs.

According to Bostick (2010), thinking is not the only thing that happens in the mind. Rather, he argues, it is also about the involvement of the will, the affections, and the conscience of a person in the thinking process. This seems to suggest that the thinking process of the mind and its

involvement with other players in the process is such that, there are bound to be complexities within it and that these complexities might have originated from the different meanings of the involvements attached to both terms. These involvements imply guidance. However, guidance is dependent on the knowledge, situation and experience of the one being guided. According to La Piere (ibid), the argument is that in order to provide guidance particularly in the context of a classroom such as in this study, it is important to know about students' situations and their experiences. However, it is not always possible to know what these are or whether a situation or an experience is positive or negative for a student unless the students themselves explicitly provide that information and the rationales behind that explicitness. The interviews with students might be able to provide that vital information about phroneo.

The first definition of phroneo, for example, is "to have an understanding and to be wise" (Goepel, 2002). Understanding and being wise is more than having knowledge. In the context of this study, this definition of attitude suggests that in order for a child to understand and become wise, the child has to have knowledge. That means having a sound knowledge or perspective of a concept or an idea about something confronted. In other words, an attitude can be defined as a perspective about different situations and experiences. For example, according to Evans (1965), Mager (1984) and Gardner (1985), an attitude is a positive or a negative view of an individual about a person, a place or a thing. It is during this thinking process that individuals' attitudes, negative or positive are developed. Bruner (1997) describes it as the capacity of the mind to perceive and understand the meanings communicated in reading comprehension. In the context of the present study, it is the mind and the thinking that happens in the mind during teaching and learning of reading comprehension that is the goal to be examined. It is predicted that children might be able to express both during the interviews.

The second definition of *phroneo*, for example, is “to feel and to think” Goepel, (2002). The way a person behaves towards someone or something, shows how they think and feel. This definition of attitude in relation to the present study suggests that for children to feel and to think is really how they respond and approach certain experiences or situations. In other words, an attitude may be formed which may reflect how children might think, feel and behave towards, for example, reading comprehension. According to Allen (1952), for example, the process of thinking and feeling happens in a person’s mind. The way a person might feel or think is largely affected by the people that he or she has been interacting with. This creates a person’s negative and positive thoughts about a person, things, experiences and situations. Readers emotional experiences such as feeling empathy and anticipation is found to be related to the way a reader thinks of the process of the story (Komeda, Kawasaki, Tsunemi & Kusumi, 2009). In the context of the present study, the way the children might think and feel about the experiences of the teaching and learning of reading comprehension during the interviews, and the way that they might react to the research question might reveal their attitudes. The types of attitudes the students might have may vary depending on their thoughts and feelings at that particular time in their lives. Students’ attitudes towards reading comprehension might be a case of feeling and thinking negatively versus positively during the interviews because children think in different ways to adults. They do not always understand situations in the same way as adults. It is predicted that children may think and feel differently about the research questions to the way the researcher does.

To ‘know by experience’ is the third definition of *phroneo* (Goepel, 2002). Attitudes can and do change as a result of our experience albeit positive or negative. In the context of the present study, this definition of attitude suggests that children learn most readily from experience. For example, John Dewey understood this when he stated that “action is the test of comprehension” and to learn by “doing” something and to act on knowledge is the basis of kinaesthetic teaching and learning

(Dewey, 1915). This refers to the experiences children might obtain by conducting an activity which involves children's minds and senses. In other words, a child can only know about certain experiences through having an experience. According to Cambrosio and Keating (1988), it is through children's experiences that knowledge is created and it is this created knowledge that children can use to know something in a situation. The interviews with the children might be helpful to know more about their experiences in reading comprehension. Children's minds will only know what it experiences during the teaching and learning of reading comprehension and therefore their thoughts might determine their attitudes towards it.

The other definition of *proneo*, is "to have an opinion of one's self, to think of one's self" (Goepel, 2002). This refers to attitudes of people towards themselves, especially their thoughts about how good they are. Thinking about one's self helps a child to know about themselves, their needs, wants, strengths and weaknesses (Ajzen, 2005). This definition of attitude suggests that during the interviews with students in the present study, the opinion of children that they might have of themselves about their attitudes towards reading comprehension may be the most important determinant factor of how others perceive them. According to Ajzen (2005), for example, many people go around thinking and having negative opinions on the inside and not realizing that how they feel about themselves is affecting what is perceived by others around them, and in return, affecting their relationships, their opportunities and overall life. In the context of this study, the information provided by the children might be based on what their opinions of themselves, and their personal experiences with their peers, at home and at school, had been during the teaching and learning of reading comprehension. The children's opinions of themselves might either be negative or positive and may vary greatly. That means an opinion a child has of self is the most important opinion that they can have. This information will be vital for this study to see and understand things from children's points of view and perspectives.

In relation to attitudes to reading comprehension, this aspect is closely related to metacognition. Metacognition is self-cognition – that is – what one thinks about oneself. Attitudes plays a critical role in metacognition self-control. Metacognitive thoughts also produce changes in thought, feeling, and behaviour, and thus are critical for a complete understanding of a person's attitude (Briñol & DeMarree, 2012). The first studies of metacognition in practice involved reading. Metacognition is an instrument in reading and comprehending the text because it detects error in a text and a part of a passage which does not make sense in terms of a whole passage (Larkin, 2010). This process happens in students minds where they reflect on their own thinking keeping track of how their thinking enables them to understand and make connections to the text.

This links to the next definition of phroneo. Phroneo, is also defined as, “to direct one's mind to a thing” (Goepel, 2002). Our mind has a habit of wandering and stopping our mind from wandering is to practice, persevere and have patience to direct it to one particular task (Sasson, 2011). In the context of the present study, this definition of attitude suggests that for a child to focus their mind on one particular activity, and prevent it from wandering to other activities or thoughts, they need to align their minds with what they are doing. The argument is that a child should not be engaged in one thing while thinking about something else. Engaging their mind on one activity at a time, can save children the time that they might waste on correcting errors and mistakes due to lack of attention. For example, according to Sasson (2011), the mind keeps thinking, worrying, asking questions, answering, giving excuses, telling stories, imagining, creating problems and solving them. These thoughts expressed from a child's mind provide clues to their attitudes. It is predicted that during the interviews the children might have multiple thoughts and expressions because their mind might wander to different things and prevent them from answering the research questions to the level of their understanding. This might not be easy for the children, but in order to succeed, practice, perseverance and patience are necessary. When children should show indications of

having a wandering mind during the interviews, bringing it back to focusing on answering the research questions might be possible through focusing on one issue at a time.

Another definition of *phroneo*, for example, is “to seek one’s interests” (Goepel, 2002). This means that a person is doing what is in their best interest (Rachels, 2010). In the context of the present study and in particular reading comprehension, this definition of attitude suggests that students might do what they want to do out of their own self-interest or they might verbalise some of their own interests by communicating the experiences of their own interest of teaching and learning of reading comprehension. By doing so, students might have opportunities to voice their ideas, opinions and concerns about reading comprehension to influence any changes that could be sought. According to Rachels (2010), for example, when a person seeks his or her own interests in doing anything, it benefits others as well as the main person’s interests. This means that pursuing one’s interests can provide a positive outcome and a long term goal for other people. It is known to be a very positive idea when a person wants to have success in life. Rachels also argues that a person must seek out their own interest as well as allow others to seek out what is in their best interest. In doing so, if both parties’ interests are competing against one another, what is in both of their interests becomes a contradiction. This seems to suggest that a person cannot do what is in their best interest and not get in the way of what is in another’s best interest. The interviews with the children might be able to provide that crucial information that might clarify some of the suggestions made in the literature about seeking one’s interest.

Perhaps the nearest definition of *phroneo* to this study, is ‘to comprehend’ (Goepel, 2002). Comprehension is understanding the meaning of something a person has read or being able to make sense of things (Block, Gambrell and Pressley, 2002). In relation to the present study, to comprehend means to understand and make meaning of a text a child has read and be able to

understand why something is the way it is. This means that if children are reading the texts but do not understand what they are reading, they are not really reading. For example, according to Block, Gambrell and Pressley (2002), in order to comprehend a child needs to get a complete understanding of what they are reading, and by practising reading comprehension techniques, not only will they improve their understanding of the content, they will also be better able to utilize the information they have learned because of the thinking processes involved in reading particularly reading critically. It is predicted that the children might verbalise a sound knowledge and understanding of their learning and teaching of reading comprehension from their previous and current experiences thus capturing certain attitudes in their responses. The present study will also investigate if students have had the opportunity to incorporate their home and classroom reading comprehension strategies to practice and improve their ability to understand what they read and construct meaning of the text. A positive attitude on the part of the student is crucial in achieving success during their teaching and learning to comprehend the text. Students in this study might mention some of their difficulties and progressions to comprehend the text and what their attitudes might be towards this phenomenon thereby being able to verbalise what they are thinking and hence articulate an opinion.

This leads to the eighth definition of phroneo. That is, “to think, or hold an opinion” (Goepel, 2002). To think is a cognitive process that happens in people’s mind and every person holds an opinion according to what they think of a certain experience or situation (Ajzen, 2005). This definition of attitude is somehow similar to the fourth definition of attitude, “to have an opinion of one’s self, to think of one’s self”. The difference between the two, however, is that this definition implies thinking and holding an opinion of something external to the person while the other is about self and therefore internal. For example, Ajzen (2005), argues that what people think of themselves and their opinion of themselves also affects what is perceived by others around them, and in return,

affecting their relationships, their opportunities and overall life. In the context of the present study, this definition of attitude suggests that the thinking that might happen in children's minds during the interviews may be expressed in a form of an opinion that they might have or had from their experiences with their peers, at home and at school in teaching and learning of reading comprehension. The opinion that the children might have may create their views and attitudes which may be either negative or positive and expressed in the form of words and expressions. According to La Piere (1934), for example, a person has the right to think and hold an opinion about different things, people, object and their experiences. This seems to suggest that when children judge and think about their attitudes towards reading comprehension during the interviews, they might have already held a formed opinion in their minds which might be expressed based on their preference of thoughts and choice of expression.

The ninth definition of phroneo is "to have thoughts or an attitude" (Goepel, 2002). It is through a person's thoughts and attitudes that their physical and spiritual realities are created. Thoughts and attitudes are the most important wisdoms in life that needs to be kept in balance (Workman, 2008). This definition of attitude in the context of the present study suggests that the kinds of thoughts the children might have may determine the attitudes they choose to have. In other words, an attitude can be defined as our thoughts and feelings about any situation. For example, according to Workman (2008), thoughts and attitudes of a person may become the foundation of success or failure in anything a person does in their experiences of life. This might mean that what the children might say during the interviews may start with the thoughts they may be thinking, the pictures they may be holding in their mind and the feelings that may surround them during the experiences of teaching and learning of reading comprehension. In the context of the present study it is the thoughts and attitudes of children towards reading comprehension that is the goal to be examined. This is because children's thoughts (words, pictures and feelings), the way they think



and feel about things in their minds reflects their attitudes and the way they react to experiences and situations that they live in at a particular time. It is predicted that the interviews with the children might reveal valuable information required for the present study.

Phroneo is also “to honour, and to respect” (Goepel, 2002). Respect means honouring other people and treating them with care and courtesy. Honour comes from the heart and attaches worth to a person while respect includes good manners and focuses on a person’s behaviour. That means doing what is right and appropriate and acknowledging a person’s position. This definition of attitude in the context of the present study suggests that the children in the interviews are needed to be honoured first followed by to be respected for who they are and for their voluntarily participation. Childrens views, perspectives and attitudes during the interviews are to be first of all honoured, respected and acknowledged in that order. From a psychological viewpoint, Petersen (2008) states, that people need to win children’s respect and not try to demand or force it. He argues that forcing to gain respect from children might allow for some cooperation between the child and the parent or the teacher but it does not build true respect for each other. He believes that gaining children’s respect begins with treating them respectfully and honouring their worthiness to build a good relationship. However, conducive with this definition of phroneo, to honour paves the way for unforceful respect and when that order is established, trust between children and teachers, children and parents and children and other adults can truly be phroneo.

One of the main goals of the present study is to build a good relationship between the researcher and the participants right from the beginning that can be honoured and respected throughout the study and which can be maintained after the study is completed. This means that respect needs to be won through honour by giving it, and earned via acknowledgement of worth and equality from both the researcher and the participants. Trust then can be an honourable outcome. Children are

our equals, not in skill or knowledge, but in human dignity and we should treat them as such (Petersen, 2008). In relation to this study, this trust needs to be cemented initially for children to feel comfortable to respond openly to the questions about what is in their minds and what their thinking process is about their learning.

It is this influence of trust that we begin to explore what is in students' minds and their thinking processes that will predictably determine what they will say in response to the interview questions. For example, according to Evans (1965), the influence of attitudes determines what a person might do or say, what a person might like or dislike, a person's approach to different people and a person's reactions to situations in their own life and the world around them depending on the situation. This might mean that what children might say during the interviews would be very much dependent on their preferences of thought and choice of expression given the different situations and circumstances that are in their lives at that particular time. These expressions of thought albeit in actions or words could perhaps also provide indications of what children are like. For example, in addition to Evans (1965), other researchers (e.g. Mager, 1984; Gardner, 1985) have argued that the expression of individual's attitudes can provide clues of a personality, either in actions or words. However, expressions of individuals' attitudes cannot be explained by actions or words alone because some actions might not match the intention of words spoken. For example, social psychologists Evans (1965) and Gardner (1985), examined attitudes in terms of three components. These are cognitive, affective and behavioural. According to these psychologists, the cognitive component involves a person's beliefs, the affective component involves a person's feelings and the behavioural component involves how a person acts and behaves. The three components are known as the ABC model of attitudes and are usually linked (La Piere, 1934). However, it was found that the cognitive and affective components do not always match with the behaviour component. This seems to suggest that the mismatch might be due to the absence of honour in relation to phroneo although respect is which in this case is not total respect because the behaviour component is missing. The

interviews with the students in the present study might or might not reveal these componential attitudes and whether similar results in relation to the mismatch between cognitive, affective and behaviour might be evident or not. Should there be evidence of a mismatch, it would be interesting to see what features of this mismatch might be and also the factors that might influence the mismatch. More importantly, how this mismatch comes about.

## **2.2. Attitude in students' voices**

The interviews with students will provide student voice. Student voice describes the different views of their own attitudes which is in their mind according to the thinking process. This is the argument presented by Manefield, Mahar, Warne, Collins & Moore (2007), in which they state that:

*Changing attitudes in the society and the views of students themselves have led to the development and refinement of the concept of student voice (p. 5)*

In the context of the present study, 'voice' simply means an opportunity for students to communicate ideas, opinions, interests and experiences and having the power to influence any change. Students from the current study might voice their experiences of the teaching and learning of reading comprehension during the interviews or might not according to their circumstances at the time. The thinking that will happen in their mind during the interviews might determine what they may say about what their attitudes towards reading comprehension are. Attitude in students' voice might be either negative or positive thinking of students during the interviews to represent their own ideas, opinions, knowledge, interests and experiences in reading comprehension.

Smith, Taylor and Gallop (2000) stress that students are often seen as passive recipients rather than active participants who can offer their own perceptions of their learning and can direct educators

towards providing better conditions for their schooling. Pasifika students experiencing difficulties in learning reading comprehension skills need to voice their opinion to relieve problems experienced by them as learners. There appears to be limited information from low achieving Pasifika students about their perceptions of their learning of reading comprehension. According to Flockton and Crook (2005), students reported that they did not get specific feedback on what they were good at in reading and what they needed to do to improve on. Feedback is one of the most important aspects of learning suggested by Hattie (2003) and thus ecological and sociocultural theory that looking at the world from children's perspectives and hearing their voices is helpful and necessary. Smith (1998), also argues that educators have much to learn from listening to children's voices. She suggests that children are capable of understanding complicated issues. Therefore it is important to seek their understanding about their learning as this understanding could provide useful information for researchers and educators where they would be able to find out more about how students experience the teaching and learning of reading comprehension in their everyday lives.

### **2.3. What the literature says about attitudes in general learning**

An attitude can alter every aspect of a student's life, including their education (Evans, 1965). This is because a student's attitude towards learning has a strong impact on their ability and willingness to learn (Mager, 1984; Gardner, 1985). In other words, a student's attitude whether negative or positive, affects their general academic performance throughout their life and it might dictate the success of their education from early years to adult years. Negative attitudes, therefore need to be changed with positive attitudes, and reinforced in order for students to be able to continue further than what is required in their education. From behavioural theory, Gardner (1985), the behavioural theory advocates a positive reinforcement in order to develop students positive attitude in learning. He believes that the behavioural theory is consistent with the attitudes towards learning at primary school level. He argues that, positive reinforcement is, perhaps, an important aspect that can be

applied when working towards making a positive difference in students' lives. In the context of the present study and in particular reading comprehension, students might display or verbalise some of these behavioural attitudes or they might not. However, it might be difficult for students to display attitudes that are not positively reinforced. What could be predicted is that negative attitudes to learning might not be fully expressed by their thinking given their learning experiences which might have been related to reading comprehension.

Providing students with, lasting positive attitudes during their first school years is important because it is during these years that foundations of learning are set. According to Sallabas (2008), for example, attitudes lie along a continuum of negative to positive effects and thus differ between gender and ethnicity. In the case of attitudes to specific subjects, students' positive and negative attitudes are determined by their likes and dislikes towards that subject. Positive attitudes affects students' academic success. Improving their achievement and changing negative attitudes to positive attitudes are more likely to improve achievement. The data from the interviews in the present study and students' achievement data from previous years may be able to show what the students attitudes are likely to be in terms of positive and negative attitudes by the achievement levels.

Students with lack of confidence in learning usually have negative attitudes. Paris and Stahl (2005), argue that this happens because most students are not emotionally engaged in their learning. They warned that this issue might be avoidable in the classroom but not in the real world. By so doing, will provide positive, sometimes even passionate attitudes where students are likely to take ownership of their own learning and thus begin to build confidence in themselves. For example, some students tend to develop a stronger confidence in learning than others (Merisuo-Storm, 2006). Others, according to Rye (2006), do not and thus it is important to develop students' attitudes to

having confidence from an early age because such a change may influence the way in which a student will approach a task, for example, reading a text during the process of reading comprehension. At this early stage, in the case of reading, students ability to read from written text can be difficult and frustrating, especially for students who are slow readers or perhaps lack the skills to comprehend texts they read. This means that at this stage students negative or positive attitudes may begin to be formulated.

Positive attitudes towards learning needs to be developed as a priority because how young children are taught initially shapes their beliefs of learning over a long period of time. For example, Hammond and Nessel (2011), argue that when teachers and students view reading and reading comprehension as a meaning making process from a very early age, students have a greater chance of being successful and develop a positive attitude towards reading comprehension through the grades and across the curriculum. However, it is important to stress that all students are readily born with a wealth of knowledge and do have the potential to learn. It would be interesting to see if this is the case with students in this study in terms of illustrating a positive attitude towards reading comprehension.

It is also important to explore the roots of origins of attitudes of students and their potential in learning to provide the most positive learning experiences for all students (Bunch & Valeo, 2004). The roots of attitudes, according to Bostick (2010), originates from students' minds, which affects a students' willingness, feelings and thinking towards their learning. This means that in order to examine students attitudes towards learning and bring out their potential in learning, the thinking that happens in their mind during teaching and learning of reading comprehension needs to be explored. The present study might be able to bring this out during the interviews with the students.

## **2.4. What are Pasifika students attitudes when they are generally learning?**

The attitudes of Pasifika students towards learning have been found to be generally positive (Otunuku & Brown, 2007). Pasifika students in New Zealand, particularly those who are New Zealand-born Samoans and Tongans and who are born outside of New Zealand, are minority groups in New Zealand classrooms. These children are first, second or third generation immigrants and are facing challenges in learning through the different curriculum areas because English is often a second language in their home and community (Fletcher, Parkill, Fa'afoi, Taleni, 2009). According to these authors, Pasifika students have demonstrated a strong desire to engage and succeed in education. In addition, they want to maintain their own language and cultural identity. Students in this study might make a mention of texts that might not be interesting to them due to the absence of their cultural background or linguistic aspects in them.

Pasifika students' attitudes towards learning has been shaped by their parents beliefs and values about their language. Pasifika parents believe that it is important that their children speak both English and their own language because it helps them understand and make meaning of the texts easier in two languages (Tuafuti & McCaffery, 2005). For example, some words in reading texts might relate to things that the Pasifika student had not yet experienced or that were unfamiliar concepts, while other words may not be commonly used or have equal translations in their Pasifika first language. Tuafuti and McCaffery (2005) have found that when Pasifika students language was used as part of their learning, their confidence and attitudes towards learning seemed more positive.

Sainsbury and Schagen (2004) stress this point that when a student has a "positive self-concept as a learner, a desire and tendency to learn and a reported enjoyment of or interest in learning" (p.374),

they are more likely to succeed in any learning area. This will also work well for Pasifika students' attitudes towards learning. Unfortunately, Pasifika students low academic performance levels had been for some time been blamed on their low socio economic status. As a result, these students' positive attitudes can become at risk. In this case deficit theory is a concept that is used widely to explain minority students' negative attitudes and failure at school (Bishop, Berryman et al, 2007; Hogg, 2011). Deficit theory in education blames minority students, their families, their communities and the low socio economic status that they come from for their underachievement (Bishop, Berryman et al, 2007; Hogg, 2011). The negative effects of deficit theory can lead to students having negative attitudes about themselves and their abilities.

## **2.5. Students' attitudes towards reading comprehension**

Rye (2006) stated that attitude is important in helping students determine the efficiency of reading comprehension. He believes that the importance of attitudes in developing reading comprehension skills does not only depend on theoretical evidence. His findings found the importance of texts related to students' interests and experiences in attempting to develop positive attitudes during the process of reading comprehension (Rye, 2006). In other words, interesting texts and students experiences have been found to have encouraged students, even the poor readers to engage with the text and have a more positive attitude towards reading comprehension regardless of their abilities.

Positive attitudes towards reading comprehension allows children to develop the motivation, the ability and willingness to learn (Gardner, 1985; Block, Gambrell & Pressley, 2002). However, it is probably also during the course of these experiences that would ultimately provide opportunities for children to develop negative attitudes towards reading comprehension. For example, when children



read aloud, read silently, writing or listening to someone talk, they explore ideas in their minds in order to make connections (Ministry of Education, 2003). However, it is when connections cannot be made by students that negative attitudes are predicted to begin to be formulated. Making connections begin from an early age of children's literacy journey (McNaughton, 2002; Alton-Lee, 2003; Amituanai-Tolosa, 2010). It is at this stage too that children's attitudes towards reading comprehension start to develop.

The development of students' attitudes takes place during the course of their experiences in reading and comprehending the text. Amituanai-Tolosa (2005), in a study of Samoan students in bilingual classrooms in New Zealand argue that students found reading at school unconnected to their interests and cultural experiences. In addition, the texts are too long and difficult to read and comprehend. It is probably during these experiences that students are more likely to develop negative attitudes towards reading comprehension. It is also likely that when students have had unpleasant experiences with reading comprehension which may have given them negative feedback can also lead to negative attitudes and dislike of reading comprehension. When students read texts of their own choice which is based on their interests, their liking for reading and developing comprehension skills becomes more positive.

Students attitudes is important because ultimately, it is the individual students who finally decide whether or not they wish to engage themselves in the critical process of reading comprehension (Rye, 2006). A powerful predictor of students attitudes towards reading comprehension is their cultural engagement in classrooms. This is because students come from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Culture is therefore influential because it allows students the opportunity to learn and see things from their cultural perspectives (Gardner, 1985). As pointed out by Presley

(2002) and Guthrie (2004), every student views reading comprehension through a cultural “lens” because most of their prior knowledge, experiences, and values that they bring to reading and comprehending the text is from their cultural background. Delpit (1995), Gay, (2000), Cummins (2001), Hawk & Hill (2005), Bishop et.al. (2009) and Amituanai-Tolosa, McNaughton, Lai, & Arini (2010) all support the importance of acknowledging student’s culture in order to enable students to progress in reading comprehension.

