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In search of Samoan research approaches to education: Tofā'a'anolasi and the Foucauldian tool box

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ABSTRACT

This article introduces Tofā'a'anolasi, a novel Samoan research framework created by drawing on the work of other Samoan and Pacific education researchers, in combination with adapting the 'Foucauldian tool box' to use for research carried out from a Samoan perspective. The article starts with an account and explanation of the process of developing and of naming Tofā'a'anolasi as a Samoan form of Critical Discourse Analysis. Following this is a discussion of the features of Tofā'a'anolasi and the theoretical underpinnings that explain the understandings and processes of this research framework. The article concludes with a story from assessment practice that acts as an example of applying this approach to educational research centred on Samoan students in Auckland, New Zealand.

Introduction

Tofā'a'anolasi is a Samoan research framework I created for my doctoral research thesis, which aimed at examining the unacknowledged issues in the standardised reading assessments used for students in New Zealand primary schools. My initial search for a Samoan word for 'Critical Discourse Analysis' (CDA) concluded that there was none. In consulting with an expert in the Samoan language (who has founded an online Samoan language programme for the Samoan community), I was asked to provide a detailed description of my research project to help him piece together an 'appropriate translation' for it. I found the phrase 'appropriate translation'—his exact words—problematic as it triggered a realisation that there was no word for CDA in the Samoan language. The obvious absence of a Samoan word for CDA then set me on a course to 'create a term' which eventually became 'Tofā'a'anolasi'.

In the next sections, I will explain how the compound word and the notion of Tofā'a'anolasi came about and what this research framework entails in terms of its theoretical underpinnings, methods of collecting data and ethical considerations.

The creation of Tofā'a'anolasi

In the Samoan language, compound words are made up of smaller root words, a process capable of generating multiple meanings. Tui Atua (2009) points out that the word *tofā* means 'wisdom' and relates to self-reflection and self-assessment through deliberate dialogue and debate with others. He explained words such as:

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- *tofā mamao* (*tofā* is 'wisdom', *mamao* is 'envision'; therefore, *tofā mamao* is the 'wisdom to envision');
- *tofā saili* (*tofā* is 'wisdom', *saili* is 'search'; therefore, *tofā saili* is 'wisdom to search');
- *tofā tatala* (*tofā* is 'wisdom', *tatala* is 'allow'; therefore, *tofā tatala* is 'wisdom to allow'); and
- *tofā loloto* (*tofa* is 'wisdom', *loloto* is 'think deep'; therefore, *tofā loloto* is 'wisdom to think deep').

Drawing on Tui Atua's explanations, I developed the term *Tofā'a'anolasi* as the 'wisdom to critique', as explained in the next paragraph.

Tofā'a'anolasi is a compound word made up of three root words: *tofā*, *'a'ano* and *lasi*; each of which has a range of different meanings. Among this, the *'a'ano* means *uiga maotua* ('deep meaning'), and the word *lasi* means *tele* ('many'). Hence, *Tofā'a'anolasi* is the 'wisdom to identify the many deep meanings of texts'. Deep thinking is by its nature critical, as it opens the possibility that one may reject assumptions and conventions. Tofā'a'anolasi therefore in English is 'the wisdom to identify and critique the many and deep meanings of texts'. It is a new coining and an amalgamation: a new collocation to capture a Samoan notion of research and a framework for investigating educational practices from the perspectives of Samoan research participants. In this sense, the idea of 'critique' or 'engaging in critique' is a reciprocal, active exercise, form of CDA. It enables the critical examination of texts, from a Samoan perspective. Analysis of discourse using the Tofā'a'anolasi research framework considers the following guiding questions:

- How are the Samoans positioned in texts?
- What assumptions are made about Samoans in the texts?
- What are the implications of these assumptions for Samoans?

These guiding questions allow the Tofā'a'anolasi research approach to question the dominant assumptions that have been accepted as common sense and the truth, while, at the same time, seeking to uphold Samoan solutions and ways of knowing as valid in their own right.

For this research framework, I also adapted the work of other Pacific education researchers, in combination with my own understanding of the 'Foucauldian tool box', as explained further below.