The attitudes of students towards reading comprehension are also connected to their culture. According to Ministry of Education (2003) every child’s learning of reading comprehension is grounded in the culture of their family and community. For example, in a study of African-American students in America, Willis (2008) discovered that the achievement gap in reading comprehension was due to the cultural and social issues which created a difficulty in making school based literacy relevant for students from some of the minority cultural groups. This fact resulted in low achievements and negative attitudes towards reading comprehension in African-American students. Perhaps if these students cultural values and knowledge were incorporated in learning reading comprehension, they might have had a better chance to develop positive attitudes and an improvement in their achievements. This type of condition is more likely to encourage loss of confidence and develop a disliking for reading amongst African-American students.

It has been found that there is a significant difference in students’ attitudes towards reading comprehension in schools (Block, Gambrell & Pressley, 2002; Merisuo-Storm, 2006). In a study by Hall (2004), she stresses that students attitudes towards reading texts were more negative. For example when one of the students was given the task to read the text ‘to the bottom of the page’, she found the task difficult and was falling behind on her reading compared to other children. The

difficulty was made more difficult when the teacher asked questions of the class and the student found herself not being able to participate in the discussion because she could not keep up with the reading. She stated:

*"Sometimes the teacher will say, 'read to the bottom of the page, 'and I try but I fall behind. Then she asks questions and a whole bunch of kids can answer the questions but I can't. I try to keep up with everything but it's really hard. Sarah; sixth grade social studies student"* (Hall, 2004, p. 403).

In this experience, the attitude of the child was a dislike and incompetence towards reading and comprehending the text. This child's indifference leads to a decline in her reading skills, reading interest, comprehension and an unpleasant experience. Many possibilities exist for such an example of a student's attitude towards reading comprehension.

Evidence suggests that children's past and present experiences in reading comprehension, to a greater degree, influence their ability to read and comprehend texts (Hammond & Nessel, 2011). One of the possibilities might be (referring to the above example) that this child found the school text difficult to understand. This idea is supported by recent studies of effective teaching of reading comprehension in English for Pasifika and Maori students (e.g. Amituanai-Toloa and McNaughton, 2008; Lai, McNaughton, MacDonald, and Farry's, 2006) in mainstream and Samoan bilingual classes in New Zealand. It may be because this child had a weakness in vocabulary knowledge in order to understand the meanings of the text and make connections. It is possible that this child's poor reading comprehension skills could be due to her negative attitude and she did not find the text exciting and engaging. Another possibility could be that this child sits at the back of the class and

could not hear the teacher's voice. Perhaps it may have been the teaching approaches which lead to this child having poor reading comprehension skills.

## **2.6. Pasifika students attitudes towards reading comprehension**

Pasifika students attitudes towards reading and comprehending the text have been found to be positive (Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi & Taleni, 2010). For example, according to these authors, positive attitudes of Pasifika students has been perceived as being part of the oral culture and wider community that Pasifika children belong to, where literacy practice is a common experience. This is supported by Evans (1965), Mager (1984) and Gardner (1985) who examined about attitudes as a negative and a positive view of an individual about different experiences and situations. However, one would have to ask, would the Pasifika students attitudes in the present study be similar. In attempting to find solutions, it all depends on what might be in the minds of Pasifika students in the present study depending on their experiences of teaching and learning of reading comprehension and the situations that they live in.

Pasifika children grow up in an oral culture and are committed to their family gathering where the elders read and retell stories to the younger siblings. Samoan childrens' experience of reading is often church based, such as (Tauloto) which are passages from the Bible to be memorised , patterns of recitation involves reading biblical text and other texts at home and church settings (Lai, McNaughton, McDonald & Farry, 2005; Amituanai-Toloa & McNaughton, 2008). These experiences use both English and their home language. It is probably during these experiences that provide Samoan students opportunities to develop positive attitudes. Unlike some American churches, Samoan churches are focused on comprehension of the text. However, unlike school reading comprehension they do not encourage critical questioning in reading comprehension (Tagoilelagi,

1995). This may be because of having different home and school languages or may also be the different expectations in their students school and out of school reading comprehension experiences.

Otunuku and Brown (2007) in a study to examine Tongan students' attitudes towards learning, found that students were largely positive towards reading and other subjects in New Zealand. These researchers pointed out that Tongan students' positive attitudes and liking for reading was because Tongan students generally have positive attitudes towards learning. If the attitudes of Pasifika students towards reading has been found to be positive, it is the lack of understanding of what Pasifika students read that is of real concern. It might possibly be because the texts are pitched too high and the language might not have enough cultural references for Pasifika students to understand and comprehend to be able to make connections to the texts they read. According to Lai, McNaughton, McDonald & Farry, 2005; Amituanai-Toloa & McNaughton (2008), Pasifika students find that school texts do not have enough relevant cultural connections which can be related to their own interests and experiences, therefore resulting in lower achievement levels in reading comprehension (Lai, McNaughton, McDonald & Farry, 2005; Amituanai-Toloa & McNaughton, 2008). A range of texts that are culturally relevant together with culturally responsive pedagogy is arguably a necessity, not only to increase the possibility of making meanings and connections, but also to ensure that reading is not separated from its socio-cultural context (Ladson- Billings, 1995). An aspect of this could be looking at the types of texts that would appeal to Pasifika students needs. As Sarland (1991) states:

*"When pupils reject texts it may well not be because they do not understand them.....Having understood, they then reject the text on experiential grounds, on ideological grounds, on grounds of lack of emotional satisfaction: because, in my shorthand, they do not find themselves in it"(p.101).*

According to Amituanai-Tolosa (2005) and Passi (2010), positive attitudes towards reading comprehension might become more positive if Pasifika students' culture plays a role in the classroom because Pasifika culture is an important factor in the acquisition of children's reading comprehension skills.

National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) in New Zealand provide information on how well overall national standards are being maintained, and where improvements might be needed (Crocks, Flockton & White, 2008). The focus of the National Monitoring Project (NEMP) is on the educational achievements and attitudes of New Zealand primary and intermediate school children. Attitudes towards subjects are assessed as part of the monitoring using a short attitudinal survey (Crocks, Flockton & White, 2008). Reading comprehension was monitored in 1996, 2000, 2004 and 2008 which involved students in silent reading to obtain information, answer questions and make decisions. According to NEMP in New Zealand, there were statistically significant differences between Pakeha and Pasifika students reading comprehension performance and attitudes. Pakeha students in Year 4 and Year 8 scored higher than Pasifika students in tasks involving reading in English. Pasifika students scored higher on the one task that involved reading in Maori. The results showed that Pakeha students were more positive than Pasifika students about getting a book to read and having their favourite author (Crocks, Flockton & White, 2008).

The evidence from international research suggests that students for whom English is a second language, have lower levels of achievement in reading comprehension than monolingual students (Tabors & Snow, 2001; Garcia, 2003). Similar evidence is noted in New Zealand particularly in the case of Pasifika and Maori students (Amituanai-Tolosa & McNaughton, 2008). Recent studies in New Zealand have found that particularly with reading comprehension, students such as Pasifika who are

linguistically and culturally diverse are good decoders but lack the understanding of what they are reading (McNaughton, MacDonald, Amituanai-Tolosa, Lai, & Farry, 2006). Evidence also showed that the development lag in reading comprehension, particularly for Samoan bilingual students, from Year 4 to Year 5 before they 'catch up' to mainstream students at Year 6 might be attributed to this lack of skills in reading to understand texts at that level (Amituanai-Tolosa, 2005). These two studies, however, did not examine students attitudes towards their learning of reading comprehension. The present study will be able to do this during the in depth interviews with Pasifika students. It is predicted that through the conversation during the interviews, what is in Pasifika students mind of their experiences in reading comprehension will be expressed in the form of negative and positive attitudes.

## **2.7. Teachers attitudes towards reading comprehension**

Many teachers are not aware of the importance of attitudes in the teaching of reading comprehension (Rye, 2006). The attitude of teachers must be in the intention of sending students away from their classroom with a positive attitude towards reading comprehension. It means recognizing the factors that influence students attitudes and being able to know how to evaluate them (Mager, 1984). Many teachers enforce wrong ways of thinking through their negative responses to a child's attitude in a classroom. For example, according to Block, Gambrell and Pressley (2002), teachers' attitudes towards reading comprehension can be heightened if they learn how the strategies work and become better able to teach them to the students by applying the strategies to their own reading comprehension. The authors suggested that when teachers apply strategies to their own reading comprehension, it not only helps the teacher become better prepared to provide comprehension strategies, but also demonstrates the potential for improvement that such strategies hold for their students (Pressley & Block, 2002). It is important for

teachers to know how attitudes develop because student's attitudes has a strong impact on their ability to read and understand text across the curriculum areas.

Teachers attitude are connected with the sociocultural values and beliefs a teacher holds about learners, which influences their students attitudes as well. Research by Amituanai-Toloa, (2005), Maclean (2005) and Passi (2010) pointed out the need to understand Pasifika student's language, cultural values and beliefs in order to understand their learning needs in reading comprehension. For example, having a positive attitude towards gaining knowledge of the literacy practices of Pasifika families and knowing how language and cultural values are used in their students' homes will provide opportunities for Pasifika students to develop positive attitudes towards reading comprehension (Ministry of Education, 2003). Research evidence about what happens in New Zealand schools has shown that teachers tend to have lower expectations for certain identified groups of students particularly Maori and Pasifika students. Deficit theorising by teachers as described by Bishop, Berryman et al (2007) and Hogg (2011) can be a major impediment to Pasifika students' educational achievements. It is when the concept of deficit theory is practiced in the teacher's pedagogy when it comes to Pasifika students, that negative attitudes are predicted to be formed. It not only affects the teachers attitude but the Pasifika students as well as the whole class.

Teachers' attitudes are largely influenced by the decisions they make about what to teach and how to teach (Hall, 2004). Their attitudes and their pedagogical knowledge in reading comprehension are closely connected. As pointed out by Hall and Ushida (2005) and Workman (2008), teachers need to demonstrate a positive attitude in order to determine the factors involved in their teaching approaches and use the information to change students' negative attitude towards reading comprehension. Gardner's socio educational model of second language acquisition (SLA) predicted



that teachers pedagogical approaches have an effect on how students react to the learning experiences, either negative or positive (Gardner, 1993; Ushida, 2005).

The influence of teachers attitudes affects students attitudes in creating a learning community in which students can experience learning with less anxiety (Ushida, 2005). According to Wudthayagorn (2000), for example, if students like the teacher, they enjoy the class and are satisfied with their learning experience and have positive attitudes towards that particular subject. Teachers to a greater degree influence their students attitudes towards reading comprehension, their pedagogical skills and the classroom environment which they are the creator of are the primary importance in determining attitudes (Evans, 1965; Mager, 1984; Gardner, 1985; Rye, 2006). It is therefore argued that the importance of teachers attitude, whether it is negative or positive, has an impact on student attitudes.

In a more recent study of Pasifika students in New Zealand, students were interviewed on the kinds of teachers they preferred to teach them (Amituanai-Tolosa, McNaughton, Lai, & Airini, 2009). The researchers found that student preference is not only for 'firm' and 'strict' teachers but also for ones who have a 'sense of [Pasifika] humour'. It is these attitudes towards teaching that are more the focus of this study. It is hypothesised, that features such as teachers' attitudes in their instruction might be another factor that impacts on student attitudes to learning. In addition, the school environment itself might be another. The evidence shows that when teachers believe in their students ability to succeed, students will achieve. On the other hand, when students believe in themselves that they will succeed, they will also achieve (Passi, 2011). However, this study will be able to reveal more of features and factors relating to or influencing students' attitudes towards learning and particularly towards reading and reading comprehension.

## **2.8. What are negative attitudes?**

Negative attitudes are negative processes of the mind that determines failure. According to Mager (1984), negative attitude is harmful and lowers individual's self-esteem. It is more likely to draw students away from learning and also avoid the subject matter being taught. For example, negative thinking of a student shapes the outcome of their learning. This means that there is always something to worry about, nothing is ever quite right, students feel like a failure when they don't pass a subject or when they make mistakes, and they surely outweigh the positive ones (Bostick, 2010). For students who are always thinking negatively of themselves, life means fear, failure and sadness most of the time. Attitude comes from a person's mind and if the thinking that happens in the mind is negative then a person will have a negative attitude. The students from the present study may possibly express negative attitudes towards reading comprehension, because each persons' thinking is different.

Fear and anxiety associated with learning are distress and uneasiness of the students mind and it can be apprehension, worry, anticipation of the unpleasant, foreboding and worry (Evans, 1965). Students usually try to avoid fear and anxiety associated with learning by not taking any interest and leaving the subject being taught. In addition, frustration occurs when students are restrained from an activity associated with their learning (Greenwald & Benaji, 1995). Practices that cause frustration in students learning for a long period usually leads to lack of confidence in students ability to learn a particular activity or subject.

Humiliation and embarrassment is caused by lowering students pride or self-respect by making uncomfortably self-conscious (Ajzen, 2005). A common practice in schools leading to humiliation

and embarrassment can be when a teacher has asked a question to a student in front of the whole class and the student has not been able to answer it correctly. In this case, the student is embarrassed and humiliated in front of his friends and the teacher and thinks very little of himself or herself.

## **2.9. What are positive attitudes?**

Positive attitudes are positive processes of the mind that determines success. It helps students gain confidence, achieve their desired goals and determines their academic performance in different subject areas (Gardner, 1985). For example, a student's desire to have positive thinking is a mental attitude that enters into their mind, thoughts, words and images that leads them to be successful in their learning (Evans, 1965). In other words, it is a mental attitude that expects good results from their teachers about their learning. A student with a positive mind will anticipate a successful outcome of every learning experience and situation. It is predicted that the students in the present study might be able to express positive attitudes towards reading comprehension.

Acknowledging student responses whether they are correct or incorrect is important in any learning environment. Student responses need to be accepted, rather than rejected, as they make an attempt to learn. Teachers, on the other hand, need to make positive comments accordingly (Mager, 1984). This will encourage students to willingly take interest in their learning and have a positive attitude especially towards a particular subject. Moreover, acknowledging students success by providing a positive feedback for successfully completing a task, particularly if it was a difficult task (Evans, 1965). This experience maximises and enhances students learning. It also gives students confidence in themselves and their ability to helps them take their education further then what is required.

Positive reinforcement helps to improve students behaviour, complete a task or to engage in learning (Gardner, 1985). Positive attitudes can be created by positive reinforcement continuously. Students love and need attention and positive reinforcement also gives students attention. By giving students plenty of attention for performing well in their learning will improve their chances of further learning. In addition, rewarding students with subject approach responses such as a sticker, certificate or favourable word can lead to long term positive attitude and behaviour (Bostick, 2010). The benefit of rewarding students is that it prevents negative attitude and behaviour. It also helps students feel good about themselves as an individual.

## **2.10. Determining factors for negative and positive attitudes**

There are many factors that determine negative and positive attitudes of students. Students' minds and their thinking processes as mentioned previously can be affected by experiences and situations. According to Evans (1965) and Gardner (1985) negative attitudes cause students to think less highly of themselves, that leads to a loss of self-respect and dignity. Positive attitudes, according to the same author, allow students to think a little more of themselves and enhance their learning. In relation to the present study, it will be the different learning experiences and the situations that the students live in, that will determine the factors associated with their attitudes during the teaching and learning of reading comprehension.

It was found that the factors that cause negative and positive attitudes of students towards learning a particular subject was because of the teacher, education environment and home background (Mihladiz, Duran & Dogan, 2011). For example, in a study of 6th, 7th and 8th grade students from Turkey attending 9 different schools with different socio-economic backgrounds, Mihladiz, Duran

and Dogan (2011) discovered that an effective teaching environment increased positive attitudes of students towards science. The students who had positive attitude towards science kept positive attitude towards their teachers, educational programs, lessons and towards the school at the same time. Teachers and parents played an important role in developing these students positive attitude towards science. This was done through having a positive relationship between the school and the parents' interest in their child's education. In addition, students' attitudes towards science decreased as the students moved from primary school to secondary school and to higher education. It was also found that Turkish female students had more positive attitudes towards science than male students (Mihladić, Duran & Dogan 2011). This study also revealed that Turkish students' attitudes changed from positive to negative depending on their families' income levels. This may have happened because of less educational opportunities provided by low-income families and more educational opportunities provided by high-income families for their children.

The factors related to negative and positive attitudes of students in maths was explored in a study conducted by Tezer and Karasel (2009) of 2nd and 3rd grade students from 12 different primary schools of the North Cyprus. These researchers found that the reason for the students being unsuccessful in mathematics was that their interest to learn maths was very low and their anxiety in this situation have shown their negative attitudes. As mentioned earlier by Evans (1965) the influence of attitudes determines what a person might like or dislike. In this case, being in anxiety affected students' attitudes and if the students' attitudes were not positive then it should have been turned into positive attitudes through positive reinforcement and giving students more choice in activities of their choice to increase success in maths. It seems that in light of the influences of attitudes, what the students in the present study might like or dislike about reading comprehension will determine what their attitudes might be.

## **2.11. Identifying individual students needs**

There are diverse range of students in the classrooms with different needs. It is important to identify and cater for individual students needs according to their learning styles. Researchers have found that there is a significant difference in students' attitudes towards reading comprehension in schools (Merisuo-Storm, 2006; Sallabas, 2008). For example, native English speaking students tend to develop positive attitudes more with stronger confidence in reading comprehension skills than English language learners do. It would be interesting to see from this study if this is the pattern with Pasifika students.

As part of this study, it is important to understand the concept of reading comprehension and how important it is for learning in different curriculum areas. Reading comprehension is an element in developing childrens' reading skills thus providing the foundation for a substantial amount of learning in schools (Block, Gambrell & Pressley, 2002). Without having the skills of reading comprehension and the motivation for reading to learn, students' have limited academic progress (Pressley, 2002; Guthrie, 2001). It is an interactive process that occurs between the reader, the text and the context (Rosenblatt, 1978). During this process when children are reading their knowledge and capabilities change in many different ways. For example motivation, self-concept and interest in the topic may change depending on the text (Sweet & Snow, 2003).

It is during this interactive process that students and teachers attitudes, albeit positive or negative that might be seen to be prevalent. This is because the reader constructs meaning by interacting with the text and the context including the classroom and the teacher, using their prior knowledge, experience, information in the text and the readers' relationship with the text (Rosenblatt, 1978;

Kucer, 2001; Pardo, 2002). As pointed out by Gardner (1985) the text, the teacher and previous experiences all influence the attitude of a student in developing reading comprehension skills.

School texts can become difficult for students when the texts chosen by the teacher is not appropriate to the students knowledge and experiences. In this case it might be difficult for optimal comprehension to occur and teachers might face difficulties as they attempt to foster positive attitudes in their students. The authors suggest that the manner in which teachers select students' reading appropriate texts is very important because teachers expertise shapes students positive attitudes towards developing comprehension skills (Rosenblatt, 1978; 2002; Block, Gambrell & Pressley, 2002; Sweet & Snow, 2003; Guthrie, 2004).

Overall, the sociocultural values and beliefs of the diverse learners play an important role, which can influence their motivation to read and their attitudes towards reading comprehension. It is important to know what is happening in students minds and their experiences and situations that they live in to be able to identify individual learners needs.

## Chapter 3. Methodology

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The aim of the study was two-fold. First, to investigate the attitudes of Year 3 Pasifika students towards the learning of reading comprehension including features which impact on those attitudes and factors which motivate students to develop better reading comprehension skills. Second, teachers of these students were interviewed about what their beliefs were towards Pasifika students' learning of reading comprehension. This chapter describes how the research was conducted in order to answer the research questions and achieve its aims.

### 3.1. Contact with the School

Initial contact was made with the Principal to seek permission to access the school, the teachers and the students. He was also asked to give the Participation Information Sheets and Consent Forms to the Year 3 teachers in the school. The Principal was told that the first two teachers who consented to participate in this study would be asked to meet with the researcher to explain what the research was about and what they needed to do.

### 3.2. Participants

#### 3.2.1. The School

One school was involved in this study and is known by a pseudonym School Y, in order to protect its identity. The decile 2<sup>1</sup> school was located in Mt Wellington, Auckland, New Zealand. It was a full primary school with a current roll of approximately 500 pupils. This school was selected for the study because it had a high population of Pasifika students, the majority of them Samoan and Tongan. It

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



was one of the biggest schools in the area and its diverse population meant that it would not be difficult for the teachers to make the selection of the ten Year 3 Pasifika students as a sample.

### **3.2.2. Teachers**

Two teachers of Year 3 students were involved in this study and are known in this study as Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 respectively. Both teachers were European females. Teacher 1 was 51 years old. She had been teaching at School Y for about ten years and taught Year 3 and 4 children for the last six years. Teacher 2 was 55 years old. She had been teaching at the same school for about twelve years and had taught Year 2 and 3 children for the last seven years.

### **3.2.3. Students**

The sample consisted of six New Zealand born Year 3 Pasifika students - three Samoan and three Tongan. Of the six students, there were five males known in this study by pseudonyms; Filippo, Kimber, Tomasi, Langi and Sione, and one female, Maletina. The pseudonyms for each of the six students were purposely chosen from characters in Samoan and Tongan reading books because they were reflective of students' culture and heritage (see Table 1 below). All the students were second language learners with age ranging from 7 years 2 months to 7 years 10 months. These students were bilingual (Samoan or Tongan and English) except for Filippo who could understand Samoan when spoken to but could not speak Samoan. A brief description of each participant follows.

#### ***Filipo***

Filipo was 7 years and 9 months old and was born in New Zealand. Filippo was a Samoan boy whose first language was English and he spoke English at home although he could also understand Samoan

when spoken to. Filipo attended early childhood education before starting school in 2009. Filipo's reading achievement was stanine 9 in the STAR test result.

### ***Maletina***

Maletina was 7 years and 10 months old and was born in New Zealand. Maletina was Samoan whose first language was English although she spoke Samoan and English at home. Maletina attended early childhood education before starting school in 2004. She belonged to the school's ukulele group. Maletina's reading achievement was stanine 5 in the STAR test result.

### ***Kimber***

Kimber was 7 years and 10 months old and was born in New Zealand. Kimber was Samoan whose first language was Samoan and he spoke Samoan and English at home. Kimber attended early childhood education before starting school in 2004. Kimber's reading achievement was stanine 5 in the STAR test result.

### ***Tomasi***

Tomasi was 7 years and 8 months old and was born in New Zealand. Tomasi was Tongan whose first language was Tongan and spoke Tongan at home. English was Tomasi's second language. At school Tomasi spoke in English to his teachers and friends. Tomasi attended early childhood education before attending school in 2009. Tomasi's reading achievement was stanine 5 in the STAR test result.

***Langi***

Langi was 7 years and 10 months old and was born in New Zealand. Langi was Tongan whose first language was English and spoke Tongan and English at home. Langi attended early childhood education before starting school in 2004. Langi's reading achievement was stanine 4 in the STAR test result.

***Sione***

Sione was 7 years and 2 months old and was born in New Zealand. Sione was Tongan whose first language was Tongan and spoke Tongan at home. English was Sione's second language. Sione attended early childhood education before starting school in 2005. Sione's reading achievement was stanine 1 in the STAR test result.

**Table 1***Student Demographics*

<b>Student Name</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Place of Birth</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Languages Spoken</b>	<b>STAR Achievement</b>
Filipo	Samoan	NZ	7.9 mnths	M	English	9
Maletina	Samoan	NZ	7.10mnths	F	Samoan English	5
Kimber	Samoan	NZ	7.10 mnths	M	Samoan English	5
Tomasi	Tongan	NZ	7.8 mnths	M	Tongan English	5
Langi	Tongan	NZ	7.10 mnths	M	Tongan English	4
Sione	Tongan	NZ	7.2 mnths	M	Tongan English	1

**3.3. Method**

This study employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative measures. Qualitative and quantitative research are two different approaches in social science. These approaches differ in many ways but they can also complement each other (Newman, 2006). One of the differences between the two approaches is the form of data collection. The data in quantitative research is collected in the form of numbers, scores or ratings whereas qualitative data is collected in the form of words or even actions. Both qualitative and quantitative researchers gain information by asking participants questions and recording the results (Denscombe, 2002; Gomm, 2004).

### **3.4. Talanoa research methodology, from a Fijian perspective**

This research was conducted using the Fijian methodology of Talanoa for collecting data. Talanoa is a popular and preferred means of communication and is a research method favoured by Pasifika people. It is a qualitative, ecological, oral interactive approach to research that allows for continuity, authenticity, and cultural integrity. 'Tala' means "to inform, tell, talk about, ask, apply and relate". 'Noa' means "any kind, ordinary, nothing-in-particular and purely imaginery (Vaioleti, 2003; Otsuka, 2006; Mutch, 2006). Hence, talanoa can be referred to as a face-to-face conversation, a talk, an exchange of ideas or thoughts in a formal or informal way. Otsuka (2006) found that talanoa was commonly practised by Pacific Islanders, such as ethnic Fijians, as it stems from their culture where oratory and verbal negotiation have deep traditional roots.

Talanoa was chosen as a methodology for this study because it is an ideal method of research when Pasifika people are involved as participants. It is a methodology based on relationship as the foundation on which most Pacific activities are being built. A common characteristic of talanoa is that it is a voluntary process involving willing participants (Robinson & Robinson, 2005). Talanoa research removes the distance between the researcher and the participants and provides research participants with a face to face relationship so they are better able to relate to each other (Vaioleti, 2003; Otsuka, 2006). The custom of talanoa in the Fijian context encourages ethnic Fijians to have social gatherings where yagona sessions and the activity of talanoa enhances people's sense of "sharing" and "caring" within their communities. As a note, yagona is *piper methysticum* – a plant – the roots of which are used to prepare as a ceremonial drink by ethnic Fijians in either formal or casual social and ceremonial gatherings (Vaioleti, 2003). Yagona is also known as kava and is a sacred drink in ethnic Fijian culture (Ravuvu, 1988; Otsuka, 2006).

More so, the talanoa method of collecting data for this study was chosen to allow participants to express themselves fully so that rich information for this study could be collected. Talanoa research is conducted mainly face to face, therefore it has been argued that research which focuses on narratives and telling of stories is particularly effective with Pasifika people (Gounder, 2009). According to Gounder (2009), it has been suggested that the process of storytelling is believed to be particularly appropriate with Pasifika people, because they originated from a history of aural and oral culture.

Talanoa, in the Tongan dictionary, is defined by Churchward (1959) as a talk (in an informal way), to tell stories or relate experience (p. 447). He also stated that 'Tala' in Tongan means to command, tell, relate, inform and announce and 'Noa' means common, old, of no value, without thought, without exertion, as well as dumb (unable to speak) (Churchward, 1959). Violeti (2011) found that a significant aspect of talanoa is the construction of knowledge in its own way. I now consider the work of Professor Konai Helu-Thaman (1997) in explaining talanoa from a Tongan perspective. In Tongan, the talanoa approach is similar to kakala as the metaphor for creating the garland of fragrant flowers. Kakala is a Tongan name for fragrant flowers and leaves woven together in special ways according to the need of the occasion they are woven for (Thaman, 1997). Kakala is made in three different stages, which are toli, tui and luva.

Toli is the first stage in making a kakala which involves deciding on, selecting and picking different flowers and leaves for making the kakala. When the flowers are picked, they are ranked and arranged according to their cultural importance. Kakala is made to suit the different type of occasion and who is expected to wear it (Thaman, 1997). In terms of research approach, toli is equal

to the stage where a problem is recognised, the research is decided on, the participants are chosen and the data are collected and analysed (Violeti, 2006).

Tui is the second stage in making the kakala and is called the process of weaving the kakala. During this process the flowers and leaves are sorted, grouped and arranged according to their cultural importance before the actual weaving (Thaman, 1997). According to Violeti (2006), the time taken to make a kakala depends on its nature and complexity. The meaning, the visual impact, beauty and the right bouquet are created by carefully using the right types, right amount and combination of flowers in making a kakala. Thaman (1997) explained that tui is the most important stage in terms of research. This is where participants' stories, beliefs and emotions from the talanoa sessions are arranged and woven further. In other words, it is the integration, combination and weaving of knowledge that came out of the talanoa. At this stage of the weaving of kakala in relation to research, Violeti (2006) explained that the authenticity, relevance and usefulness of the research are based on the type and amount of information used, how data are arranged in relation to one another and how they are presented as research. Also cultural and technical skills are important at this stage because incompetent selection and combination of the rich information from talanoa can easily lead to invalid findings (Thaman, 1997; Violeti, 2006).

Luva is the third stage and it is the giving away of the kakala to the person who is going to be wearing it when completed. In the context of Pasifika values, luva is important in 'ofa' (love, compassion), 'faka'apa'apa (respect) and 'fetokono'aki (reciprocity and responsibility for each other) (Thaman, 1997). In relation to research, luva signifies when the research is given for the benefit of the community and is also comparable to the metaphor of 'koha' in Kaupapa Maori research (Bishop, 1997; Bishop & Glynn, 1999). At this stage the kakala becomes the new knowledge and is

expected to be passed on so that other people can also benefit from the researcher and their institution's research (Violeti, 2006). The talanoa approach in Tongan which is similar to kakala is comparable to grounded theory where major themes of talanoa are identified, developed and explained (Violeti, 2006). Hence talanoa creates the opportunity for both the researcher and the participants' theory to be formulated.

In Samoa, talanoa is also a more informal, culturally elaborate and appropriate version of 'Talaga' in conversations (Passi, 2011). The talanoa approach reflects the significance of the Samoan language, its values and beliefs. Talanoa in Samoa is a verb meaning to talk informally at a family gathering or formally in a village meeting (Collins, 2010). The significance of talanoa in the Samoan context is that spoken words are believed to be magical and they are used to settle differences, to arbitrate disputes, to heal and to relay various senses of deep emotions (Collins, 2010). In the Pacific region, talanoa is well known as a talking methodology. According to Amituanai-Toloo, McNaughton, Lai, & Airini (2009) from a Samoan perspective, the term is made up of two words; 'tala' meaning 'talk' or 'story', and 'noa' meaning 'nothing' or 'void'. 'Noa' can also mean 'never ending' or continuous. Amituanai-Toloo and colleagues expressed that talanoa means to have a conversation, to relate something, or simply to 'talk story'.

Talanoa in Samoan draws upon two important cultural concepts from a Samoan perspective of 'va fealoaloa'i' (reciprocal respect of space) and 'ava fatafata' (reciprocal respect of face-to-face). The interviews reflect 'va fealoaloa'i' and 'ava fatafata' in order for acceptance between people, for people and with people to occur. Talanoa enables stories to be told and shared in a nonthreatening manner within the 'va-tapuia' (sacred space) through 'fa'aaloalo' (respect) in the face to face encounter between participants and people in general (Amituanai-Toloo, 2007; Amituanai-Toloo, et.



al, 2009). As a Pasifika researcher in projects involving Samoan, Tongan and other Pasifika families, she wrote in one of their reports, of the research experience with Pasifika families, namely that as a Pasifika researcher, “it was important that the interviews with Pasifika parents were carried out in a ‘talanoa’ (conversation) format” (p. 39). She stated that “talanoa is increasingly becoming a more suitable alternative to the Palagi (European) structured interview method of qualitative data gathering” (p.39). This is because talanoa elicits situations through the eyes of the participants – explicit situations which sometimes emerge unexpectedly in the course of talanoa but which might not have been so if it had been by any other method (Amituanai-Tolosa et. al, 2009). From her talanoa experience with Pasifika parents, she concludes that human values of relationships are important. She states that:

*“While the talanoa with parents highlighted their concerns, carrying out the interviews by a Pasifika researcher added value to the information gathered in a sense that through the talanoa trust had embraced both the participants and the researcher based on talanoa principles. These principles are: reconciliation; inclusion; sincerity; honesty; and respect for each other as individuals, along with respect for spirituality and human values. Through the talanoa methodology the sharing of ideas, beliefs, perspectives and reciprocity of respect ensures, therefore, a collaborative and collective outcome to be discussed for the purpose of providing feedback” (Amituanai-Tolosa et. al, 2009, p. 39).*

In the Samoan context, talanoa is sometimes like telling stories with filled emotions and enthusiasm. Talanoa can be carried out between an adult and a younger person on a one to one basis or amongst groups of people (Collins, 2010). Collins added that in the Samoan culture, the talanoa approach is a way for problem solving and policy making to eventuate (Collins, 2010).

Research involving Pasifika students need to take into consideration a number of issues such as Pasifika students attitudes and perceptions of research, the participants' values, culture, ethnic diversity, education and language and their relationships and interactions with one another and the researcher (Prescott & Hooper, 2007). The meaning of talanoa is similar in Tongan, Samoan and Fijian. The research methodology of talanoa hence a product of Pacific oral traditions has been practiced widely in academia by researchers where the Pasifika community is involved.

Of considerable importance to talanoa is the identification of the researcher who is a Fijian Indian. I have chosen to take the Fijian concept of talanoa for this study as a Fijian Indian researcher, as I begin to recognise a particular and a specific theoretical lens that I can bring to it. Being an insider researcher, I am familiar with the Pasifika culture having lived and experienced it. It is necessary to encourage cultural research studies such as the present study because Latu (2009) found that researchers, particularly Pacific researchers, can help to bridge research that has not been done before among international bodies of literature and local knowledge of the research setting and its subject. In explaining the talanoa method that I have employed in this study, quite simply I talk, query, dialogue and reflect with the participants in order to understand their attitudes and to gain an insight about their experiences of the teaching and learning of reading comprehension.

Along with qualitative research, grounded theory, naturalistic inquiry and ethnography, talanoa in this sense belongs to the phenomenological research family. As Patton (1991) notes, phenomenological research approaches focus on understanding the meaning that events have for participants. Talanoa requires researchers to participate deeply in the research experience rather than stand back and analyse (Vaiolleti, 2003). It is the sum of 'tala' and 'noa' that adds to the whole

concept of 'talanoa'. While 'talanoa' is about interacting, it involves a deep, inter-intrapersonal relationship, the kind of relationship where most Pasifika activities are carried out (Otsuka, 2006).

In Talanoa research, researchers and participants not only share each other's time, interest and information, but also share emotions of both parties involved. In actual fact, "tala holistically integrates researchers' and participants' emotions, knowledge, experiences and spirits" (Vaiioleti, 2003, p. 24). Talanoa research is all about "sharing" based on face- to-face verbal interactions between the researcher and the participants, therefore the value of talanoa supports the concept of rapport in Western social research. As Burns (1990) states "a face-to-face interaction assists in the establishment of rapport and higher level of motivation among respondents" (p. 302).

Mo'ungatona (2003) who has been involved in a major Pasifika families research project for several years stated that Pasifika people seem to be tired of surveys. She explained that if Pasifika people do take part, it is with reluctance. In this case talanoa research has become an appropriate and more accepting methodology amongst Pasifika people to make sense of their stories. The following is an example of the use of talanoa to carry out research with Pasifika people. Mo'ungatona (2003) explains as follows:

*"We have our own way to do research. I use talanoa for most of my interviews for the long term Pacific Island Family research I am involved in, which follows the development of over a thousand young Pacific peoples in Auckland over several years. I find talanoa friendly; it allows relationships between me and my participants, which helps my work greatly. At the beginning of my interviews I would ask the mothers how their days had been while helping them with their chores, things that were totally irrelevant to my topic. They would talk about*

*several things, and I, about my work and myself, until they felt at ease. Once they accepted and trusted me as a person, out came their stories, including the information I was wanting to know about. The stories around the information I was looking for were what made me know that the information was authentic. I rarely needed to ask specific questions. On some occasions, I would do so, however, in order to probe and to maintain the malie of the talanoa” (cited in Vaioleti, 2003, p.3 & 4).*

Talanoa research is non-linear and has responsive approaches generally associated with an interview (Prescott & Hooper, 2007). These qualities may allow talanoa research methodology to have universal appeal to Maori, indigenous, oral tradition communities and those who are interested in using specific qualitative and localised critical research (Vaioleti, 2003). It is appreciating the diverse interests, needs, rights and obligations of participants, especially of different ethnic groups. This means giving such participants the opportunity to ‘express and share their narrative worldviews through talanoa, rather than covering up the worldviews of others within pre-determined assumptions and concepts’ (Halapua, 2003 p. 2). Morrison et al. (2002) claimed that the concept of talanoa for Tongans is the same as it is for Samoans, Fijians and other Pacific nations, although some may have local variations. Talanoa is natural for most Pasifika people. It is anticipated that through the uniqueness of talanoa, ideas and thoughts derived from the conversations will bring wisdom and honour to the Fijian, Samoan, Tongan and other Pacific nation’s community. This will heighten cultural connections and form a mutual line of respect between the researcher and the participants.

The focus of talanoa is to reach a state of understanding between the researcher and the participants. Halapua (2003) writes, ‘our talanoa process of dialogic-exchange interactions with each other can and ought to be oriented towards building understanding and respect of the competing

claims of rights and obligations which we value and share in our lives' (p5). This understanding, he argues, is reached through the respectful and mutual sharing of views, experiences and beliefs through the process of talanoa (Vaiotei, 2003). Talanoa's holistic approach encapsulates the richness of the student's voice and will provide an understanding of the different attitudes Pasifika students might have towards reading comprehension. If one wants to understand this methodology more from a Maori and Western point of view, talanoa can be interpreted and nicely summed up by the Maori proverb:

*"Ka tou rourou, ka taku rourou, ka ora e te iwi" (meaning with your food basket and my food basket, we will feed the people well).*

This is essentially what talanoa is; it is reaching consensual decisions through our conversations and understandings with each other and knowing who we are as people, where we come from that can make us arrive at our ultimate destinations and knowing ourselves for the first time (Amituanai-Toloa, 2009; Violeti, 2011). It is the understanding of these things that attitudes can finally be revealed thus enabling the researcher to truly understand the participants.

### **3.5. Measures**

#### **3.5.1. Achievement data: Supplementary Tests of Achievement in Reading (STAR)**

The Supplementary Tests of Achievement in Reading (STAR) tool (Elley, 2001), is standardised assessment used by schools to assess students reading ability. STAR is a series of reading tests recently redeveloped for New Zealand schools. It is administered twice a year, in March and October, to all Year 3 to 8 students (Stoop, 2009). The rationale behind STAR is the expectation that all students are to learn to read successfully at primary school. In other words reading successfully

at primary school is learning to read appropriate text fluently, independently, and with comprehension. According to Ministry of Education (2009), the subtests of the STAR look especially at close reading behaviours, as described in the New Zealand Curriculum. All levels from Year 3 to 8 complete subtests on word recognition, sentence comprehension, paragraph comprehension and vocabulary range. In addition to this, Year 7 and 8 complete two more subtests; the language of advertising, and reading different styles of writing.

STAR is designed to be a 'norm referenced' test, meaning that scores are presented in stanine groups. This means inferences can then be made about which pupils are reading at, above or below their age level (Stoop, 2009). Results can also be compared with other children in New Zealand primary schools of the same age and class level. Stanines are not expected to increase from the beginning to the end of the year, as they are adjusted according to the age of the student when the test was administered. The students at risk are targeted to pull them into the expected range of achievement (Stoop, 2009). The information about students reading abilities gathered from STAR is not used in isolation. Rather it is used in conjunction with other reading assessments to generate a more complete picture of each child's reading ability and needs (Stoop, 2009).

### **3.5.2. Interviews with Students and Teachers**

One approach to qualitative research is to use interviews with open ended questions to gather information (Creswell, 2003; Gomm, 2004). Often, qualitative researchers use a small number of participants to get rich 'thick' data that can be used to interpret and explain behaviour (Newman, 2006). Given the aim of the study was to investigate Pasifika students attitudes towards reading comprehension, the opportunities presented by both qualitative and quantitative approaches made it an appropriate choice. A qualitative research approach enabled the researcher to obtain a 'thick

description' (Creswell, 2003) of the data to understand Pasifika students' attitudes towards reading comprehension while a quantitative research approach allowed the researcher to analyse the data statistically to examine any emerging significant aspects (if any) of the data.

Semi structured audio recorded interviews were conducted with students and teachers involving a 10 minute interview with each student and a 30 minute interview with each teacher. The aim of the interviews was to examine the attitudes of students towards learning reading comprehension and the attitudes of their teachers to their teaching and learning of reading comprehension.

### **3.5.3. Interviews with students**

For the semi-structured interviews with the students three questions were used as a guide to formulate responses from each of the participants. The first question was 'what is your favourite story/book?' The purpose of this question was to find out the likes and dislikes of students about texts and about their learning preferences. The second question was 'when you listen to a story being read by your teacher what are some of the things that you like about how its read?' This question was asked to find out students' understanding of the text, their reaction to their teacher and their preference of the type of text to be read to them. The third question was 'when you're looking for a book to read, what are some of the things do you look for before you choose a book?' The purpose of this question was to determine students likes and dislikes of a particular type of text, how they felt about the books they chose for themselves to read and their interest, if any, for a particular author, character, the type of language being used and previous memories and experiences associated with the text. It was hypothesised that through Talanoa responses to these questions, prompt clarification and elaboration of students' deeper awareness and understanding of their attitudes towards reading comprehension might be captured. Student interviews lasted

approximately ten minutes with each child. The interviews were recorded using a digital recorder which was later transcribed, coded and analysed.

#### **3.5.4. Interviews with teachers**

For the semi-structured interviews with the teachers four questions were used as a guide to formulate responses from each of the participants. The first question was 'what goes through your mind about your Pasifika children's learning of reading comprehension?' The purpose of this question was to find out teachers' attitudes and knowledge of where their Pasifika students were at in reading comprehension. The second question was 'what sort of responses do Pasifika children give you when you ask reading comprehension questions?' This question was asked to find out teachers' interpretive knowledge of Pasifika students' responses to reading comprehension questions that they normally asked during a normal reading session. The third question was 'what do you think Pasifika parents' views might be on their children's reading comprehension? The purpose of this question was to find out teachers knowledge of Pasifika parents' views on reading comprehension. The fourth question was 'tell me how you might be able to encourage Pasifika students to improve their reading comprehension skills?' The purpose of this question was to find out teachers knowledge and strategies of reading comprehension and how they work towards improving Pasifika students reading comprehension skills. Teacher interviews lasted approximately half an hour to forty minutes with each teacher. The interviews were recorded using a digital recorder which were later transcribed, coded and analysed.



### **3.5.5. Journal**

In addition to the interviews, the researcher kept a journal as an instrument for personal growth. A journal was used as an extra tool for collecting information that was not possible to record during the interviews, for example, gestures, body language, facial expressions. These were considered important information for this study. It allowed the researcher to generate on-going dialogue and ideas throughout this study and was generally a way of taking extra notes.

## **3.6. Procedures**

### **3.6.1. Ethics Approval**

The ethics application approval process which all research projects, like the present, needed to be noted here as it was one of the difficulties encountered during this research. An ethics approval application was submitted at the beginning of semester one for work to be completed before the end of the same year. This process became a lengthy and a rigorous one that took almost three months to approve. Part of the process was to ensure that the methodology was consistent with the objectives of the research and to reassure the Ethics committee that the wellbeing of all involved in the study was taken into account. Ethics approval was granted and the fieldwork began. Ethical issues observed in this study include confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent, participant's right to withdraw and cultural considerations.

Confidentiality: all data will be securely kept at the University of Auckland in a locked cabinet in the Principal Investigator's office for a period of six years after which all data will be destroyed and /or deleted and erased. Participants' names were replaced by pseudonyms and therefore will not be associated with any information obtained thus remaining completely confidential. Reports, articles

and feedback arising from this research will not identify the school or individual participants as the source of data.

Anonymity: There is a small risk that participants may be identifiable despite pseudonyms being used as only two teachers are involved, but all measures will be taken to ensure anonymity to readers of the research. The participants in the project will only be known to the researcher and the Principal Investigator.

Informed consent: Informed verbal and written consent was given by all participants after potential participants viewed the PIS and CF forms and had been informed verbally of what the forms meant. Consent forms were given to parents of students involved. Parents gave their signed consent forms to their children to bring to school and put into the drop box which was on the counter in the school office. The box was being cleared daily and contents tallied under classroom until the number required from each classroom was reached.

Participant's right to withdraw: Participants in all parts of this research is voluntary. The PIS and CF addressed this issue and provided an opt-out date of the 1st July 2012, where participants were able to withdraw from the research without having to give reasons if they wished. Emphasis was given that participation in the study was purely voluntary and that participation, or non-participation was not in any way affected their relationships with or their position in the school. The principal was asked to give an assurance to this effect.

Cultural considerations: Appropriateness in cultural protocols for Pasifika students and teachers were respected as participants in the study.

### **3.6.2. Contact with the School**

The principal of School Y was contacted by telephone to discuss the possibility of having the research done at the school (See Appendix A). He was told that the Ethics application was approved and the researcher was looking for a school to volunteer to take part in the study. The school was handy for me (as I have small children) and it had a high proportion of Pasifika students. The principal was happy for me to do the research in his school and suggested that the researcher meet with him Tuesday 13th March at 8.30am to discuss the study further. At the meeting, I discussed the purpose of the research, provided an information sheet, identified any ethical issues that might possibly arise and requested access to the site for carrying out this research. Upon the acceptance of the invitation, the principal was requested to fill in the consent form as part of the process of this study (See Appendix B). The principal approved and signed the consent form to carry out the research in his school.

I left with him the Participation Information Sheet (PIS) and Consent Form (CF) to give to all Year 3 teachers of Tongan and Samoan students to invite them to participate in the study. I explained to the principal that the first two teachers who return the consent form will be the teacher sample. I also sought permission from the principal to meet with teachers once they agreed to participate so that they could identify ten Pasifika students, a mixture of Samoan and Tongan, for this study. I discussed with the principal about the student sample that the first five students from each class who return their forms will be student sample. The teachers' and students' interviews were also

discussed in order to accommodate the teachers and students timetable allowing minimum interruption to their school work.

The principal emailed me three days after our initial meeting to inform me that two Year 3 teachers had agreed to be the teacher participants and that they would assist in identifying ten Year 3 Samoan and Tongan students.. The principal gave the researcher permission to meet with the teachers any time in their classroom before or after school personally to confirm face to face the details of the study and to ask if they could distribute the information sheets and consent forms to students to take home to their parents to sign for consent.

### **3.6.3. Contact with Teachers**

The Year 3 teachers were contacted by the principal by an email explaining my research in their school (See Appendix C). The invitation given to the teachers by the principal explained the nature of the study. It also detailed the importance of their contributions in completing this study and how their voice would add to the already existing knowledge. The teachers gave the researcher permission and appointed a time to meet with them. This was important as it was appropriate to meet the teachers face to face first before fieldwork could begin. This also gave the researcher the opportunity to meet and greet the participants, briefly introduce the topic and answer any questions they might have. It was also a chance to discuss the interview process with them. Upon their acceptance of the invitation, the teachers were requested to fill in the consent form as part of the process of this study (See Appendix D). After agreeing to participate, a time and a meeting room was organised and confirmed for the interviews. The participants were able to go away and have a think about the topic discussed and anticipate what potentially could be asked.

The meeting room that the teachers chose to use as the venue was in their team area and they used that space to work in their teacher release time. For them, it provided a personal space where they felt comfortable and which was easy to locate. The use of this meeting room meant that they felt secure and valued because this room was the teachers own working space. One of the two teachers was also the team leader of Year 3 students and had worked closely with the Pasifika students. The researcher discussed with the teachers their assistance in identifying ten Pasifika students. I left with the teachers the PIS and CF forms to give to students to take to their parents to sign for consent. The first five forms to come back signed would be the sample of participants from each class. Students were asked to return the forms to the office in the office drop box already allocated for this purpose. The first ten forms in the box would make up the student sample. The organisation and the conducting of student interviews were discussed with the teachers.

#### **3.6.4. Contact with Students**

The students were contacted by their teachers during their class time (See Appendix G) where they were invited to participate in the study. The teachers explained the nature of the study and students were asked to take their consent forms along with their parents' consent form home to gain permission from their parents because of the students' age being under 16. One of the participant teachers in this study was in charge of getting all the signed CF and PIS forms from the students and their parents back to the researcher.

The teacher in charge (Teacher 1) asked if I could come back to see her after four days to check if any students and parents agreed to participate in the research. When I went to see (Teacher 1) after four days I received three forms back from the students, two of them agreeing to participate and one of the students did not agree to participate.

A week later Teacher 1 emailed me to say that two more students had agreed to participate in the research. During this time some of the students also lost their forms so Teacher 1, the teacher in charge asked me to reprint some more forms to give to the students and their parents for the second time. After the second attempt of resending the forms, the students lost them as well. (Teacher 1) informed me that I needed to reprint the forms for the third time to send back to some of the students and their parents.

After the third attempt at resending the forms, a week later Teacher 1 emailed me to say that she had received two more forms back from the students and that some other students had promised that they would bring their forms back the next day. The researcher decided to wait for another day and then went back to see the teacher in charge (Teacher 1). When I saw her she was disappointed and said that her students did not return the forms despite promising her that they would. After meeting with her and having been disappointed with the outcome, I contacted my supervisor to explain the situation. My supervisor suggested that I give the students one more week and see what the outcome might be. The teacher and I decided to give the students one more week to coincide with the completion of my fieldwork. A week later another disappointment arose when the teacher emailed me to say that no more forms had come back and that she had given up on the students. She then suggested that I gave up waiting because if the students had not responded yet, they were not likely to respond. Although the initial sample of 10 was anticipated, only six students returned the consent forms from their parents despite waiting another week for more to come.

Upon their acceptance of the invitation, the students were requested to fill in the consent form as part of the process of this study (See Appendix H). The teachers of the participants scheduled an informal meeting to meet with the participants prior to the interviews. This was important as it

was appropriate to meet the students face to face first before fieldwork could begin. The teacher involved arranged a 15 minute meeting with the students in their team's assembly. This gave the researcher the opportunity to meet and greet the participants, briefly introduce the topic, answer any questions they had and was also a chance to discuss the interview process with them. The participants were able to go away and have a think about the topic discussed and anticipate what potentially could be asked.

During the meeting with the students, the teachers showed me a meeting room as the venue for the students' interviews. This meeting room was in their team area and they used that space to read with the students. For them it provided a personal space where students felt comfortable and which was easy to locate. The use of this meeting room meant that they felt secure and valued because this room was the students own space that they were familiar with. The interviews with the students were scheduled for three different days.

### **3.7. Data Collection Process**

#### **3.7.1. STAR Data**

Prior to interviewing the students for this study, the STAR achievement data was collected for each student. This was important as it was appropriate to find out what levels the students were at in their reading tests before the interviews began. The teachers involved arranged for the STAR achievement data of the six students to be given to the researcher to enable mapping of the interview data to occur.

### **3.7.2. Interviews**

Interviews were carried out in the location preferred by the participants. In the location, privacy was ensured in order to encourage open conversation and maintain confidentiality. In planning the interviews with the participants I recognised that my approach was informed by my own beliefs, knowledge, experience and attitude, but attempted not to allow this to interfere with the intention of understanding participants' accounts of the influences on their beliefs about their attitudes towards the teaching and learning of reading comprehension.

Before beginning the interview I spent time with each participant in relaxed and general conversation about school and reading comprehension. Teachers were interviewed individually with Teacher 1 first on Monday, then Teacher 2 on Wednesday. Students were interviewed individually and at different times with Filipo and Maletina on Monday, then Sione and Tomasi on Thursday. Then a week later on Thursday, Kimber and Langi were interviewed. This gave both the participant and myself the opportunity to develop a conversational relationship, and build rapport with one another, leading to a better interview. During the interviews, I attempted to provide ample opportunity for the participants to give accounts of their experiences and thoughts. I elicited further information and clarification from the participants with open ended questions.

### **3.7.3. Student Interviews**

The Interviews with the students were carried out during the class period. Appointments had already been made with the teachers of the students in this study the day before. The interviews were carried out on three different days, interviewing two students on each day. The Interviews were ten minutes for each student and started at 9.00am in the morning. I also made sure that



there was a five minute gap duration between the first and the second interview to allow for next interview and to reflect on responses from interviewed students. Students were asked to elaborate on their responses in response to probing and prompting during the interviews. As well as verbal prompts, I used body language prompts such as raised eyebrows and gesturing with hands. I also probed the students in the form of asking for more details for clarification. Students answered the questions according to their knowledge and understanding of the research questions. By allowing the students to tell their stories their attitudes towards the teaching and learning of reading comprehension were beginning to be formulated.

At 9.00am on Monday morning, I met Filippo for our 'talanoa' session. Our 'talanoa' began with an exchange of greetings in Samoan. Filippo had come with a big smile and was keen to talk. He sat down and the interview began. It seemed that Filippo was eager to share his story and his experiences of the teaching and learning of reading comprehension because he could not stop talking. At the end of the interview, I offered Filippo some lollies that I took with me to give to the students. Filippo took some lollies and we exchanged thank yous and assured each other we were to keep in touch.

Next I met Maletina at 9.15am on Monday morning for our 'talanoa' session. Maletina walked in confidently and happily with a huge smile on her face as if she had known me for a long time. We exchanged greetings in Samoan at the beginning of our 'talanoa'. For Maletina, I did not do much talking, I asked the relevant questions and she shared her story very expressively. Her facial expressions and body language portrayed a story itself. It felt as though she was very comfortable and confident by her openness to talk about her story and experiences of the teaching and learning of reading comprehension. At the end of the interview, Maletina seemed as though she was happy with everything she had said by asking when I was coming back to their school to "read with her

again". I offered her some lollies and exchanged farewells and ensured that continual contact would be maintained.

On Thursday at 9.00am, I met Sione for our 'talanoa' session. Sione walked in very relaxed with all smiles carrying his favourite book in hand. He sat down happily and still smiling and talking about how he had been thinking about what he was going to share during our 'Talanoa'. Greetings in Tongan was exchanged and our 'Talanoa' began. During the interview, he giggled about sharing his stories and experiences of the teaching and learning of reading comprehension because students like himself do not normally get an opportunity to share their stories and experiences at school with a visitor like me. After the interview, I offered Sione some lollies, exchanged farewells and he went off to his class. I ensured that we were to keep in touch.

After my 'talanoa' with Sione, I met Tomasi at 9.15am for our 'talanoa session. We exchanged greetings in Tongan and Tomasi sat down quietly. Tomasi was a very quiet student who talked very little. He was very friendly and happy in his approach but showed more body language like nodding, than speaking clearly. I was able to get relevant information out of him through one or two word sentences and figured most of his responses through his body language. Tomasi responded to some of the questions by showing me areas in the school, for example; he pointed and showed me the library and said that he goes to the library at school and with his mum he goes to the local library. When the interview was completed, we thanked each other and I offered Tomasi some lollies. I assured Tomasi that a continued contact would be maintained.

A week later I went to have a 'talanoa' session with Kimber at 9.00am on Thursday. Our 'Talanoa' began with an exchange of greetings in Samoan. Kimber walked in very cheerfully and was a very

confident speaker. He had a lovely manner and gestures while telling his story and his experiences of the teaching and learning of reading comprehension. His love for books and for reading became evident when he spoke about his childhood experiences of people reading to him and owning his favourite book. Kimber felt very excited and special about being listened to by a visitor because it does not happen very often at his school. At the end of the interview, we exchanged farewells and I offered Kimber some lollies, ensuring him that I would keep in touch.

I met Langi for a 'talanoa' session at 9.15am on Thursday after finishing my 'talanoa' with Kimber. Langi with his biggest smile walked in confidently. I greeted him in Tongan and our 'Talanoa' began. He was a very talkative student as well, even more talkative than Kimber. Langi went on and on and on with every question that I asked and I had to ask him to stop at certain times. He was very funny and full of stories and experiences of the teaching and learning of reading comprehension. Langi owned a laptop and he loved reading, watching movies and playing online games. His love of books and for reading was evident when he spoke about his collection of series of different story books for example, Harry Potter, Dragons and Spiderman. After the interview, we exchanged thank you's and I offered Langi some lollies. Langi asked if I was ever coming back to their school to "do more work" with him and I assured him that we were to keep in touch.

#### **3.7.4. Teacher Interviews**

The interviews with the two teachers were carried out during their teaching release time. Each teacher was interviewed once and separately. Teachers' interview appointments were made on two separate days to suit the teachers teaching release times. The interviews lasted for approximately 30 to 40 minutes for each teacher. Both teachers that participated in the interviews were given an equal opportunity to share their experiences and views related to the research questions. The

purpose of this interview was to ask the teachers what they thought of Pasifika students' attitudes towards reading comprehension and in particular the strategies they used when they supported Pasifika students through the process of reading comprehension. Teachers were asked to elaborate on their responses in response to probing and prompting during the interviews.

On Monday at 11.00am a 'talanoa' session was carried out with Teacher 1. This was her teaching release time. I met her outside her classroom and she walked with me to the chosen venue for the interviews with her. She had been teaching at School Y for about 10 years and had been teaching Year 3 and 4 students for the last six years. When I met her she said that she was nervous about the interview and had been thinking about how she was going to answer the questions. She was pleasant in her approach and mentioned that she had been trying to get all the CF and PIS forms back from the students even though some students had taken a long time to return their forms. Teacher 1 and another teacher in her team provided me with all the students demographics and STAR achievement results before students were interviewed. Teacher 1 was in charge of getting all the PIS and CIF forms back to me and she also arranged all the student interview days and times. Teacher 1 and I had one formal interview but on many occasions I corresponded through emails and met with her when clarification about the study was needed. After the interview we exchanged farewells and I ensured her that continual contact will be maintained.

The 'talanoa' session with Teacher 2 was held at 2.30pm on Wednesday during her release time. Teacher 2 arranged to meet with me at the office where the teacher interviews were going to be held. She had been teaching at School Y for about 12 years and had been teaching Year 2 and 3 students for the last seven years. As the team leader, she was a busy woman. When I met with her she said that she had been nervous about the interview and hoped that she would not talk too much

because she is known to be very talkative. She mentioned that this was a good time for the interviews to be conducted because she had been testing Year 3 students' reading abilities.

During the interview, Teacher 2 mentioned that as part of the reading and topic lesson she was taking Year 3 students to a trip to the Zoo the following week. She invited me to their team's trip and asked if I could help the teachers look after a group of students on the day. I was overwhelmed by the opportunity to take part as this would give me an insight into the teacher's planning for teaching and learning of reading comprehension when they returned to the classroom. In addition, their attitudes towards the preparation of Pasifika students learning of reading comprehension if given texts to do with the visit. After the interview, Teacher 2 and I exchanged farewells and ensured each other that contact will be kept.

After the students' and teachers' interviews, the researcher spoke with the teachers and told them that she would be back with some presents as offering to all the participants as part of the typical ethnic Fijian value of 'talanoa' methodology of valuing and sharing. The students were keen to maintain their contact with me, that even after the fieldwork the teachers told me that the students were asking when I was coming back to their school to "read" with them. Both teachers were keen to maintain their contact as well and to find out about the outcome of this research.

The interview time with the teachers varied from thirty minutes to forty minutes for each interview, but the students' interviews remained to the time limit of ten minutes for each interview. The ample information gathered from each interview with the teachers and students reflected on the rich process of 'talanoa'. At times, the researcher realised that the guiding questions prompted wider discussions where some of the pre-conceived ideas and assumptions of the researcher prior to

the interviews were challenged. As each interview progressed, each participant had the opportunity to reflect on their own attitudes and experiences towards reading comprehension. Moreover, with their consent, the researcher took notes in the journal. Ethical considerations which were exercised and clarified with the help of the informal meeting with the students and teachers and email correspondence with the teachers prior to the interviews helped the constructive flow of the interviews. The researcher was excited about the rich data collected and believed that the outcome of the study will have a great impact in determining factors and features that affect Pasifika students' attitudes towards reading comprehension.

### **3.8. Data Analysis**

Data analysis is an on-going process in any research. The process of data analysis requires asking questions of the data and developing an analysis from the information that has been gathered. The method of data analysis utilised for the interviews in this study was based on the grounded theory approaches originally developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). A grounded theory approach focuses on identifying themes and is a step by step process which has three systematic steps for data analysis (Merriam, 1998). These steps are open coding, axial coding and selective coding. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), a grounded theory approach calls for 'theory' to emerge out of the process of analysing data. The theory which emerged from the data being collected, allowed the researcher to ensure that the theory had relevance to what had happened in the research context rather than allowing any other theory to influence the study, and therefore perhaps prejudice it in inappropriate ways. Sarantakos (1998) suggested that grounded theory is a suitable approach to data analysis when the researcher is primarily concerned with the thinking that emerges from a limited amount of data.

At the completion of all the interviews with the students and teachers, each interview was transcribed. One of the benefits of transcribing the data myself had been the creation of opportunities for the researcher to recall, reflect, understand and conceptualise emerging themes from the transcripts while completing this task. Holliday (2002) found that the transition from reading and summarizing the research of others to explaining one's own ideas independently is perhaps one of the most difficult transitions researchers need to make. As he explained "making that transition from voice after silence as one struggles to express one's own voice in the midst of an enquiry designed to capture the participants' experience and represent their voice" (Holliday, 2002, p.101) is very challenging.

### **3.8.1. Coding of interviews**

#### **3.8.1.1. Open Coding**

The first step of a grounded theory approach is the open coding of data. Open coding takes place in the initial reading through of the data and involves the researcher naming and categorising data through close examination (Strauss & Cobin, 1990; Neuman, 2003). When the initial categories have been established the researcher then continued to compare new phenomena by looking at the existing categories. The open coding process requires the researcher to question his or her emerging categories by asking: "What is this? What does it represent? What does this seem to be about? How is it the same or different from before?" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.63).

For the current study, open coding began with an initial read through of all the qualitative data generated from the interviews. At this stage the researcher did not write any notes, as the purpose was to become familiar with the data first. During the second read through of the data, the researcher made brief notes and identified data of particular interest or relevant to the research

question. After this initial scanning of the data a more systematic approach to open coding was adopted. Each interview transcript of the students was named with a letter – A through to F and the interview transcript of the teachers was named with a letter – A and B.

While reading the transcripts notes were made in the margin identifying key words, phrases and ideas. Notes were taken on a memo through this open coding stage, noting possible categories, surprising data and possible relationships between the data and this was maintained continuously. The categories in regards to Pasifika students attitudes towards reading comprehension and teachers beliefs about the teaching of reading comprehension to Pasifika students was noted down as variables.

The common categories for students for question one was an initial total of fifteen variables. These were: Animal stories; Likes big books; Pictures in books; Familiar books; Engagement; Lots of pictures; Fairy tales; Lots of texts; Interesting stories; Books that relate to child's experience; Funny stories; Variety of stories; Dragon stories; Books that relate to real life experience and Chapter books. For question two a total of seven variables were formulated. These were: Interesting; Enjoyment; Understanding; Expression; Voice expression; Facial expression and Likes story read by teacher. For question three a total of ten variables were formulated. These were: Information books; Picture books; Books with lots of texts; Type of text; Nice stories; Books with birds; Funny stories; Books being new; Animal books and Books with dragons.

The common categories for teachers for question one was a total of ten variables. These were Good decoders; Bad comprehenders; Lack of vocabulary; Lack experience; Lack of oral discussion; Lack



curiosity; Lack of depth of understanding; Children lack knowledge about culture; Lack of books at home and Children think they just need to read.

For question two a total of ten variables were formulated. These were: One word responses and limited phraseology; Lack of depth of understanding; Difference in knowledge between children born in NZ and new immigrants from Pacific Islands; Lack of questioning skills; Lack of oral language; Lack of experience; Immigration and settlement problems; Three levels of Pasifika students in school; Gives up when no response from children and Lack of engagement.

For question three a total of ten variables were formulated. These were: No time for reading; No discussion of the text with the child; Parent hesitant; Parents don't question; Lack of depth of understanding; Lack of parent and teacher interaction; Parents working shift work; Difference in knowledge between Pasifika parents living in NZ and new immigrant families; Lack of experience with texts and Some parents cannot read.

For question four a total of eight variables were formulated. These were: Lots and lots of talking; Real life experiences; Different strategies; Issues about children being bilingual; Deficit theory; Engagement; Culturally specific texts is an issue and Understanding of text. These categories were modified in the second stage of coding to form the initial coded categories.

### **3.8.1.2. Axial Coding**

The second stage of a grounded theory approach to data analysis is axial coding. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), axial coding is the reassembly of fractured data through the process of

making connections between the categories established in the open coding stage. The focus of axial coding then becomes the initial coded categories rather than the data (Neuman, 2003).

In the current study the first stage of axial coding was done through examining the margin notes of the first transcript (Interview A) and identifying groupings of these notes that seemed to fit together. During this process the researcher constantly questioned the data as to what it was, what it represented, what it seemed to be about and whether it differed from that found in earlier stages of data analysis (Merriam, 1998). For Interview A, for example, a list of initial categories was developed and each category was given a title. The margin notes from Interview A were then rewritten and reorganised under each of the category titles developed from an analysis of Transcript A. The same process was carried out for the second transcript but with the initial categories developed in the analysis of the first transcript were applied where appropriate to the second transcript. When the categories developed did not fit with the data from the second transcript, the researcher developed new categories. Where the responses were found to be similar, they were placed under a more relevant and related category. This process was completed for all six interviews of the students and two interviews of the teachers.

To keep an on-going list of developing categories a master list was written at the conclusion of the analysis of each transcript. Beside each category on the master list the letters of transcripts were written which had data that matched each category. The master list was useful to refer to for the overview of the categories which appeared continuously across the transcripts and the categories that appeared only in one or limited amount of transcripts. The next stage of axial coding involved the condensing of the number of codes or reassembling of the fractured data by reorganising the initial categories formulated in the open coding stage into main thematic areas that were running consistently through student and teacher transcripts.

The reassembling and reorganisation of fractured data for students for question one was modified to ten variables from an initial total of fifteen. These were: Animal stories; Likes big books; Pictures in books; Familiar books; Engagement; Lots of pictures; Lots of texts; Interesting stories; Books that relate to child's experience and Funny stories.

The fractured data for question two was modified to four variables from the initial total of seven. These were: Interesting; Understanding; Expression; and Likes story read by teacher. The data for question three was modified from ten to eight variables. These were: Information books; Picture books; Books with lots of texts; Type of text; Funny stories; Books being new; Animal books and Books with dragons.

The reassembling and reorganisation of fractured data for teachers for question one resulted in modification of initial categories from ten to eight variables. These were Good decoders; Bad comprehenders; Lack of vocabulary; Lack experience; Lack of oral discussion; Lack of depth of understanding; Children lack knowledge about culture; and Lack of books at home.

For question two, eight variables were modified from the initial ten variables. These were: One word responses and limited phraseology; Lack of depth of understanding; Difference in knowledge between children born in NZ and new immigrants from Pacific Islands; Lack of questioning skills; Lack of oral language; Immigration and settlement problems; Three levels of Pasifika students in school and Gives up when no response from children.

For question three seven variables were modified from the initial ten. These were: No time for reading; No discussion of the text with the child; Parent hesitant; Parents don't question; Lack of depth of understanding; Lack of parent and teacher interaction; and Difference in knowledge between Pasifika parents living in NZ and new immigrant families.

For question four, five variables were modified from eight initial variables. These were: Lots and lots of talking; Real life experiences; Strategies; Issues about children being bilingual and Understanding of text. These categories were refined in the third stage of coding to form the major themes identified in the interviews.

### **3.8.1.3. Selective Coding**

The final stage of the grounded theory approach is selective coding. Selective coding involves the researcher integrating and refining categories in order to generate theory and generalisations (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). According to Neuman (2003), the researcher scans the original data for cases that illustrate the emerging theory.

In the current study, selective coding occurred through an on-going memo mentioned earlier in the first stage (open coding) of the grounded theory approach which identified possible relationships between each of the categories that had been generated. The information from this memo was added to the information on original transcripts while they were sorted into relevant categories.

The final stage of selective coding involved the identification of relationships between the major categories. These relationships were generated into final themes that allowed the theory to

emerge from the data analysis process. There were five major variables formulated in regards to students attitudes for question one. These were: Animal books; Big books/Picture books; Familiar books; Engaging books and Others. For question two, there were two major variables. These were: Likes listening to story read and Likes expression for understanding. For question three, there were six major variables. These were: Informational text; Humour; New; Pictures; Lots of text; and Others.

The major variables finalised in regards to teachers' attitudes for question one was noted as: Good decoders; Bad comprehenders; Lack vocabulary; Lack oral language; Lack experience; Lack cultural knowledge and Lack exposure to text at home. For question two, there were six final major variables: One word responses; Lack depth of understanding; Different NZ born/PI born; Lack questioning skills; Lack oral language and Immigration and settlement issues. There were five major variables for question three: No time for reading; No discussion of texts; Hesitant and don't question; Lack understanding and Lack teacher/parent talk. There were two final major variables for question four: Lots of talk and Engage real life. The examples of these codes are shown below.

When the final coding was completed, each code was counted on each transcript to examine the frequency a code was mentioned. This provided the quantitative data. Once all the transcripts were counted, the tally for each code from each transcript was noted and the total numbers were written under the relevant variable. One of the benefits of going over the transcripts repeatedly was the repeated emphasis placed on what Pasifika students had mentioned about their attitudes towards reading comprehension and what the teachers had said about their attitudes towards their Pasifika students teaching and learning of reading comprehension. At the same time, the transcripts allowed the researcher to reflect on her own pedagogy and understanding about the attitudes of Pasifika students towards reading comprehension. The interviews had helped the researcher understand

that despite the disparities and barriers these participants constantly face, they have a positive attitude towards learning. The teachers received a copy of their transcript to edit. However, no changes were made. The researcher, students and the teachers have kept in contact since these interviews.

#### **3.8.1.4. Student Interview Analysis – Examples of final codes**

The student interviews were analysed by each of the questions that were asked. There were three main questions asked. The responses were coded using the three main coding systems above. In the final selective coding, all three questions were coded using the final selective coding. Below is an example of the code:

#### **3.8.1.5. Animal books**

For example, Question 1 ‘what is your favourite story/book?’ was finally coded under: animal books, big books/picture books, familiar books, engaging books and others. The variable animal books referred to stories that were about animals, penguins, dragons and dinosaurs. “Animal books” was the code used for any response which had aspects of animals mentioned by students as their favourite book/storybook. For example:

*‘My big animal book. Because I like animals and it’s got lots of animals in it and sea creatures. Yeah..... it shows the types of animals and pictures of the animals and tells you about what it eats and those sorts of things. It is interesting to me. I also have one fish pet and my sister has two pets. I like fish stories as well. It’s interesting because it tells you where they live; they live under ground or what. Where they live and what they eat.’ (Filipo)*

*‘I like animals and I like dangerous animals. Because it tells all about animals.’ (Kimber)*

### **3.8.1.6. Big books/Picture Books**

Big books/picture books were story books that were big in size with lots of pictures in the books. Familiar books were books that had been read to the students while they were in kindergarten by the teachers or by their parents when they were little. Any response from students about any aspect of big books and picture books as their favourite book was coded under “big books/picture books”. For example:

*‘I like all of the pictures.’ (Langi)*

*‘My big animal book.’ (Filipo)*

### **3.8.1.7. Familiar books**

Familiar books also referred to stories that students had experienced before or had known somebody who had experienced a similar situation and they had prior knowledge about the stories. Any response from students about an aspect of books being familiar to them was coded under “familiar books”. For example:

*‘I made up...and my mum used to read to me about penguins, cos I liked it when I was a baby.’ (Sione)*

*‘When I was a little kid I used to paint animals. I played with the toys that were animals and umh..... yeah from when I was little’. (Filipo)*

### **3.8.1.8. Engaging books**

Engaging books were books with stories that had facts and fascinating ideas and students found they were able to relate to real life situations and learn new and interesting things. Responses from

students which showed their engagement with the text when reading their favourite book was coded under “engaging books” For example:

*‘You can learn new things and..... Umh...cos when and how they were born, when and where they come from and lots of other things’. (Kimber)*

*‘The name of the animals, where they come from, how they were born and these sorts of things. For example: the name of the dinosaurs, what its predators are, does it come from out of an egg or what....’ (Filipo)*

*‘Superdog like saves people. Umh...umh...the baby is going down and she barks and trying to save the baby’. (Tomasi)*

### **3.1.8.9. Others**

‘Others’ referred to books that were of a variety of topics depending on students personal preferences such as fairytales, Jack and the beanstalk and why do you have a mouth. Any response from students which mentioned aspects of ‘other’ choice of books as their favourite book was coded under “others” For example:

*‘The fairy books. It is Interesting. Like, it’s like happening in real life. The part that the monsters were coming to get Katie and they are trying to take the powers. (Maletina)*

*‘New books’. (Tomasi)*

Question 2 ‘when you listen to a story read by your teacher what are some of the things you like about how its read?’ was coded under: likes listening to story read and likes expression for



understanding. For example, the variable 'likes listening to story read' indicated that students liked listening to stories that their teachers read during reading sessions. Below is an example of the code:

#### **3.8.1.9. Likes listening to story read**

Likes listening to story read was chosen as a variable to indicate that students liked listening to stories read by their teacher. Responses from students indicating that they liked listening to the story being read by their teacher was coded under "likes listening to story read". For example:

*'I like how my teacher reads the story. She reads a chapter book.'* (Filipo)

*'I enjoy my teachers reading'. It's like feeling me, making me happy'. (Maletina)*

#### **3.8.1.10. Likes expression for understanding**

Likes expression for understanding was chosen to indicate how students liked the stories read by their teacher so they could understand and make meaning of the story. Expressions included voice and facial expressions, expressions to show where exclamation marks and full stops are and how it should be read and variation in reading expressions. Any response from students about expressions shown during the time they were listening to their teacher read, such as words, pictures, feelings and facial and voice expressions was coded under "likes expression for understanding". For example:

*'She smiles and laughs. Kind of deep, it's deep and low voice, yeah. Her voice is not very high.'* (Kimber)

*'When she reads she has a funny voice and a good voice. She makes funny faces.'* (Langi)

*'The books and its funny and when my teacher makes a big loud voice, we laugh yeah.....  
It's a funny story. My teacher changes her voice. She goes like this (child imitates her  
teacher's voice) "I don't know where I am going" (a sentence from the story) yeah..... My  
teacher changes her voice to tell the story and then she goes to the big loud voice. She goes  
from soft to loud voice in the story'. (Maletina)*

Question 3 'when you're looking for a book to read, what are some of the things do you look for before you choose a book?' was coded under: informational text, humour, new, pictures, lots of texts and other. For example, the variable "informational text" referred to books with information where students found a variety of information from these sorts of books. Below is an example of the code:

#### **3.8.1.11. Informational texts**

Informational books was referred to books that gave students a lot of important information about places, people and things to help students comprehend the content. Responses from students which mentioned their choice of books selected based on finding information was coded under "informational text". For example:

*'I look for "finding books". Like I have a finding book at home where you can find things  
(means finding information about things). I don't like lots of writing in a book, maybe just a  
little bit of writing, yeah....' (Filipo)*

#### **3.8.1.12. Humour**

Humour indicated books which had funny, interesting stories and humorous stories. Any response from students about any aspect of their selection of books being funny, interesting and full of humour was coded under “humour”. For example:

*‘The funny one is umh...’ ‘Why do you have a mouth’ because it says why do you have a mouth’. (Langi)*

#### **3.8.1.13. New**

New books for students meant that books were newly bought from the shops. Any response from students mentioning new books being bought as a book selection was coded under “new”. For example:

*‘New books.’ (Tomasi)*

#### **3.8.1.14. Pictures**

Pictures referred to books that had more pictures in books. Responses from students which mentioned their choice of books selected was to look at pictures was coded under “pictures”. For example:

*‘Picture books.’ (Kimber)*

*‘I like all of the pictures.’ (Langi)*

### **3.8.1.15. Lots of Text**

Lots of text was mentioned by students because they liked books that had lots of text to enable them to read more. Any response from students which indicated their selection of books with lots of text was coded under “lots of text”. For example:

*‘I just look for heaps of writing in a book so I can read’. (Maletina)*

### **3.8.1.16. Others**

‘Others’ referred to books depending on students’ personal preferences such as Jack and the beanstalk and fairy tales. Any response from students which mentioned any other type of books selected was coded under “others”. For example:

*‘I just choose the book if they are nice and if it’s like a scary book umh.... I just put it back on the shelve and get another book yeah.....’ (Maletina)*

### **3.8.1.17. Teacher Interview Analysis – Examples of final codes**

The teachers’ interviews were analysed by each of the questions asked. There were four main questions and they were coded under each variable. For example, Question 1 ‘what goes through your mind about your Pasifika children’s learning of reading comprehension?’ was finally coded under: good decoders, bad comprehenders, lack vocabulary, lack oral language, lack experience, lack cultural knowledge and lack exposure to text at home. The variable “good decoders” referred to students being able to fluently read the texts. Below is an example of the code:

### **3.8.1.18. Good decoders**

Good decoders referred to students ability to read the written words from the books. Any response from teachers which mentioned Pasifika students being good decoders was coded under “good decoders”. For example:

*‘Well usually they can be very good readers decoding really well.’ (Teacher 1).*

*‘I think the children are quite good at decoding.’ (Teacher 2)*

### **3.8.1.19. Bad comprehenders**

Bad comprehenders indicated that students were unable to understand and make meaning of the text that they read. Responses from the teachers about Pasifika students not being able to understand the text was coded under “bad comprehenders”. For example:

*‘They have very poor understanding. You often sort of think well how can you read this so well if you don’t know what this is about. They can decode the words but they really don’t have any experience with them.’ (Teacher 1)*

### **3.8.1.20. Lack vocabulary**

Lack of vocabulary indicated that students having a weakness in vocabulary. Any response from teachers which mentioned that Pasifika students lacked vocabulary was coded under “lack vocabulary”. For example:

*‘I think it’s mainly due to their lack of vocabulary, lack of understanding.’ (Teacher 1)*

### **3.8.1.21. Lack oral language**

Lack oral language meant that students were not able to communicate and engage in conversations when learning about reading comprehension skills. Responses from teachers which mentioned that Pasifika students lacked oral language was coded under “lack of oral language”. For example:

*‘I think that they need to have better oral language and better understanding of English.’  
(Teacher 2)*

### **3.8.1.22. Lack experience**

Lack experience indicated that students did not have enough experience with activities related to reading. Any response from teachers which mentioned that Pasifika students lacked experience was coded under “lack experience”. For example:

*‘I also think that it is due to a lack of vocab and a lack of experience and lot of these children do not have experiences or they are not talked about.’ (Teacher 1)*

### **3.8.1.23. Lack cultural knowledge**

Lack cultural knowledge meant that students did not have knowledge of their own culture. Responses from teachers which indicated that Pasifika students do not have any cultural knowledge was coded under “lack cultural knowledge”. For example:

*‘The ones that are....well a lot of them...the Pasifika stories...umh...some of them have no experience with them anyway because they are New Zealand born but they live in a home where English is the main language so these ones are as foreign as having a hangi or any of the other stories that we might have or a Chinese new year or something. They don’t seem to have much knowledge or experience with these sorts of things.’ (Teacher 1)*

### **3.8.1.24. Lack exposure to text at home**

Lack exposure to text at home meant that students did not have a rich text environment to enable them to read and understand the text. Any response from teachers which mentioned that Pasifika students lack the exposure of books at home was coded under “lack exposure to text at home”. For example:

*‘I often think that they don’t have enough...pause...they need more exposure to books.’*

*(Teacher 2)*

Question 2 ‘what sort of responses do Pasifika children give you when you ask reading comprehension questions?’ was coded under: one word response, lack depth of understanding, different NZ born/PI born, lack questioning skills, lack oral language and immigration and settlement issues. The variable “one word response” was referred to students responses to reading comprehension questions being one word or less. Below is an example of the code:

### **3.8.1.25. One word response**

One word response was chosen as the variable because according to the teachers Pasifika students responses to reading comprehension question was one word or less. Any response from teachers which indicated that Pasifika students responses towards reading comprehension questions was one word or less was coded under “one word response”. For example:

*‘They usually come up with something, but sometimes they don’t. Well we always try and make them feel like whatever they’ve got to offer is worthwhile. Sometimes they....you just have to give up on the question with them because you not getting any response and there’s a lot of shuffling and shifting and eyes going and you know that they are not comfortable’.*

*(Teacher 1)*

### **3.8.1.26. Lack depth of understanding**

Lack depth of understanding was used as a code because teachers found that Pasifika students lack the depth of understanding of the texts they read. Any response from teachers which mentioned that Pasifika students did not have understanding of the text and reading comprehension questions was coded under “lack depth of understanding”. For example:

*‘They don’t really have any deep understanding. Because you know leaving them to answer questions by themselves or do a worksheet or activity by themselves they really, they don’t get any more understanding, you really have to be talking about it and questioning and rephrasing and requestioning for them to understand’. (Teacher 1)*

### **3.8.1.27. Different NZ born /PI born**

Different NZ born/PI born was chosen as a code to refer to the differences in knowledge and understanding of the texts between Pasifika students who were born in New Zealand and those who were born in the Pacific Islands and are schooling in New Zealand. Responses from the teachers which mentioned that Pasifika students who are born in New Zealand showed a difference in knowledge in reading comprehension activities compared to the students who have recently arrived from the Pacific Islands was coded under “different New Zealand born/Pacific Island born”. For example:

*‘Well there is a difference but then there is another difference where the children have been born here have good English speaking parents that may have even been born here or have better English, been here for longer and those that have been born here still live in a family that don’t have much English spoken at home....umh...so there is sort of almost three levels of differences.’ (Teacher 1)*



*'It's quiet hard when people come to another country and they're trying to reach both things the other culture and their culture of where they are and of course they do what's best for their children but sometimes people don't know how to help.'* (Teacher 2)

### **3.8.1.28. Lack questioning skills**

Lack questioning skills was another variable chosen because teachers believed that Pasifika students do not put their hands up and ask questions about reading comprehension. Any response from teachers which mentioned any Pasifika students lacking questioning skills when responding to reading comprehension questions was coded under "lack questioning skills". For example:

*'I think they just listen respectfully and take it in believe what we are saying. Right as we've said before they don't actually put their hands up unless it's directed to them. Umh.....I often think they are very self-conscious and .....'* (Teacher 1)

### **3.8.1.29. Lack oral language**

Lack oral language was a code describing Pasifika students lacking the skills in interacting with the teachers and in class discussions. Any response from teachers which mentioned Pasifika students lacking oral language when responding to reading comprehension questions was coded under "lack oral language". For example:

*'Sometimes they wait a long time before answer and umh...sometimes they'll give you sort of broken short answers and things like that and you just sort of, you always need to ask more or ask further so you can actually test their understanding.'* (Teacher 2)

### **3.8.1.30. Immigration and settlement issues**

Immigration and settlement issues was a code chosen which indicated that Pasifika students low reading comprehension levels was mainly because of migrating from their home countries and adjusting to a new environment and culture of New Zealand, therefore they had difficulties in understanding and comprehending the texts. Any response from the teachers which mentioned any aspect of Pasifika students having issues related to migrating from their home country and settling in New Zealand was coded under “immigration and settlement issues”. For example:

*‘I think the children that are born here have more language, they are used to the things that are part of this culture rather than the children that have come straight from Tonga or Samoa or wherever or another Pacific Island are adapting for a wide range of things.’*  
(Teacher 2)

Question 3 ‘what do you think Pasifika parents’ views might be on their children’s reading comprehension?’ was coded under: no time for reading, no discussion of texts, hesitant & don’t question, lack understanding and lack teacher/parent talk. The variable no time for reading referred to Pasifika parents not having time for their children’s reading at home. Below is an example of the code:

### **3.8.1.31. No time for reading**

No time for reading was chosen as a code to indicate that parents are working long hours and have limited time for involvement in school reading activities. Responses from teachers which mentioned Pasifika parents not having time for reading with their children was coded under “no time for reading”. For example:

*'The children are probably left to their own devices to play amongst their cousins and that and the extended family and entertain themselves without a lot of adult interaction.'*  
(Teacher 1)

### **3.8.1.32. No discussion of texts**

No discussion of texts was another code referring to Pasifika parents not being able to have a discussion about the reading books that they take home every night. Responses from teachers indicating that parents only listen to their children's reading but do not engage in discussions about the text in order to build comprehension skills was coded under "no discussion of texts". For example:

*'A lot of people are very busy and if they manage to listen to their children read and if they manage to do their homework sheet I think people feel that you know that's all that needs to be done so more would be better.'* (Teacher 2)

### **3.8.1.33. Hesitant and don't question**

Hesitant & don't question was a code meaning Pasifika parents hesitate to communicate with the teachers and do not question about their children's learning. Any response from teachers which mentioned that Pasifika parents are hesitant and do not question about their children's learning of reading comprehension are coded under "hesitant and don't question". For example:

*'Generally those with reading difficulties are hesitant and you know we try and tell them at a parent interview you know, give them a few strategies, they listen and they nod and agree with everything we say. No they don't question.'* (Teacher 1)

### **3.8.1.34. Lack understanding**

Lack understanding was another code which referred to Pasifika parents lacking understanding of the text and reading comprehension skills. Responses from teachers which indicated Pasifika parents lacking understanding of texts and reading comprehension skills was coded under “lack understanding”. For example:

*‘I don’t think they really understand what we are trying to say or think that they need to do that....or they just agree with you and you wonder what’s happening there.’ (Teacher 1)*

### **3.8.1.35. Lack teacher/parent talk**

Lack teacher/parent talk was chosen as a code to refer to Pasifika parents not being able to interact with the teachers on a regular basis regarding their children’s learning of reading comprehension. Any response from teachers which mentioned Pasifika parents not interacting with their children’s teachers in regards to the learning of reading comprehension was coded under “lack teacher/parent talk”. For example:

*‘You almost need to invite them into the classroom and then they are hesitant Umh...but they know they won’t pop in. They are not comfortable about that. Umh.....if the teacher says you have to read this, you read it and if the teacher says you know whatever.....They seem to think teachers are right but it’s totally wrong.’ (Teacher 1)*

Question 4 ‘tell me how you might be able to encourage Pasifika students to improve their reading comprehension skills?’ was coded under: lots of talk and engage real life. The variable lots of talk indicated that Pasifika students needed to have lots of conversation with their parents about reading activities and learning in general at home and at school to improve their learning of reading comprehension skills. Below is an example of the code:

### **3.8.1.36. Lots of talk**

Lots of talk was chosen as a code because it indicated a strategy that students needed to have at home and at school to improve communication skills to enable them to develop good reading and comprehending skills. Any response from teachers about encouraging Pasifika students improve their reading comprehension was coded under “lots of talk”. For example:

*‘I think a lot of these Pacific culture, well...I don’t actually know. Yeah.....so just talking more about things would give them more knowledge therefore would help with their understanding of the world and everything around, so when they read about something they can have more knowledge and experience. To improve their comprehension.....I just think this thing about talking what they’ve read and what they are doing and the things connected with it. We just don’t have the time, the one to one, there’s too many children in the classroom to do it, too little time to go through all the different groups to really do it properly you know (Teacher 1)*

*‘I think what I need to do is to get them to talk more about stories and to actually ask questions of each other and yeah. It’s about the talking because once you talk about it then you sort of learning it and if you can actually express what you are saying; so if you can express your ideas then you actually understand and if you can frame a question then it is to understand what the answer is anyway.*

### **3.8.1.37. Engage real life**

Engage real life was another code referring to Pasifika students having real life experiences in order to understand and gain more knowledge of the texts. Responses from teachers which mentioned

engaging Pasifika students into activities to improve their reading comprehension skills was coded under “engage real life”. For example:

*‘I think there’s a huge need to talk, to give them experiences and then talk about it. Cos on the weekend their news is often about we watched T.V., we played games, we went to church, we went shopping you know that’s about all they do. . Umh...the children probably left to their own devices to play amongst their cousins and that and the extended family and entertain themselves without a lot of adult interaction’. (Teacher 1)*

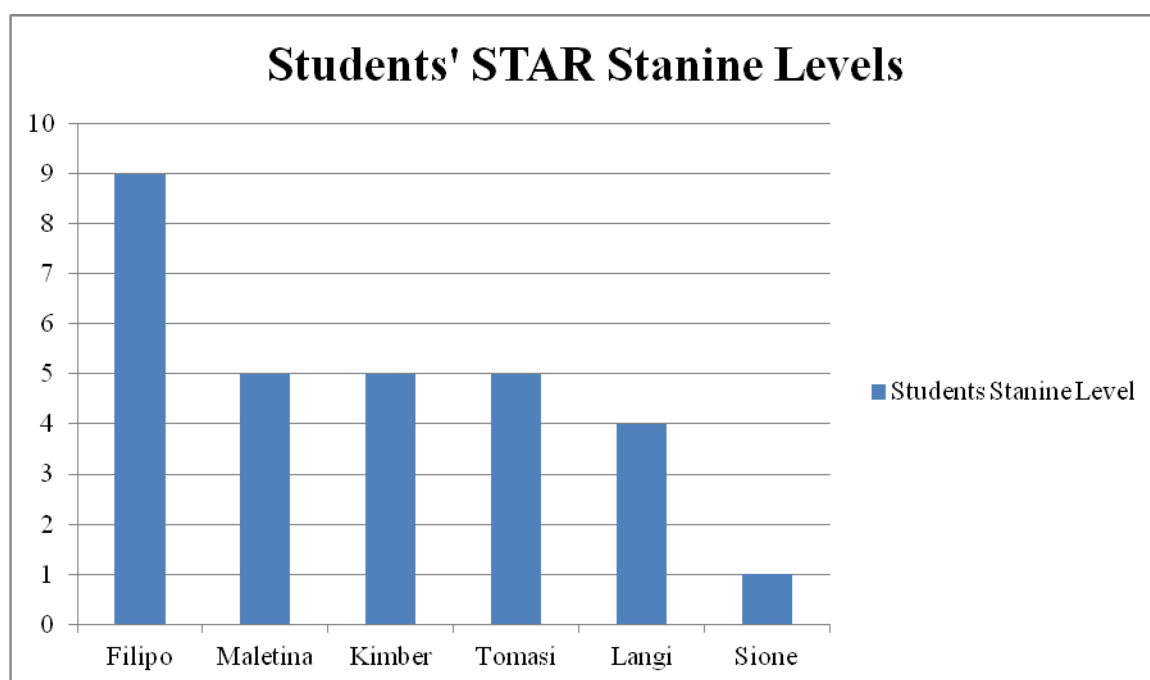
### **3.8.1.38. Individual case studies of students**

An analysis of two student’s interview, one with the highest stanine and one with the lowest stanine is provided in detailed case studies also in the results chapter. This allowed for students’ stories to be told in detail about what their attitudes towards reading comprehension were and how these were implicated in their reading of texts and subsequently reading comprehensions. In addition, case studies were an appropriate way to see what each student’s experience of reading comprehension was and their preferred approaches of teaching.

## Chapter 4. Results

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The goal of this study was to investigate the attitudes of Pasifika students towards the learning of reading comprehension. Three main questions were asked of students to examine what their attitudes were. In addition, teachers of these students were interviewed about what their beliefs were towards Pasifika students' learning of reading comprehension. Four main questions were asked of them. The findings presented in this chapter are in three sections. The first reports on the interviews with students; the second on the interviews with teachers; and the last one presents a summary of the findings. It is important to note at the beginning of this section the achievement of participant students at the beginning of the study (see Figure 1).



*Figure 1 Students' STAR stanine levels at the beginning of the study*

## **4.1. Student interviews**

The main aim of student interviews was to obtain an overall perspective on student reaction to or attitudes towards their learning of reading comprehension. There were three guiding questions. The first one was, 'what is your favourite story/book?', the second one, 'when you listen to a story being read by your teacher what are some of the things that you like about how its read?' and the third, 'when you're looking for a book to read, what are some of the things do you look for before you choose one?'

### **4.1.1. What do students' like to read?**

The responses of students to the first question asked about their favourite story/book are shown in Table 2 below. There are two features of the table. The first one is that all children liked a variety of books to read, some more than others. However, when broken down into the types of favourite story/books, 27 instances of animal books as favourite story/book were noted thus making this variety of text the most popular read with students. 'Others' books as a general category came in second place with 13 instances mentioned as favourite story/book followed by 11 instances of 'engaging' books subsequently 10 instances of 'big/picture' books as favourites. Interestingly, 'familiar' books came in as the least popular with these students. The second feature is that five out of six students each had two combinations of book preferences as favourite story/book. For example, as two favourite books, Filipo had Animal books and Big/picture books, Maletina had Other books and Animals books and Kimber had Animal books and Engaging books.

These findings suggest that 'Animal' books might be a topic that students find more connections with in relation to their everyday life and experiences. However, it might also suggest two things:



that the popularity of Animal books might be due to a topic currently studied in class at the time. The other might be due to more male students (n=5) interested in the topic than by female students (n=1).

**Table 2**

*Students' favourite story/ book*

Student Name	Animal books	Big books/Picture books	Familiar books	Engaging books	Others
Filipo	10	6	2	2	1
Maletina	3	1	1	2	5
Kimber	7		1	4	3
Tomasi	4		2	1	
Langi	1	2	1	2	2
Sione	2	1	2		2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>

## 4.2. Rationale behind students' choice of favourite story/book

### 4.2.1. Making connections

When prompted further on this question about their choice of favourite books, interesting responses came from students. For example, 'making connections' was one reason why students selected Animal books as their favourite story books. For example, some students talked about how they used to make animal toys with their mothers and how teachers used to read animal stories when they were little.

*'When I was a little kid I used to make and paint animal toys with my mum. I played with the toys that were animals and umh...yeah from when I was little' (Filipo)*

*'My kindergarten teacher used to read the animal book' (Kimber)*

Others, on the other hand, described how they connected with texts through family activities such as 'fishing with dad' or having read to at home and at kindergarten before commencing mainstream schooling.

*'I went fishing with my dad that is why I like animal book' (Langi)*

*'My mum used to read to me about penguins, cos I liked it when I was a baby'*

*(Sione)*

It may be that Pasifika people came from the land of richest sea animals and an awareness of other animals in their lives, so Pasifika students are likely to have this connection in their lives as well. Another reason already alluded to could be that the students were learning about animals at that time in the school as one of the topics and therefore limited their choices of favourite book/story.

Prior knowledge of the child for learning comprehension is important. While 'a lot of text' was noted by other students as a choice for favourite book/story, connections for students were also made by book illustrations hence big books or picture books. Big books and picture books were liked by students who had a love of making meaning through looking at pictures and the size of the books were mentioned as being 'big'. There were ten instances of big books and picture books as favourite book/story thus suggesting that colour and vibrancy of illustrations help students to connect with meaning making and therefore gain better understanding of the texts.

*'I like my big animal book. Because it has pictures of animals and people in it. It shows the size of the animals and there is a picture of a person' (Filipo)*

*'I like all of the pictures' (Langi)*

Making connections also mean familiarity with texts for understanding and sense making. Some students expressed their liking of familiar story books. Altogether, nine instances of students responded that they like books or stories which are familiar to them and that they can relate to in terms of life experiences. It is recognising that events that happen in the story are not dissimilar to their real life events and occurrences.

*'When I was three years old or four umh...this dragons, dragons, dragons umh...is a movie I saw and a story too' (Langi)*

From these conversations with students, it is not surprising that there is also a distinct level of text engagement with students when connections are made in the text for reading comprehension. A total of 11 instances of students mentioned that they liked story books that they could engage in. Their explanations of engaging with the story books seemed to link with their personal life experiences. They found that when they were engaged in a particular text of their choice, it taught them new and interesting things.

*'It is an interesting story to me. I also have one pet fish and my sister has two pets. I like fish stories as well. It is interesting because it tells you where they live, is it underground or what. Where they live and what they eat' (Filipo)*

*'I like this story umh...cos it tells you when and how, how they were born, when and where they come from and lots of other things. You can learn something new and something interesting' (Kimber)*

In addition, making connections enhances cognitive processes such as learning, problem solving and communicating ideas and social processes such as interaction through their engagement with text.

*'It tells you the name of animals, where they were born, how they were born and these sorts of things. For example, the name of the dinosaurs, what its predators are, does it come out from an egg or what...' (Filipo)*

*'It teaches me that dragons are like baddies and when Hulk kills them they turn in to goodies' (Langi)*

Making connections might also be the reason why students had referred to 'Other' texts as favourite book/story. Their choices of other types of story books varied depending on their personal preferences. 'Jack and the beanstalk', books with 'lot of text', and fairy tale stories, for example, were only a few of the examples given by the students to describe other types of story books that they liked. There were 13 instances of 'Other' books as students' favourite story books.

*'I like the fairy books. Because there's lots of reading. It's a thick chapter book' (Maletina)*

*'I like Jack and the beanstalk. Well I like it when the big man, the giant says "fi fo fi fung"' (Kimber)*

This may suggest that Pasifika students, having been raised and socialised in an oral culture and hence committed to their family gatherings and church activities, read and recite bible stories and retell stories which gives them encouragement to have an interest in other story books as well.

#### **4.2.2. What do students like when read to by the teacher?**

The second question asked about some of the things students liked when they listened to their teachers read a story to them. The fact that reading and reading comprehension was part of the school curriculum and part of everyday learning also led to a degree of enjoyment. The responses of students to the second question asked is shown in Table 3. Two features of the table that need to be noted. The first feature is, that all students liked the interest and enjoyment generated when read to by their teacher. In addition, they enjoyed listening to how the story is being read especially when read with expression and tone. The second feature is that while there is variability between students in the different ranges of response, the overall responses for each of the two categories were similar. In the first category, the range of frequency of like was 3-33 range but totalled 49, while the other was from 2-17 range with a total of 50. There was also variability in each student's responses to each question. For example, Filipino had three for listening and two for expression whereas Maletina had 13 and 17 in the two categories respectively.

These findings suggest that listening to stories read by their teacher motivated students to learn and develop an understanding of the story. In addition, it provided enjoyment for them when the story read was with a range of expressions for students to make sense of the story in relation to the world around them. The overall responses for both categories were similar which indicate that it may be due to Pasifika students experiences with living and socialising in an oral culture.

**Table 3***Student attitudes to their teachers' reading*

<b>Student Name</b>	<b>Likes listening to story read</b>	<b>Likes expression for understanding</b>
Filipo	3	2
Maletina	13	17
Kimber	11	17
Tomasi	6	2
Langi	13	4
Sione	3	8
<b>Totals</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>50</b>

### **4.3. Rationale behind students' interest in listening to stories read by their teacher**

#### **4.3.1. Motivation to learn**

The responses from students in question two indicated that they enjoyed listening to stories and mentioned the pleasure of listening to a story being read to them by their teacher. When prompted further on this question about what they thought of the way their teacher read a story to them, students were interested in the expressions their teachers used during reading. One of the reasons why students liked listening to stories read by their teachers was because it motivated them to learn more. For example some students mentioned that when their teacher explained the story as she read, they were motivated to read more. For example:

*'When she shows something she actually umh...when people don't know what it means she actually explains it to us. She is really good at reading and we can understand her when she's reading.'* (Kimber)

*'I like the stories and she read nicely. I understand the story...yeah.'* (Maletina)

It seemed that voice expression, facial expression, gestures and expression to show where exclamation marks are and how a sentence should be read was very important to the students as motivational factors. Some students imitated sentences from a story that their teacher had been reading to the class to express the type of voice the teacher used to show a variation in reading expression.

*'My teacher changes her voice. She goes like this (child imitates her teachers voice and says "I don't know where I am going" – a sentence from a story). My teacher changes her voice to tell the story and then she goes to the big loud voice. She goes from soft to loud voice in the story. Umh...I enjoy my teachers reading.'* (Maletina)

*'I like about the teacher reads to each other. She reads smoothly and stops where there is a full stop and tells us. She tells you about the full stops and question marks.'* (Sione).

Reasons for liking expressions while their teachers read stories to the students was also connected to the construction of the story, with all student making reference to the feelings it evoked or the use of vocabulary which gave them enough detail to make out the story in their mind. Furthermore, as children learn ways of expression in a story, they also understand different ways of making sense of the world they live in.

Retelling and recalling events from the story is an important part of learning reading comprehension skills. In everyday life, when students hear a story, they often share it with others, telling the story in their own words. How one tells a story depends on the purpose of telling, the audience and how the story should be understood. Some students were able to recall and retell the stories that their teachers had read to them to explain how they were motivated to read. For example Filippo said that

when he is sitting on the mat listening to a story being read by his teacher it provides him opportunities to visualise aspects of a text. He stated:

*'She reads to us, umh...the story is sort of like magic. The book is about two brothers and sisters and they put their finger in the hole in the tree and the tree goes bigger.'* (Filipo)

*'When she reads it's kinda interesting how she says it. The characters are quite surprised umh...cos Jupiter is an elephant and they are surprised to see it.'* (Kimber)

Parent can have a tremendous effect in motivating their children to learn. From the conversations with students, it was evident that their parents also read reading material at home, hence it was an experience that they liked. For example, Pasifika oral tradition was one of the main reasons why students liked listening to stories. Storytelling and listening to stories is a special time between Pasifika parents, their children and other family members usually in family gatherings and church activities, therefore the children are usually influenced by these experiences. Pasifika students come from a background of rich oral-language traditions and have a wealth of expertise. Some have experienced family and bedtime story reading and listening to stories. Others have developed the practice of transmitting certain kinds of knowledge through expressions. Learning through expressions is part of Pasifika students' culture, tradition and history because they have grown up in an oral culture.

#### **4.3.2. Students' choices of reading books**

The responses of students from the third question asked is presented in a summary below. All students' selection of books varied according to their own interests in different topics. The data from students responses from question three provided evidence of students selection of books



depending on their interests. All students liked a book or more of their own choice to read either from the library or owning it by purchasing from the bookshop.

The third question asked what were some of the things students looked for before they choose a book to read. The general feeling from the answers given by the students indicated that they preferred to select story books from a wide range based on a variety of topics. It seemed that students recognised the importance of selecting books based on their personal interests because it encouraged them to read more and enjoy reading at the same time. In addition, it helped them understand the story in relation to the given context better. The conversation with the students also revealed that their selection of books was also connected to their childhood experiences.

There was a strong preference from students about selecting informational text for reading. Some students preferred to read books with lots of texts while others preferred books with pictures, humour, new books and a variety of other books. These students mentioned that they enjoyed and valued reading story books. It appeared that the students in this study liked reading story books more frequently and read a wide range of material because they got pleasure from reading. In turn, they were enhancing both their comprehension skills and learning experiences. Students in this study also indicated how much they would like to buy a copy of the book that they had selected to read from the bookshops or any other shop that sold books. However, this was not always the case as it depended on their parents' affordability to purchase books for them. This study confirmed that Pasifika students enjoyed selecting books from the school and their local library to read. The findings from this study indicate that literacy access and literacy engagement dictate the attitude of students to reading and reading comprehension.

### 4.3.3. Teacher interviews

The main aim of teacher interviews was to obtain an overall perspective on their reaction to Pasifika students teaching and learning of reading comprehension. There were four guiding questions. The first one was 'what goes through your mind about your Pasifika children's learning of reading comprehension?', the second one 'what sort of responses do Pasifika children give you when you ask reading comprehension questions?', the third 'what do you think Pasifika parents' views might be on their children's reading comprehension?' and the fourth 'tell me how you might be able to encourage Pasifika students to improve their reading comprehension skills?'.

## 4.4. What do teachers think of Pasifika students' learning of reading comprehension?

The responses of teachers to the first question asked about their thoughts on Pasifika students learning of reading comprehension are shown in Table 4 below.

**Table 4**

*Main literacy issues: Teachers responses about Pasifika students' knowledge and learning of reading comprehension*

<b>Teacher 1</b>		<b>Teacher 2</b>	
Good decoders	3	Good decoders	1
Bad comprehenders	8	Bad comprehenders	7
Lack vocabulary	4	Lack vocabulary	
Lack oral language	14	Lack oral language	12
Lack experience	12	Lack experience	1
Lack cultural knowledge	1	Lack cultural knowledge	1
Lack exposure to text at home		Lack exposure to text at home	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>42</b>		<b>24</b>

The main feature of the table is that both teachers appeared to hold similar views about their perceptions of Pasifika students learning of reading comprehension. For example, while both teachers identified Pasifika students as 'good decoders', the majority of their views were related to 'lacks' ranging from 'poor comprehenders' to 'lack of exposure to text at home' in Pasifika students' attitudes in the learning of reading comprehension. This suggests that teachers have a 'deficit' view of learning - a view that blames the children and their families as the cause of their negative attitudes to learning.

*'Well usually they can be very good readers decoding really well but poor understanding. You often sort of think well, how can you read this so well if you don't know what this is.'*  
(Teacher 1).

*'I think the children are quite good at decoding. Umh I think that they need to have better oral language and better understanding of English'. (Teacher 2)*

However, when each teacher was examined individually, there were differences between the two. For example, Teacher 1 believed that it was the lack of vocabulary that hindered children's learning of reading comprehension hence their negative attitude to learning whereas Teacher 2 did not seem to identify this lack.

*'I think it's mainly due to their lack of vocabulary, lack of understanding. They can decode the words but really don't have any experience with them'. (Teacher 1)*

Teacher 1 also suggested more than Teacher 2 that children lack outside experiences that they should be exposed to in order to relate more to and understand texts.

*'I think there's a huge need to talk...to give experiences and then talk about it. Cos in the weekend their news is often about we watched T.V, we played games, we went to church, we*

*went shopping you know that's all they do. The children are probably left to their own devices to play amongst their cousins and that and the extended family and entertain themselves without a lot of adult interaction'. (Teacher 1)*

Teacher 2, however, identified 'lack of exposure to text at home' as a contributor to attitude of students – one that Teacher 1 did not identify as such.

*'I often think that they don't have enough...pause...They need more exposure to books.'*  
*(Teacher 2)*

These findings suggest that teachers faced various challenges in their teaching and learning of reading comprehension of Pasifika students. It is important, therefore, to examine the rationale behind teachers beliefs and perceptions in order to understand why they responded the way they did.

## **4.5. Rationale behind teachers' responses (attitudes) on Pasifika students' learning of reading comprehension**

### **4.5.1. Main Literacy issues**

The teachers perceived that, for Pasifika students, decoding of words was a strength but that understanding the meaning of words and comprehending the text was a weakness. When asked what went through their minds about their Pasifika children's learning of reading comprehension, both teachers had similar responses. For example, Teacher 1 stated that:

*'Well usually they can be very good readers decoding really well but very poor understanding. You often sort of think well, how can you read this so well if you don't know what this is about. And probably think it's mainly due to their lack of vocabulary, lack of understanding. They can decode the words but they really don't have any experience with them.'* (Teacher 1)

Teacher 1's attitude towards her Pasifika students' learning of reading comprehension was considered a challenge that she was faced with all the time. She commented that students from non-English speaking backgrounds have particular literacy learning needs. However, she did not offer any particular solutions. She also expressed that Pasifika students differ in strengths in using their first languages and in the English language strengths that they bring to school for reading and understanding of the texts. For this reason, she explained that Pasifika students can decode very well but do not comprehend well enough.

The response of Teacher 2 was similar but she also commented that Pasifika students need more exposure to books to become better readers and develop reading comprehension skills. She stated that:

*'I think that they need to have better oral language and better understanding of English. And I often think that they don't have enough...pause...They need more exposure to books.'*  
(Teacher 2)

Teacher 2's attitude towards her Pasifika students learning of reading comprehension was similar to Teacher 1's. She argued that there is a necessity for Pasifika students to be in a rich text

environment in their home where students together with family members might discuss and solve issues that would eventually enhance their reading and understanding of the texts.

#### 4.5.2. What teachers think are the causes of the issue

When asked about what they thought the reason might be Pasifika students lacking the skills in reading comprehension, both teachers responded that it is the lack of vocabulary, lack of oral language, experience, lack of cultural knowledge and lack of exposure to text at home. Teachers' perceptions of the causes of the literacy issue in regards to Pasifika students reading comprehension was based on the attitude displayed by students in class activities and their level of academic reading achievement (see Table 5).

**Table 5**

*What teachers think are the causes of the issue: Students' responses to comprehension questions according to the teachers*

Teacher 1		Teacher 2	
One word response	2	One word response	2
Lack depth of u/s	1	Lack depth of u/s	2
Diff NZ born/PI born	2	Diff NZ born/PI born	2
Lack questioning skills	2	Lack questioning skills	2
Lack oral language		Lack oral language	2
Immigration & Settlement Issues		Immigration & Settlement Issues	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>7</b>		<b>12</b>

Reading the Bible, both in their first language and in English and reciting texts at church is a common practice for learning to read for Pasifika students. The teachers talked about Pasifika students' tradition and culture associated with their learning of reading comprehension skills. Teacher 1

commented that students learn to recite passages from the Bible at home and at church and that is how they read all the other texts. However, teachers mentioned that students think that they just have to read the texts similar to how they read Biblical texts but they do not understand what they are they reading.

Literacy experiences also mean recognizing the importance of students' first language and culture in their schooling. For Pasifika students, their first language plays a key role in building student's confidence, self-esteem, self-identity and self-discipline in all aspects of their education. The teachers responses are shown below:

*'Probably because of the way that they are traditionally done things you know they not really a book culture I suppose but they are and I think the church type attitude of reciting the children learn at a very early age. They recite but don't actually understand what they are saying. They just have to read it and that's what they learn to do and that's what they think is all they need to do. Umh...O...the children think that anyway.'* (Teacher 1)

The response of Teacher 1 was similar to Teacher 2. She stated that:

*'I think it's because they generally speak their own language at home and I think that they need to speak their own languages at home which is great, which is what people should be doing but they sometimes...pause...sometimes the parents and sort of expect the school to do all the teaching and that once they pass their child over to the school that it will all happen there, and I think that they really need to embrace the idea of everybody doing it.'* (Teacher 2)

Teacher 2 also commented that because Pasifika students speak their own language at home and students do not get any help from their parents at home with their learning, they lack the skills in

reading comprehension. She went on to say that Pasifika parents expect the school to be responsible for all the learning that happens in their child's life. When prompted further on this question, Teacher 1 responded that:

*'Well I suppose it's the conditioning of just doing this repetition all the time and umh...but I also think that its due to a lack of vocab and a lack of experience and a lot of these children do not have experiences or they are not talked about. They don't have the oral English vocabulary to make a discussion or to know what these things are. And they not actually that curious about things. They tend to be more accepting of information and situations. They just accept that that's the way it is and they don't question it. Whereas other cultures might question it more and umh...'* (Teacher 1).

From Teacher 1's perspective, Pasifika students' reciting the text did not seem to be benefiting them in developing their interest in reading comprehension. She expressed that because Pasifika students lack vocabulary, experience and oral language skills, they are not able to engage in discussions and therefore experience difficulty in understanding texts. The lack of curiosity on the part of the students meant that they accepted everything without question. This lack of curiosity and interest in students mentioned by Teacher 1 can be inhibited by making connections with the text for understanding and sense making. It is also recognising that building on Pasifika student's expertise in recitation, developed through church and family literacy practices and activities are motivational factors for the students which ignites their curiosity.

#### **4.5.3. What supports teachers' comments about causes of the issue?**

The teachers perceived that they use a variety of strategies to develop Pasifika students' reading comprehension skills. When asked to think about strategies that they use to ensure that Pasifika



students understand the story, the teachers expressed that they use a variety of strategies, basing their thinking on what they had observed from their time in the classroom. The teachers commented that Pasifika students were unable to answer reading comprehension questions. Teacher 1 said that if they do give answers to any questions, it is only to basic surface feature questions with only one word responses. The teachers responses are shown below:

*Generally we'll have a discussion about things after reading of story. Sometimes they do related activities. But we do generally have a procedure where we read and clarify the words as they go but if they don't tell you that they don't understand it then you know or they don't get clarified. You know, I mean we clarify some of them. Answering questions in a discussion, we actually have to draw those children in and ask them specifically umh...they are not the ones that put their hands up and offer. That is one of the cultural things what the teacher says goes and you don't question it. I don't think any particular strategy works because we still have this ongoing problem of them reading beautifully word for word perfectly but unable to answer anything but basic surface feature questions. They don't have any deep understanding'. (Teacher 1)*

Similarly Teacher 2 responded that:

*'I ask lots of questions, I get them to kind of find pieces in the text, I get them to point to pictures and I get them to ask questions and to talk about things generally. You have to prompt them because sometimes people are not sure if there is a right answer and that umh...for some things there is a definite right answer but you know lots of things especially in reading you can actually...interpretation can be different. Sometimes they wait a long time before answer and umh...sometimes they'll give you sort of broken short answers and things like that and you just sort of always need to ask more or ask further so you can actually test their understanding. ' (Teacher 2)*

According to Teacher 2, Pasifika students who have migrated from their home country and settled in New Zealand face the challenges of adjusting themselves to the culture of New Zealand. Her view was that Pasifika students who are born in New Zealand are used to New Zealand's culture and the way teaching is done in schools rather than the students who are Pacific Islands born and have migrated here. According to teachers, these are the students who are attempting to adapt to a wide range of cultures and the New Zealand school system. Both teachers found that Pasifika students who were born and have lived in New Zealand for a longer period of time have different levels of oral language proficiency in English compared to students who were born in the Pacific Islands and schooling in New Zealand. In addition, Teacher 1 made mention of some students who may have been born in New Zealand and perhaps living with families who did not speak much English at home. These children too had different levels of oral language.

Providing a range of culturally relevant texts, topics, contexts and perspectives is important for students to learn reading comprehension skills. Children from the same cultural, ethnic, or socioeconomic group can be different, not only in their achievements but also in the knowledge and experiences that they bring to school literacy practices. Therefore a teacher's knowledge and understanding of the culture of the student is very important. One of the teachers suggested the provision of texts for students according to their needs. She stated that:

*'We have a variety of texts. Umh...depends on their needs, depends on what sort of child they are, if they are child who is obviously still learning the language then we have very structured texts, we introduce new words each time and they get to read using a basic vocabulary of words. Umh...umh...but later on you know the school journals that's a whole variety of texts that they have. Umh...some of them, umh.. only a few of them are really culturally specific. But there are a number of stories in those that are about life on the islands and things like that. Umh..yeah.'* (Teacher 1)

On the other hand, the other teacher gave students all types of texts to read.

*'I give them all sorts of texts but I try and find things that I think children will like and things that have humour in them and sometimes we've got texts that follow on so there's a series and they've already met a character or characters before and umh...I always try and make it fun for the children, so if I can find a funny way into it I will.'* (Teacher 2)

When students had been reading a culturally appropriate text the teachers mentioned that some words in the reading texts related to things that the Pasifika students had not yet experienced or were unfamiliar concepts. On the other hand, some words may not be commonly used or have equivalent translations in the different Pasifika first languages.

*'The ones that are...well a lot of them...the Pasifika stories...umh...some of them have no experience with them anyway because they are New Zealand born but still live in a home where English is the main language so these ones are as foreign as having a hangi or any of the other stories that we might have or a Chinese New Year or something. They don't seem to have much knowledge or experience with these sorts of things...umh...'* (Teacher 1)

The response of Teacher 2 indicated that culturally specific texts did not contain stories that were engaging for Pasifika students. She stated that:

*'I do like some of those texts...no...some of them are umh...they are weak stories and you are sitting there thinking who, well, yeah...I think we've always got to find a thing...you are always selling...selling reading the whole time so yeah.'* (Teacher 2)

#### 4.5.4. Teachers' perceptions of Pasifika parents' views on their children's reading comprehension

One of the concerns discussed by the teachers about Pasifika parents involvement in their children's learning of reading comprehension was that they may not be talking with their children. Teachers responded that if parents are not talking to the children, then the children do not have the oral language. Teachers also mentioned that Pasifika parents usually have two or three occupations to meet the financial demands of their families. The effect of working long hours and other cultural commitments may result in less time to help and engage in quality oral language discourse between parents and their children. Teachers felt that Pasifika parents do not have time to read and have a discussion with their children. Parents lack understanding of the text and are hesitant to interact with the teachers and ask questions to find out more about their child's learning of reading comprehension. Table 6 below shows the attitudes of teachers to parents' views of reading comprehension.

**Table 6**

*Teachers' perceptions of Pasifika parents views on reading comprehension*

<b>Teacher 1</b>		<b>Teacher 2</b>	
No time for reading	2	No time for reading	2
No discussion of texts	2	No discussion of texts	2
Hesitant & don't question	4	Hesitant & don't question	4
Lack understanding	2	Lack understanding	2
Lack teacher/parent talk		Lack teacher/parent talk	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>14</b>

The teachers' responses on their thoughts about Pasifika parents' views on reading comprehension are shown below:

*'I think they just listen respectfully and take it in believe what we are saying. Sometimes the children's reading is possibly better than the parents so they not in a position to question or alter or change things. Umh...again that's where you get your three levels those that have parents who are quite fluent in English and confident in it probably ask questions and do it differently to those that don't have so much English themselves. You almost have to invite them into the classroom and then they are hesitant. Umh...but they know they won't pop in. They are not comfortable about that. Umh...if the teacher says you have to read this, you read it and if the teacher says you know whatever...They seem to think teachers are right but it's totally wrong.'* (Teacher 1)

Teacher 2 responded by saying that:

*'I don't know. I think that they kind of...pause...umh...reading comprehension I'm not sure that they actually understand the difference between umh...actually reading a story and understanding it. Sometimes people think that if you can read it that you understand it and the two things don't go together. Umh...so therefore what I tend to do, I ask them if I know that children are having a bit of a weakness with comprehension I ask the parents to ask one or two questions and I give them examples of what they might ask.'* (Teacher 2)

When prompted further on this question about Pasifika parents awareness of strategies to help their children with reading comprehension, the teachers replied that parents were not aware of the strategies. Teacher 1 stated that:

*'No I don't think they are at all. O...generally those with reading difficulties are and you know we try and tell them at parent interviews you know, give them a few strategies, they listen and they nod and agree with everything we say and really I don't think they really*

*understand what we are trying to say or think that they need to do that...or they just agree with you and you wonder what's happening there so...no they don't question.'* (Teacher 1)

Similarly Teacher 2 responded that:

*'No I don't think so, yeah...No I don't think they are. A lot of people are busy and if they manage to listen to their children read and if they manage to do their homework sheet I think people feel that that's all that needs to be done so more would be better.'* (Teacher 2)

The teachers said it was difficult to find a way of encouraging Pasifika parents to come regularly into the classroom. They mentioned that parents come to the events – Pasifika and cultural evenings but in the school they drop the children off in the car park. Teachers believed that this was part of a cultural thing. It is the Pasifika tradition of showing respect for people of high status, such as teachers and principals, by remaining silent and not questioning them. Silence does not mean that they are not sensible rather they want to be polite and respectful.

#### **4.5.5. Teachers' perceptions on improving Pasifika students reading comprehension skills**

Table 7 shows what teachers thought were ways to improve students' reading comprehension. Both teachers agreed that 'Lots of talk' and 'Engage in real life' are the two most important things children should be engaged in as these will improve reading comprehension skills of students.

Table 7

*Ways to encourage Pasifika students improve their reading comprehension skills*

Teacher 1		Teacher 2	
Lots of talk	2	Lots of talk	2
Engage real life	2	Engage real life	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4</b>		<b>3</b>

The teachers reported that in order to improve Pasifika students reading comprehension skills, they need to be engaged in lots of oral discussion. They believed that traditionally Pasifika students are seen and not heard, therefore they do not get an opportunity to talk to their parents about experiences related to reading activities. Teacher 1 explained that:

*'I think a lot of these Pacific culture, well...I don't know actually. I wonder if they actually talk very much to their children about things you know...there's children that are seen and not heard mentality...so therefore even if they have been for a trip they don't say that for example, "We are going to Waihi, this is an interesting place because they used to go gold mining here" or you know there's nothing extra added in so the children come to school and they know that they have been somewhere but they don't know where, they don't know why or whatever or anything that's been along the way or anything. Umh...so I think just...there's a huge need to talk...to give them experiences and then talk about it. Umh...the children probably left to their own devices to play amongst their cousins and that and the extended family and entertain themselves without a lot of adult interaction. Yeah...so just talking more about things would give them more knowledge therefore would help with their understanding of the world and everything around, so when they read about something they can have more knowledge and experience.'* (Teacher 1)

In addition, the process of thinking and talking will enable students to make connections and help understand the text. The response of teacher 2 was also similar. She stated that:

*'I think what I need to do is to get them to talk more about stories and to actually ask questions of each other and yeah. It's about the talking because once you talk about it then you sort of learning it and if you can actually express what you are saying; so if you can express your ideas then you actually understand and if you can frame a question then it is to understand what the answer is anyway. So I think that's where they need to go next so I still think that children do need to know...they still need to talk about what they are learning but umh...sometimes it's quite hard to get talking about the learning going.'* (Teacher 2)

#### **4.6. Summary of student and teacher interviews results**

The results indicate that Pasifika students in this study loved reading and being read to. In addition, their being able to comprehend texts is likely to be enhanced through making connections to their prior knowledge and experiences hence the rationale behind their choice of readers. In order to increase students understanding of texts, Pasifika languages and culture need to be incorporated more into the teaching and learning of reading comprehension.

Results of teacher interviews indicate that while the teachers knew their students well, they however, did not know their students well enough to know student preference about their teaching and reading comprehension needs. The second was that their expectations of students, and their families and communities, were low.



## 4.7. Student case studies

To enable student attitudes to be adequately defined in the context of Pasifika students' learning of reading comprehension, a detailed examination of their interview responses is reported in this section through two case studies. The first case study is that of a high achieving student and the other, a low achieving student. These case studies provide explicit elaborations of their individual attitudes (see Table 8).

**Table 8**

*Differences between the high achieving and low achieving students*

Details of students	Filipo	Sione
Stanine level	9	1
Favourite books/story	Animal	Animal
Likes listening to story	3	3
Likes expression for understanding	2	8
Book selection	Informational text	Lots of text

### 4.7.1. Filippo – high achieving student

Filipo was seven years and nine months. He was taught by Teacher 1. As Table 8 shows, he had the highest achievement in reading in the group of students in this study. He was a strong academic student and was identified as an intelligent student by his teacher. His performance on STAR was highly proficient with a stanine level of 9 (the highest of the STAR stanine ranking from 1 being lowest and 9, being the highest). Filippo was a New Zealand born Samoan. He spoke English as a first language at home and at school. He could understand Samoan when spoken to but was not able to speak the Samoan language. Before commencing primary school education, Filippo attended early childhood education. He loved reading particularly animal books with a particular preference for picture books. He referred ten times to animal books as his favourite story/book followed by big

books and picture books (see Table 3). When asked what his favourite story/book was, he stated that:

*'I like my big animal book. Because it has pictures of animals and people in it. It shows the size of the animals and there is a picture of a person'.*

When Filipo was asked why he selected animal books as his favourite story book, he immediately made connections by providing childhood memories and his experiences with animal stories and related activities he was involved with at a young age. This created an interest in him for animal books for familiarity and understanding thus enabling him to easily make sense of the world around him and his learning. He stated:

*'When I was a little kid I used to make and paint animal toys with my mum. I played with the toys that were animals and umh...yeah from when I was little'.*

Making and painting animal toys with his mother while young, is a literacy practice he was exposed to at home and even before mainstream schooling. It is not surprising then that his interest in this genre is maintained and sustained due to familiarity and connections made with these types of texts. In other words, to be able to hold an interest in this genre suggests that his attitude towards reading is dictated by his prior knowledge and family literacy practices thus eagerness to learn has extended to not just animals but also land and water animals. This is shown by his response below when asked whether he liked reading books about water or land animals and he simply stated that:

*'I like land and water animal books'.*

Childhood experiences and real life experiences in connection to reading his favourite story books have shown to enhance his cognitive processing skills – the ability to reason logically with the text. This was evident in the depth of knowledge in his responses when he was further prompted about identifying important things he learnt from reading his favourite story. He stated:

*‘It tells you the name of animals, where they were born, how they were born and these sorts of things. For example, the name of the dinosaurs, what its predators are, does it come out from an egg or what.’*

Filipo can identify names of animals, their environment and how they come to be, including the imminent dangers animals face. In other words, to Filippo, to find out about a topic embodies everything to do with that topic. It is not enough to know about what an animal is, but rather a holistic knowledge about that animal. In doing so, he develops a thorough knowledge of and a good grasp of topical vocabulary in the process. Being the highest achiever in the group with a STAR stanine of 9, Filippo’s attitude to reading and learning suggests that his entire outlook on learning and reading comprehension is one of excitement and confidence. His verbal responses to interview questions and his ability to mentally recall different situations illustrate the depth of his engagement with texts and learning. The fact that he has animal pets at home in addition to his learning about different animals thus strengthens his understanding and makes him want to learn more. There was a distinct level of text engagement with Filippo. Filippo talked about having an interest in reading other story books that he could get engaged in. His interest and engagement in other stories was present in his response when he said that:

*It is an interesting story to me. The characters are cat, giant and some other magical characters. It is interesting because it’s like the story is happening in real life.’*

Filipo's knowledge and understanding of the stories he read was found to be of a higher level despite being in Year 3. He used prior knowledge and incorporated with real life experiences to explain his learning of reading comprehension. At times he mentioned the names of the 'characters' in the story. At other times he talked about the characters by labelling them.

Further conversation with Filippo about listening to stories being read by his teacher indicated that he least likes listening to stories. He was not very interested in any type of expression used by his teacher during reading. However, he loved reading books. The results of Filippo's responses to teacher reading a story was mentioned on three instances and for teacher using expressions for understanding during reading was mentioned on only two occasions. This means that Filippo gains most of his knowledge, understanding of the text and reading comprehension skills from reading on his own. It may be that he was not motivated to enjoy listening to the stories through this medium. It might also mean that he is an independent reader now and he had gone past that level. This suggests that for Filippo, it might be unrealistic to expect listening to teachers read as reading stories independently had contributed to his interest and enthusiasm in reading and subsequently, his development of reading comprehension skills. It appeared that though Filippo least liked listening to stories being read by his teacher compared to other students, he seemed to have understood the story very well. For example, Filippo retold a part of the story that he was listening to when his teacher was reading to the whole class in a 'teacher reading session'. He explained that:

*'She reads to us, umh...the story is sort of like magic. The book is about two brothers and sisters and they put their finger in the hole in the tree and the tree goes bigger.'*

His active and explicit involvement in listening to his teacher read a story is shown by this comment about his teacher:

*'I like the way she reads, umh...she makes it interesting. Some of the children wriggle on the mat. I understand and like the story that my teacher reads.'*

Filipo's interest in choosing a book to read was not the same as the other students' interests. Although he liked animal books and big/picture books as his favourite books, he was also motivated to learn from informational texts. For this reason, it was important to understand and take account of his interest in the different types of books that he liked reading and what motivated his learning of reading comprehension. When asked about some of the things that he looked for before choosing a book to read, he responded:

*'I look for "finding book". Like I have a finding book at home where you can find things (means finding for information about things). I don't like lots of writing in a book, may be just a little bit of writing, yeah.'*

Overall, Filippo was a student who was full of energy and enthusiasm for learning. His personality and social skills helped him to be part of various activities at school and outside of school. Filippo had the support of his parents in his learning and was a motivated student. He was one of those students who would go the extra mile to learn new and different things or try authentic experiences.

#### **4.7.2. Sione – Low achieving student**

Sione was seven years and two months. He was taught by Teacher 2. Sione had the lowest achievement in reading in the group of students in this study. His performance on the STAR test was

a 'well below average' level with a stanine level of 1<sup>2</sup>. Sione was a New Zealand born Tongan. He spoke Tongan as a first language at home. English was Sione's second language and he spoke English at school. Before commencing primary school education, Sione attended early childhood education. He loved reading particularly animal books with a group of students. Sione also liked reading stories that were familiar to him mostly because of his childhood experiences with these stories. He referred twice to animal books as his favourite story/book followed by familiar books. During the interviews, Sione brought his favourite penguin book to share his thoughts and feelings about the book with the researcher. When asked what his favourite story/book was, he stated that:

*'I like reading with others. My favourite book is ...umh...this penguin book.'*

When Sione was asked why he selected animal books as his favourite story book, he constantly made connections across past and present experiences. He talked about his childhood memories of how his mother used to read animal stories when he was little. This expressed an interest in him for animal books for making it a meaningful part of his life hence enjoying literature at the same time. He stated:

*'My mum used to read to me about penguins cos I liked it when I was a baby'.*

Despite Sione being a poor reader, he was motivated to become better at reading. Sione's attitude towards reading was reflected through his involvement with literacy activities at home and his prior knowledge about his interest and curiosity in reading his favourite story books. He described how he made connections with the texts through family literacy activities. He referred to his father's

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<sup>2</sup> Stanine (STANDARD NINE) is a method of scaling test scores on a nine-point standard scale with a mean of five (5) and a standard deviation of two (2). A stanine of 1 indicating a very low relative achievement to the whole norm reference group in the Supplementary Tests of Achievement in Reading (STAR).

experience with penguins and associated reading of the same topic with his perception of that experience. He stated that:

*'I learn about umh...pause...umh...about my dad cos he went to see penguins. He went to Wellington and he saw penguins.'*

Sione also mentioned that copying texts from the books motivated him to read more. By doing it this way, he believed he could learn more words and transfer to writing at the same time. In doing these activities, he develops great enthusiasm in himself as a reader for reading and writing. It also provides inspiration and motivation for him as he is learning about literary elements in connecting reading and writing. In addition, this experience also provides Sione a tremendous opportunity not only on practice writing, but also to practice reading while rehearsing. Being a low achiever in the group with a STAR stanine of 1, it is less important for him to get every word exactly right but more importantly for him to take an interest and learn to love reading itself. His interest in learning about writing from reading his story books was present in his response when he said that:

*'I learn about...umh..pause...I learn about writing and copying. I copy the writing from the book.'*

In the interviews, Sione mentioned that he liked reading story books but sitting down and listening to stories read by his teacher was not one of his favourite activities. He liked the way his teacher read with expression the stories to the class, however he did not enjoy this experience very much. He stated that:

*'I like about the teacher reads to each other. She reads smoothly and stops where there is a full stop and tells us. She tells you about the full stops and question marks.'*

When asked if he understood the story his teacher read, he responded that he understood his mum's and his teacher's reading. He said:

*'Also my mum and my teachers reading.'*

He further commented about the way his teacher reads the story to the class by saying:

*'She smiles and makes funny faces.'*

Sione had an interest in reading other kinds of story books when he had some spare time. He added that he enjoyed reading about 'Billy and Jack'. He imagined himself taking the main characters part in the story. Sione also liked reading books with a lot of text. When choosing a book to read, he always chooses books with lot of text and funny stories as well to add humour in his reading. He stated:

*'I like lots of writing.'*

*'You could look for a happy book.'*

*'Some books that are funny.'*

Overall, Sione was a very cheerful and talkative student. He talked about his interests in other areas of the curriculum, especially music and sports. Sione was in the schools ukulele group and he said that he goes at lunch breaks to practice ukulele with his ukulele teacher. This demonstrates Sione's interest and motivation in learning.



#### **4.8. Summary of Case Studies**

The case studies show that both students were academically motivated despite one being a high achiever and the other, a low achiever. Both students utilised their prior knowledge and experience well to make connections to their reading and understanding of texts they read. Both liked being read to, with one preferring expressions by teacher in reading more than the other. It is important to note that both students were taught by different teachers and that this might be the variance that dictated the status of achievement of the two students. This is supported by the fact that one is an independent reader with a preference for 'informational text' which might indicate that the student is more advanced and more focused, the other not with a preference for 'lots of text' thus indicating that this student might still be developing his love for reading.

## Chapter 5. Discussion

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This chapter discusses the findings from the previous chapter. In examining what the attitudes of students were towards the teaching and learning of reading comprehension, it was found that children loved reading and learning and that their choice of reading materials was based solely on how books make connections to them and their life experiences. It is these connections that motivate them to learn and read more. The teacher interviews, on the other hand, showed that while the teachers knew their students well, they however, did not know their students well enough to know student preference about their teaching and reading comprehension needs. In addition, their expectations of students, and their families and communities, were low. These are discussed in the present chapter.

The purpose of teaching comprehension is to teach strategies as tools to expand and deepen understanding of the text. Effective teachers who are skilful in content literacy knowledge and practices can increase students' capacity in understanding of the text. Many factors for example, when teachers select the texts and authenticity of texts for reading can affect whether students become motivated and engaged in understanding texts and related activities. It could be that students are good at reading but not able to transfer those abilities to comprehending the text because students are not prompted to make connections with their knowledge and experience when discussing texts.

Pasifika students come from an oral culture and from an early age through these experiences Pasifika students' early literacy experiences begin. Teachers have a crucial role in helping students develop a range of reading comprehension strategies and awareness of how to use them for understanding of the text. It may be that the strategies utilised when teaching reading

comprehension is not appropriate for Pasifika learners. The emphasis may initially be on decoding and making sense of the text, but thinking critically about the text and providing rich experiences of the purpose of reading a particular text is crucial in helping students develop better understanding of the text. It is also important that teachers help their students to recognise that behind every text is an author, that the author has a reason for writing, and that the reader has a reason for reading and understanding.

One of attitudes students had in their learning of reading comprehension was the keen interest they showed in their ability to make connections to the text using their prior knowledge. This supports the argument presented by McNaughton (2002), Alton-Lee (2003) and Amituanai-Toloa (2010) that while reading, children can make connections to the texts using their background knowledge. In this study, the favourite books identified by students were almost always chosen based on some form of past connectivity made by children to text content whether through activities they see or through what they read. For example, it was clear from the interviews with students that, family activities they were engaged in at an earlier age with family members such as 'fishing' and 'making toys' provided for some the experiences that they were familiar with and connect with when reading.

A high level of interest and engagement in reading was also evident when these connections were made. Students discussed their interest and engagement with the text and were able to connect what they learnt at school to the real world and vice versa. According to Rachels (2010) when a person shows their interest in doing anything, it benefits others as well as their own interest. Children being able to make the connections between their family activities and school activities and showing interest and enthusiasm at the same time, suggests that they are in fact creating new knowledge and thus progressing that new knowledge to a new level of understanding by applying it to new situations. This idea is supported by Cambrosio and Keating (1988). They argue that it is

through children's experiences that knowledge is created which is then utilised to know something in a situation.

Another attitude that students had in their learning of reading comprehension was their motivation to learn from reading and listening to their teachers reading. In this study, a small sample of Pasifika students were found to be motivated learners as evident in their responses. Meaningful discussions with these students encouraged them to share their perspectives of what motivated them to read and enjoy listening to their teachers reading. Students' thoughts were expressed in the form of words, pictures and feelings. The thoughts and feelings which was in their mind about what motivated them to learn and the way they reflected on those experiences and situations reflected their attitudes towards their learning of reading comprehension.

Students were motivated to read and comprehend the text at home because of the encouragement from their parents. The students' parents had set a good example by providing reading materials, and reading and telling stories. They gave strong encouragement by taking them to the library and buying books. This idea is supported by (Lai, McNaughton, McDonald & Farry, 2005; Amituanai-Toloa & McNaughton, 2008), that Pasifika children grow up in an oral culture and are committed to their family gathering where the elders read and retell stories to the younger siblings. Pasifika children's experience of reading comprehension is often church based, such as (Tauloto) which are passages from the Bible to be memorised, patterns of recitation involving reading biblical text and other texts at home and church settings. According to Guthrie (2001), engaged readers are intrinsically motivated to read for knowledge and enjoyment. This enjoyment is important since it provides a strong motivation to read more.

Most of all it seemed that the students' willingness and motivation to read and comprehend the text at school was from their own abilities. Their interest in books was evident in their responses which indicated their attitudes towards the teaching and learning of reading comprehension. Listening to their teachers read a story with expressions during reading sessions on the mat motivated students to read and learn. This supports the definition of motivation that Gardner (1985), noted as, "individuals who are truly motivated not only strive to learn the material but also seek out situations where they can obtain further practice" (1985, p. 50). The challenge is to examine what drives this motivation. The first area to investigate is the mind and its processes. In this study, the attitudes of the students were formulated in their minds and the thinking processes which determined how they felt motivated to learn from reading and listening to their teacher read. It was also this attitude which dictated their learning of reading comprehension. Bostick (2010) argued that the thinking that happens in the mind involves the will, affections and the conscience of a person to make a decision. This is also evident in this study with these students.

Teachers knowledge and understanding of students play an important role in helping their students to develop a range of reading comprehension strategies and awareness of how to use them. It is recognising that students understand the texts and connections are made by providing activities that are enjoyable and which motivates students in an attempt to develop reading comprehension skills. In the case of classrooms, teachers play a vital role in creating and building knowledge in children. However, if this knowledge is not elevated to new levels of learning and understanding, children's newly created knowledge will never be applied to new learning contexts to enable that understanding and learning to be cemented. The interviews with teachers in the study show that while the teachers knew their students well, they however, did not know their students well enough to know student preference about their teaching and reading comprehension needs. In addition, their expectations of students, and their families and communities, were low.

One of the attitudes teachers had in their teaching of Pasifika students reading comprehension was that they did not know their students and their communities. The quotation “In order to teach you I must know you” (Delpit, 2001, p.211) raises questions about what it means to “know” the students the teachers teach. If “knowing” includes having an understanding of the social, linguistic and cultural contexts that shape the students learning , social interactions and ability to achieve in the New Zealand education system, then the teachers in this study faced a challenging task in their multicultural classrooms. Knowing and understanding a person is a metacognitive process that happens in the mind. The thinking that happened in the teachers mind formulated their attitude towards Pasifika students teaching of reading comprehension. In this study the attitudes of teachers showed that the professional knowledge required to understand their Pasifika students and their communities was not attributed to their pedagogy. However, the teachers stressed the importance of having a strong support and interest from Pasifika families in their children’s progress at school. The teachers said that they have limited parental interest and involvement in the school which makes it difficult for them to know their students and their communities.

Given that students are motivated and are attempting to make connections to text for sense making, teachers could have used their professional expertise to support and empower parental support and engagement in their children’s learning of reading comprehension. On the other hand, it may have been difficult for Pasifika parents to discuss and share the experiences of their children’s learning of reading comprehension because they place a high level of respect to the teachers knowledge and expert judgement on their children’s learning. The research has shown that there is a need to understand and acknowledge Pasifika students’ and their families’ languages, cultural values and beliefs in order to understand their learning needs (Amituanai-Tolua, 2005; Maclean, 2005; Passi, 2010). This acknowledgement of Pasifika families knowledge of the literacy practices and knowing how language and cultural values are used in their students homes will provide opportunities for

Pasifika students to develop positive attitudes towards reading comprehension (Ministry of Education, 2003). It will also promote a stronger relationship between the teacher, students and the community.

Teachers in this study were aware that the Pasifika students in their classes attended church activities and cultural festivals that were important in their lives but it appeared that they were not aware of the literacy aspects that were attached to them. It was unlikely that such literacy experiences would have been shared with the teachers unless the teachers asked their students about them. The research literature has shown evidence that teachers to a greater degree influence their students attitudes towards reading comprehension, their pedagogical skills and the classroom environment which they are the creator of, are the primary importance in determining students attitudes (Evans, 1965; Mager, 1984; Gardner, 1985; Rye, 2006). The attitudes of teachers in this study showed that they had limited knowledge, understanding and experiences of their Pasifika students and their families language and culture.

Another attitude the teachers had in their teaching of Pasifika students reading comprehension was low expectations of not only their students' achievement in reading comprehension but also of their parents and families. According to Ministry of Education (2009), Pasifika student underachievement in reading comprehension has often been explained by a view of Pasifika languages and cultures that is based on deficit thinking. In this study the beliefs of the teachers influenced their attitudes in teaching reading comprehension to Pasifika students. While the teachers agreed that the strategies they used in reading comprehension to Pasifika students were appropriate, they did not know how to teach these strategies explicitly and directly. Alton-Lee (2004) in her Best Evidence Synthesis argue that effective teaching was lacking in schools especially schools where there were high populations of ethnic minority students.

Teachers in this study felt that they were doing everything to help Pasifika students learn reading comprehension skills effectively. According to an article in *The Reading Teacher*, about theoretical beliefs and practices of teachers, a common theme yielded was that “all teachers bring to the classrooms some level of beliefs that influence their critical decision making” (Squires & Bliss, 2004, p. 756). This means that the opinion teachers held had an impact on what they think of Pasifika students experiences in reading comprehension according to their individual situations.

It is now widely accepted that teachers’ personally held beliefs and values help to guide their teaching practices (Freedman & Carver, 2007, p. 656). It appeared that the decisions teachers made when teaching reading comprehension to these students was largely influenced by their own beliefs and attitudes. This supports Hall (2005) idea that “despite the types and amounts of knowledge that teachers may hold, it is their beliefs that are more likely to dictate their actions in the classroom” (p. 405).

Teachers in this study also mentioned that Pasifika students low achievement in reading comprehension was mainly due to the parents not questioning and helping the children with reading activities at home. They said that parents are hesitant to come into the classrooms and find out about their children’s progress. Pasifika parents do not have input in their children’s education because they are often busy working trying to make ends meet. It is important to note that the Pasifika tradition of showing respect for people of high status, such as teachers, by remaining silent and not challenging or questioning them may contribute to them not seeking consultation with teachers about their children (Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa’afoi, Taleni & O’Regan, (2009). As in the words of Tuafuti and McCaffery (2005), this respect should not be interpreted as agreement but as deference to those considered experts.



The teachers in this study identified that it is the lack of Pasifika students' understanding of reading texts that led them to low achievement in reading comprehension. However, from their responses to the interview questions, it was evident that the school texts that they provided the students were not culturally appropriate to enable the students to understand the cultural experiences and the language that is associated with it. Despite the students not having enough culturally appropriate resources for making connections, these students' achievement in the STAR assessment in reading was above the national norms except for two student whose achievement was below the national norms. This supports the argument presented by (Lai, McNaughton, McDonald & Farry, 2005; Amituanai-Tolua & McNaughton, 2008), that Pasifika students find that school texts does not have enough relevant cultural connections which can be related to their own interests and experiences, therefore resulting in lower achievement levels in reading comprehension. The concept of culturally and linguistically responsive classrooms is needed to be able both to support Pasifika students' transition into a teaching and learning environment that is different and enable the same students to bring their own knowledge and ways of learning in the classrooms. The 'at risk' label frequently attached to our Pasifika students suggests that teachers are not yet achieving these aims effectively (Allen, Taleni & Robertson, 2008).

## Chapter 6. Conclusion

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In this study the attitude of students was shaped by their own ability, determination and family support in the teaching and learning of reading comprehension. From the findings, it appeared that both teachers pedagogies were similar. The students of Teacher 1 achieved highly at national norms while the student of Teacher 2 achieved low at stanine 1. The findings of this research concur with Nourie and Lenski's (1998) view that "the attitude of classroom teachers toward content area literacy can be one of the most important factors in reading achievement" (p. 372). The research indicates that, whether educators are comfortable or not, willing or not, knowledgeable or not, they and their attitudes directly correlate with their pedagogy in the teaching of reading comprehension in the classroom. However, this study takes into account that the teachers in this study are hard-working teachers who attribute their knowledge to the students.

The aim of this study was to investigate the attitudes Pasifika students have towards reading comprehension and also the teacher's perspective on their reaction to Pasifika students teaching and learning of reading comprehension. The teachers in this study emphasised the need for Pasifika parents to develop a rapport with their children's teachers and the school in order to raise their achievement levels in reading comprehension. In addition, the teachers reported that Pasifika students need to develop better oral language skills and more exposure to books at home. However, it was found that the students in this study showed a high level of interest and engagement in reading and comprehension development. Their attitude showed a determination and willingness from their own abilities to participate and experience activities related to reading comprehension. These students had a wealth of prior knowledge in order to make connections to the texts. Students interests in selecting books for reading was associated with their prior knowledge and real life experiences. It appears that teachers did not fully recognize the role that readers' interests play in classroom activities because they bring a significant aspect of their prior knowledge to the text.

Students were indeed capable of providing their views and were perceptive in what they thought of the teaching and learning of reading comprehension. Their attitudes were determined by the way they learnt and developed the skills in reading comprehension. In addition, their learning did not come directly from classroom activities, it came from the way students experienced these activities at school and outside of school, how they extracted information from the activities and the sense they made from them.

The study highlights the importance of home school relationships and the central role of the parents in supporting their children's learning. The students mentioned numerous examples of support and on-going help they received from their families. It was apparent from the conversations with these students that their parents expected them to do well in reading comprehension and were prepared to help their children to make this happen.

## **6.1. Implications**

This study has highlighted the central role the teacher plays in the development of students attitudes towards the learning of reading comprehension. The quality of teaching practices is the largest influence on the achievement of students and their attitudes. Developing positive attitudes and creating an interest in reading and comprehending the text are seen as important goals for teachers to achieve. As the schools increasingly have Pasifika students in the classrooms, teachers need to look for ways to enhance relationships with Pasifika parents. One of the ways may be to better understand the literacy practices the Pasifika students in their classes have experienced. This will enhance and compliment the teaching and learning of reading comprehension at school and to increase a teachers' understanding of literacy, in this case, reading comprehension development of Pasifika students in real life.

Teachers need to be prepared to confront their own beliefs, attitudes and assumptions and be willing to accept that students data may need to be explained in terms of what the teacher believes and does (Ministry of Education, 2003). In other words, it means accepting that they cannot continue to attribute student's low achievements to factors outside of school, such as family circumstances or low income. Teachers constantly need to reflect on their pedagogical beliefs and practices. Reflections also need to be conducted about the reasons their students progress at different rates. Positive outcomes will be seen from on-going reflections provided that they are underpinned by a belief that all students can succeed (Alton-Lee, 2003).

The teacher's behaviour is influenced by their own knowledge, beliefs, opinions and attitudes. A teacher's ability to reflect upon how he or she is thinking can help to make wiser decisions in the classroom (Larkin, 2010). In order to understand what happens during the teaching and learning of reading comprehension and identify the support and barriers, teachers must consult those who are an important part of that learning process and that is by looking at things from the students' perspective.

## **6.2. Limitations**

This research has provided some significant insights into Pasifika students' attitudes and the beliefs of teachers of these students towards the teaching of reading comprehension. The conversations with students and their teachers elicit results in keeping with the findings of prior studies, suggesting that the results of this study are indicative of beliefs held by Year 3 students and their teachers. However, the research has a few limitations.

These limitations relate to the generalizability of the findings. Firstly, a limitation to this study was that the small sample size was a small number of students and teachers. Of the six students, five were from one classroom, and only one from the other. Secondly, the students were all born and raised in New Zealand, therefore nobody was born and raised in the Pacific Islands. Thirdly, there was only one female student participant so the views are mostly from the male participants perspectives. Fourthly, the STAR achievement data of students was above the national norms except for two students so the perspectives of low achieving Pasifika students was not fully captured. Lastly, both the teachers were European females, therefore the perspectives of Pasifika teachers was not captured in this research.

A further limitation is the fact that this study was carried out by one researcher. Thus the interpretation of the findings is that of one person. Although care was taken to use systematic analysis, other readers might make differing interpretations. Quotations from the interviews have been included to give a sense of the data but I acknowledge that, in the end it is my interpretation of the data that forms the argument in this thesis.

### **6.3. Future Recommendations**

This research has pointed to a number of areas where further research would help broaden the understanding of educators on the attitudes of Pasifika students towards the teaching and learning of reading comprehension and the teachers beliefs on teaching reading comprehension to Pasifika students.

The first suggestion would be to replicate the study with a larger sample size across multiple classes to explore the findings of this study in more depth. This study was carried out with Year 3 Pasifika students (Samoans and Tongans) and it could also be extended to other class levels to see whether the attitudes of other Pasifika students are similar. It would be helpful if further studies investigated attitudes of Pasifika students towards reading comprehension based on gender.

Research on those who are born and raised in the Pacific Islands might provide further insights on Pasifika students attitudes towards reading comprehension. These differences in Pasifika students' experiences in making connections may impact on their attitudes. Therefore, such research could inform more specific ways of helping Pasifika students improve reading comprehension skills hence raising academic achievement.

It would also be beneficial to do a further investigation of teachers' attitudes towards the use of comprehension strategy instruction that would be of value for New Zealand teachers, particularly the teaching of Pasifika learners. Such research would provide more information to support teachers in delivering effective instruction and provide them with the required strategies and understanding when teaching reading comprehension to Pasifika students.

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## Appendices



### **Appendix A - BOARD OF TRUSTEES/PRINCIPAL PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

**Title of Project:** An investigation on Pasifika students' attitudes towards reading comprehension.

#### **Who am I?**

My name is Ravina Devi. I am a Masters of Education student at the University of Auckland working towards completion of my Master's Degree in Education by conducting a research project in your school.

#### **What is the research?**

I would like to find out what Pasifika students' attitudes might be towards teaching and learning of reading comprehension in your school. To know this, I would like to explore the English reading comprehension achievement of ten year 3 Pasifika students in two classrooms in your school. I would also like to conduct interviews with the same students and the teachers about their perceptions and beliefs on attitudes towards teaching and learning of reading comprehension.

The research project will commence in the current year from April to December 2012. The aim of the study will be to explore features that impact on Pasifika students' attitudes towards reading comprehension. In addition, to find out how Pasifika students can achieve at higher levels of reading comprehension.

I invite you to participate in this study.

#### **What are you being asked to do?**

If you agree to participate in this project, I would like to ask permission to access the school, teachers and students. I ask permission to access the Supplementary Tests in Achievement in Reading (STAR) for the ten students to see their achievement in reading. Lastly, I would also like to ask permission for the use of a separate room where students could be interviewed in private.

The interviews will be conducted during school hours and at a time and place in the school that is safe and within visibility of staff. If a separate room could be provided for this purpose that would be appreciated. The interviews will take 30 minutes for each teacher and ten minutes for each child. Interviews will be audio-recorded. The teachers and students will be given the option to turn off the audio-recording at any time during the interview should they feel uncomfortable to continue. A pen

and paper will be used instead in that case. I will transcribe all the interviews after which teachers and not students will be given the opportunity to review and check their transcripts for accuracy.

Participation in this research project is voluntary for everyone. All participants can decide not to take part in any aspect of the research at any time during this project up until 1 July, 2012. Participants will feel free to withdraw without having to give any reason and their decision will be completely respected. Please give your assurance to teachers and students that their participation, or non-participation, will not in any way affect their relationship or standing in the school or their access to school services.

### **What will happen to your data?**

All data will be analysed for a Master of Education thesis study. Children's reading levels which will be obtained from the teachers will be matched against the interview data after the interview data are analysed to determine the attitudes of Year 3 Pasifika students towards reading comprehension. All data (including audio recordings, transcriptions of interviews and student achievement data) will be kept securely at the University of Auckland in the Principal Investigator's locked cabinet for a period of six years after which all data will be destroyed and/or deleted by erasure and shredding.

Participants' names will not be associated with any information we obtain (all participants will only be identified by a number) and this information will remain completely confidential. Reports, articles and feedback arising from this research will not identify the school as the source of the data.

At the end of this research a summary of the findings will be given to the teachers and the parents and general feedback will be given to the school. Again, participants will not be named, and although anonymity cannot be guaranteed, given the small sample every effort will be made to disguise all participants so they are not easily identifiable.

If you agree to participate in this study, please sign the consent form below.

Thank you very much for your time and help in making this project possible. If you have any queries or wish to know more, please phone or write to any of us at the addresses below:

Ravina Devi	Primary Supervisor: Dr Meaola Amituanai-Tolosa
Master of Education student	Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Education	School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
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Head of School:

Dr Judy Parr

School of Curriculum and Pedagogy

Faculty of Education

The University of Auckland

Ph. 09 6238899 x 88998

Yours sincerely,

Ravina

For any queries regarding ethical concerns please contact:

The Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office – Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Ph: (09) 373 7599 ext. 83711

**APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON  
18th of April 2012 for 3 years until 18th of April 2015 Reference Number 8021**

## **Appendix B - BOARD OF TRUSTEES / PRINCIPAL - CONSENT FORM**

**THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS**

**Title of Project:** An investigation on Pasifika students' attitudes towards the teaching and learning of reading comprehension.

**Researcher:** Ravina Devi - Masters of Education student

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, have understood the nature of the research and why I have been approached for this study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I may withdraw my school and/or any information that I have provided for this Master of Education thesis study at any time up until 1 July, 2012 without having to give any reasons.

I understand that the STAR reading levels of the students will be given to the researcher in order to enable mapping of interviews to be made.

I understand that interviews will be audio recorded should teachers and students give consent, and that teachers and students have the right to turn off the audio-recorder at any time during the interview in which case, pen and paper will be used. I understand that audio recordings will be transcribed by Ravina after which the teachers will be given the transcript to be checked and reviewed for accuracy.

I understand that teachers' and students' participation is voluntary and I give my assurance that their participation or non-participation will not influence their relationship with or standing in the school or their access to school services.

I understand that my school's privacy and confidentiality will be protected at all times, and that every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality. However, anonymity cannot be guaranteed given the small sample of participants.

I understand that the data will be stored securely at the University of Auckland in the Principal Investigator's locked cabinet in the University of Auckland and will be destroyed by shredding/deletion and erasure of electronic files after a period of six years.

I understand that at the end of this project a summary of findings will be given to the teachers and parents.

I give approval for the researcher to access my school premises.

I agree/do not agree (circle one) for ..... school to participate in this research.

I agree / do not agree (Circle one) to provide a separate room for interviews.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON  
18th of April 2012 for 3 years until 18th of April 2015 Reference Number 8021**



## **Appendix C - TEACHER PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

**Title of Project:** An investigation on Pasifika students' attitudes towards reading comprehension.

**Researcher:** Ravina Devi – Masters Education Student

My name is Ravina Devi. I am a Masters of Education student at the University of Auckland working towards completion of my Master's Degree in Education by conducting a research project in your school.

### **What is the research?**

For my Master of Education thesis study, I would like to find out what Samoan and Tongan students' attitudes might be towards the teaching and learning of reading comprehension in your classroom. To know this, I would like to explore the English reading comprehension achievement of five year 3 students in your classroom. I would also like to conduct a 30 minute interview with you about your perceptions and beliefs on Pasifika students' attitudes towards reading comprehension. The students from your classroom will also be interviewed for ten minutes each about their attitudes towards teaching and learning of reading comprehension.

The research project will commence in the current year from April to December 2012. The aim of the study will be to explore features that impact on Pasifika students' attitudes towards reading comprehension. In addition, to find out how Pasifika students can achieve at higher levels of reading comprehension.

I invite you to participate in this study.

### **What are you being asked to do?**

Your participation will involve you providing for me the STAR achievement of your five students. In addition, you will be interviewed for 30 minutes about your perceptions and beliefs about reading comprehension instruction and students' attitudes towards their teaching and learning of reading comprehension. This interview will take place in the school and will be set up at a time that is suitable for you. The interview will be audio-recorded. However, if you feel that during the recording you do not want to continue, you can ask to turn off the recording and I can use pen and paper instead. The interviews will be transcribed and a copy will be given to you to review and check for accuracy before it is coded and analysed for the study. The five students from your class will also be interviewed about their likes and dislikes of reading comprehension.

Participation in this research project is voluntary. Your school principal has also agreed and has given his assurance that your participation is voluntary and that your participation, or non-participation,

will not influence your relationship or standing in the school or access to school services. You can withdraw from participating at any time until 1 July, 2012 without having to give any reason at all. Your decision will be completely respected.

### **What will happen to your data?**

Your student's STAR and interview data and your interview data will be analysed and kept securely stored in a locked cabinet in the Principal Investigator's office at the University of Auckland for a period of six years after which all electronic and paper data will be destroyed by erasure and shredding respectively.

Your name will not be associated with any information we obtain (you, your school and the students will only be identified by a number) and this information will remain completely confidential. Reports, articles and feedback arising from this research will not identify the school as the source of the data. Neither your name nor the name of the school or students will be identified throughout the production of the research. However, given the small sample, anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

Results of the research will be given to you in a form of a summary. Given there are only two teachers, you being one, there is a small risk of being identified within the school. Again I want to assure you that you will not be named in any documents.

If you agree to participate, please sign the consent form below.

Thank you very much for your time and help in making this project possible. If you have any queries or wish to know more, please phone or write to any of us at the addresses below:

Ravina Devi	Primary Supervisor: Dr Meaola Amituanai-Toloo
Master of Education student	Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Education	School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
The University of Auckland	Associate Director, Woolf Fisher Research Centre
Private Bag 92601, Symonds Street	Faculty of Education
Auckland 1150	The University of Auckland
Ph. (021) 0420865	Private Bag, 92601, Symonds Street,
	Auckland 1150
	Ph. (09) 37375999 x 82506

Head of School:

Dr Judy Parr

School of Curriculum and Pedagogy

Faculty of Education

The University of Auckland

Ph. 09 6238899 x 88998

Yours sincerely,

Ravina

For any queries regarding ethical concerns please contact:

The Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office – Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Ph: (09) 373 7599 ext. 83711

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18th of April 2012 for 3 years until 18th of April 2015 Reference Number 8021**



## **Appendix D - TEACHER CONSENT FORM**

**THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS**

**Title of Project:** An investigation on Pasifika students' attitudes towards reading comprehension.

**Researcher:** Ravina Devi – Masters Education Student

I have had the purpose of the research and what I have to do explained to me. I have also read the Participant Information Sheet, and have understood the nature of the research and why I have been selected. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I may withdraw myself from this Master of Education thesis study at any time up until 1 July, 2012 without having to give any reasons.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that my school principal has agreed and has given assurance that my participation or non-participation will not influence my relationship or standing with the school or my students or my access to school services.

I understand that I will distribute the PIS and CF forms to children to take home to their parents to sign for consent and that the first five forms returned signed will constitute the children sample of my class.

I understand that on receipt of the forms, the assent forms for children will be given to them to be read and that children will put their names on it as a sign of assent.

I understand that the STAR achievement data of my five students will need to be given to the researcher to enable mapping to the interview data to occur.

I understand that I will have to organise interview times of ten minutes each for my five students and that these interviews will be audio recorded and be held at the school within visible distance from the teacher or office.

I understand that I will be audio recorded for the 30 minute interview and that my students will also be interviewed for 10 minutes.

I understand that should I feel uncomfortable being recorded and do not wish to continue, I may stop the recording at any time during the interview and the researcher will then use pen and paper to record.

I understand that after the interview a copy of my transcript will be given to me to be reviewed and checked for accuracy.

I understand that information about me will be confidentially collated and entered into a database by the researcher and that neither my name nor names of the participants and the name of the school will be identified throughout the production of the research or in any report or publication.

I understand that the data will be stored securely in a locked cabinet in the Principal Investigator's office at University of Auckland and will be destroyed after a period of six years.

I understand that a summary of the findings will be given to me after the study is completed.

I agree /do not agree (circle one) to participate in this research.

I agree/do not agree (circle one) to give the researcher the STAR achievement of my five students

I agree / do not agree (circle one) to be interviewed for 30 minutes

I agree / do not agree (circle one) to be audio recorded during the interview.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON  
18th of April 2012 for 3 years until 18th of April 2015 Reference Number 8021**





## **Appendix E - PARENT/CAREGIVER PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

**Title of Project:** An investigation on Pasifika students' attitudes towards reading comprehension.

### **Who are we?**

Talofa lava. Malo e lelei. My name is Ravina Devi. I am a Masters of Education student at the University of Auckland working towards completion of my Master's Degree in Education by conducting a research project in your school.

### **What is the research?**

For my Master of Education thesis study, I would like to find out what Pasifika students' attitudes might be towards teaching and learning of reading comprehension at school. To know this, I would like to explore the English reading comprehension achievement of your child and conduct a 10 minute interview with your child to find out what his/her perceptions and beliefs are on reading comprehension.

The research project will commence in the current year from April to December 2012. The aim of the study is to explore features that impact on your child's attitudes towards reading comprehension. In addition, to find out how your child can achieve at higher levels of reading comprehension.

I would like to ask your permission for your child to participate in this study.

### **What are you being asked to do?**

I would like to interview your child about what he likes or dislikes about reading. This interview will take 10 minutes and will involve general questions about their understanding about reading. This interview will be set up at the school at a time that is suitable for your child. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded. Your child will be given the option to turn off the audio-recording at any time during the interview if he does not want to continue. Should this be the case, the researcher will use pen and paper instead.

Your child's school principal has given assurance that the participation of your child in this research project is voluntary and your child's participation, or non-participation, will not influence your child's grades or relationship with the school or teachers. You can withdraw your child from participating at any time up to and until 1 July, 2012 without having to give any reason. Your decision will be completely respected.

### **What will happen to your data?**

All information about your child including their name will be disguised so that he is not identifiable. However, I cannot guarantee their being easily identifiable by others due to the small number of children taking part in the study. Your child's information will be analysed and will be kept securely stored in a locked cabinet in the Principal Investigator's office at the University of Auckland for a period of six years after which they will be destroyed and/or deleted by erasure or shredding.

Your child's privacy and confidentiality will be protected at all times during the project and after the project is completed. Neither your child's name nor the name of the school will be identified in any document related to the study. After the study, a summary of the findings will be sent to you.

If you agree for your child to be involved in this study, please sign the consent form below.

Thank you very much for your time and help in making this project possible. If you have any queries or wish to know more, please phone or write to any of us at the addresses below:

Ravina Devi	Primary Supervisor: Dr Meaola Amituanai-Toloa
Master of Education student	Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Education	School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
The University of Auckland	Associate Director, Woolf Fisher Research Centre
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Head of School:

Dr Judy Parr

School of Curriculum and Pedagogy

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Yours sincerely,

Ravina

For any queries regarding ethical concerns please contact:

The Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office – Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Ph: (09) 373 7599 ext. 83711

**APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON  
18th of April 2012 for 3 years until 18th of April 2015 Reference Number 8021**

## Appendix F - PARENT/CAREGIVER - CONSENT FORM

### THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS

**Title of Project:** An investigation on Pasifika students' attitudes towards reading comprehension.

**Researcher:** Ravina Devi – Masters Education Student

The purpose of the study has been explained and I have read the Participant Information Sheet and understood the nature of the research and why I need to volunteer my child for this study I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I may withdraw my child from this Master of Education thesis study at any time up until 1 July, 2012, without having to give any reason.

I understand that my child's participation is voluntary and that my child's school principal has given an assurance that his/her participation or non-participation will not influence my child's grades or relationship with the teachers and / or the school.

I understand that my child's reading level will be given to the researcher for this study.

I understand that my child will be interviewed for 10 minutes and that the interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

I understand that the recording can be turned off at the request of my child and that the researcher will use pen and paper instead to record the interview.

I understand that information obtained about my child will remain confidential and will be analysed and kept in the Principal Investigator's office in a locked cabinet at the University of Auckland for a period of six years after which will be destroyed by erasure of all electronic files and shredding of all paper files.

I understand that my child's privacy and confidentiality will be protected at all times, and that neither his/her name nor the name of the teachers or the school will be identified throughout the course of the research or in any publication that arises from it.

I agree / do not agree (circle one) for my child ..... (child's name) from  
..... (child's classroom number) to participate in this research.

I agree / do not agree (circle one) for my child to be audio-recorded during the interview.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON  
18th of April 2012 for 3 years until 18th of April 2015 Reference Number 8021**

## **Appendix G - STUDENT PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

**Title of Project:** An investigation on Pasifika students' attitudes towards reading comprehension.

### **Who am I?**

Talofa lava. Malo e lelei. Bula. My name is Ravina Devi and I am currently studying at the University of Auckland doing a Masters of Education degree. I am carrying out a research project in your school to complete this degree.

### **What is the research?**

For my Master of Education thesis study, I want to know what you think about reading comprehension and the kinds of things that help you understand what you are reading. I will be asking the teacher about your grades in reading and will talk to her about what you like or don't like in reading.

I would like to invite you to be part of this study.

### **What are you being asked to do?**

During this project, I would like to talk with you for only 10 minutes about your feelings on reading and understanding the books you read. Our talk will be at the school at a time that is suitable for you and your teacher. With your parent's permission, the interview will be audio-recorded but you can ask me to turn off the recording if you want to. After the interview, I will write down what you said so I can look for things that you like or do not like about reading.

You can be part of this study if you like. Your school principal has agreed to be part of it but it is up to you to decide. Whether you decide to take part or not is your choice and your school principal has given me his word that it will not affect your grades or you being able to do things at school. You can withdraw from taking part at any time up to and until 1 July, 2012 without having to give me any reason for your withdrawal. I will respect your decision.

### **What will happen to your data?**

All the information you give me (including audio recordings, transcriptions of the interviews) will be analysed and kept securely stored in a locked cabinet in the Principal Investigator's office at the University of Auckland for a period of six years after which all data will be destroyed and/or deleted.

Your name will be changed to a number so that no one will be able to know that you were part of the study. Your name will be completely confidential and it will not be used in any reports, articles and feedback arising from this research.

Your privacy will be protected at all times during the project and after the project is completed. However, due to the small number of students like you in the study, I might not be able to guarantee your anonymity. Neither your name nor the name of the school will be identified throughout the production of the research. At the end of the study, I will give you a summary of what I have found to give to your parents to read.

If you want to take part in this study, please put your full name on the form below.

Thank you very much for your time and help in making this project possible. If you have any queries or wish to know more, please phone or write to any of us at the addresses below:

Ravina Devi	Primary Supervisor: Dr Meaola Amituanai-Toloa
Master of Education student	Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Education	School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
The University of Auckland	Associate Director, Woolf Fisher Research Centre
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Head of School:

Dr Judy Parr

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Yours sincerely,

Ravina

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## Appendix H - STUDENT ASSENT FORM

**THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS**

**Title of Project:** An investigation on Pasifika students' attitudes towards reading comprehension.

**Researcher:** Ravina Devi – Masters Education Student

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, and I understand the research and why I have been selected. I have had a chance to ask questions and the researcher has answered my questions.

I understand that I may come out from this Master of Education thesis study at any time up until 1 July, 2012, without saying why.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that my school has agreed that whether I do or do not take part will not affect anything else at school.

I understand that I will be audio recorded during the interview and that I can ask to turn off the recording any time if I don't want to carry on.

I understand that researcher will write down what I said to know what I like or not like about reading comprehension.

I understand that everything I tell you is private. My information will not be shared with anyone outside the research team. My name, teacher's name and school's name will not be used in any way.

I understand that the information about me will be stored securely in a locked cabinet in the supervisor's office at the University of Auckland and will be destroyed after six years.

I agree/do not agree (circle one) to take part in this research.

I agree / do not agree (circle one) to take part in the interview.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Appendix I Interview Questions – Students**

1) What is your favorite story/book?

Prompt:

Why do you like this story?

Do you have a favorite character in this story?

Do you think it is an interesting or funny story?

Does the story make any connections to your personal life?

Tell me what important things you learn from this story.

2) When you listen to a story being read by your teacher what are some of the things that you like about how its read?

Prompt:

When you sitting on the mat listening to a story, tell me how you feel about the story?

What do you think of the characters in the story?

Tell me what you think of the way your teacher reads the story?

What can you tell me about your teachers voice when she is reading the story?

3) When you're looking for a book to read, what are some of the things do you look for before you choose a book?

## Appendix J Interview Questions – Teachers

1) What goes through your mind about your Pasifika children's learning of reading comprehension?

Prompt:

What might be the reason?

Why do you think this is the reason?

What sorts of texts do you give them for reading? What might be their reactions?

What strategies do you use so you know they understand the story?

Which strategies do you think work best for you?

Why do you think a particular strategy works?

2) What sort of responses do Pasifika children give you when you ask reading comprehension questions?

Prompt:

What might be some of the things you do to enable them to express themselves?

3) What do you think Pasifika parents' views might be on their children's reading comprehension?

Prompt:

Do you think Pasifika parents are aware of strategies to help their children with reading comprehension at home?

4) Tell me how you might be able to encourage Pasifika students to improve their reading comprehension skills?

Prompt:

What might be some of the ways?