Tofā'a'anolasi and the Foucauldian tool box

Foucault (1974 as cited in Motion & Leitch, 2007) asks that we draw on his theories and use them to best suit our own thematic research schema. I have therefore drawn on my interpretation of his ideas of power, knowledge and language in society, to develop the concept of Tofā'a'anolasi and apply it in my educational research, from my perspective, as a Samoan. Tofā'a'anolasi draws on Foucault's analytical tool box (Foucault, 1974) to counter-read texts and practices. Such research takes an explicit position to understand, expose and ultimately resist social inequality, by asking basic questions such as how do more powerful groups control public discourse? How does such discourse control the minds and actions of individuals from less powerful social groups? What are the social consequences of such control? Tofā'a'anoalsi research framework is used to examine assumptions within and about practices to reveal the way mundane power relations feed into the organisation of institutional power relations; to expose how the normalising hegemonic nature of these practices profoundly disadvantage others such as Samoan students (Motion & Leitch, 2007). The following sections focus on how two key concepts in Foucault's work, problematisation and discourse analysis, inform and are applied to Tofā'a'anolasi.

Problematisation

Problematisation is a technique presented to scholars challenging them to think differently about problems (Foucault, 2003). Problematisation involves reflecting on, and accounting for how certain systems of thought and practices come to be conceived in a particular way; and highlighting paradoxes, difficulties and 'the conditions in which human beings problematize what they are, what they do, and the world in which they live' (Foucault, 2003, p. 10). Problematisation is an endeavour to know

how, and to what extent, it might be possible to think differently, instead of what is already known. As Foucault (2003, p. 24) posits:

> This development of a given into a question, this transformation of a group of obstacles and difficulties into problems to which the diverse solutions will attempt to produce a response, that is what constitutes the point of problematization and the specific work of thought.

For me, it was my discovery of the mistake in the 'palolo story', as explained in the example below that prompted the problematisation of standardised assessment in New Zealand primary schools. Problematisation within the Tofā'a'anolasi research framework seeks to encourage actively questioning and critically scrutinising, from a Samoan perspective, established knowledge, such as the knowledge of the palolo fish in academia and in society at large. It does so by offering a distinct alternative to the dominant approach that uses the literature in a field for formulating research questions. Problematisation considers the educational topics under investigation as objects of critique, transforming them into problems to which diverse solutions are possible (Devine, 2010). Thompson (2010, p. 127, as cited in Wolf, 2013, p. 34) posits that this type of analysis entails 'the historical, yet *a priori* condition that makes thought and practice possible and that, as such, govern them both'.

Foucauldian discourse analysis

Tofā'a'anolasi draws on Foucault's (1981) notion of CDA to uncover the history of a word/phrase/practice by looking for how it has been used in the past. Foucault's CDA explores the relationship between power and knowledge within a discourse, making these power relations visible. Foucault achieved this by highlighting how some discourses maintain their authority, how some 'voices' get heard while others are silenced, and who benefits and how.

Foucault explained that discourses are governed by analysable rules, which govern the formation and possible transformation of all objects, concepts and subjects. These rules constitute systems of thought that determine what can be said, by whom, the positions from which subjects could speak, the viewpoints and interests presented, and the stakes and institutional domains that might be represented. A Foucauldian critique therefore is not just saying things are not right, but pointing out the kinds of assumptions and practices which are unchallenged and taken for granted. The primary task of the analysis is to focus on the formation and transformation of such discourse (Motion & Leitch, 2007). Foucault's analysis offers alternative ways of thinking about how power operates and is transferred in discourses and how alternative possibilities might be offered.

According to Hook (2001), Foucault's analytic attention focuses on a variety of circumstantial variables, stretching across the examined material, to locate evidence that makes certain acts, statements and subjects possible. To unite the conditions of discourse analysis in one over-riding methodological imperative, it is argued that the analysis of discourse cannot remain simply *within* the text, but must 'drive through the extra discursive', moving 'both *in and out* of the text', so the analysis is not 'limited [in] political relevance, restricted [in] generalizability, and stunted [in] critical penetration' (Hook, 2001, p. 543). Remaining within the text, and not referring to a greater macroperspective, means that the examination of the discourse will not be able to properly engage with discourse as an instrument of power (Hook, 2001, p. 540). This lack of attention to discourse as an instrument may itself become the insidious instrument of power, which is, paradoxically, a part of the critique of the discourse.

Drawing on the ideas on Foucault, as discussed above, the Tofā'a'anolasi research framework seeks to challenge the locus of power and control inherent within discourse, especially when it is located in another cultural frame of reference and world view. Tofā'a'anolasi seeks to empower Samoan voices, processes and knowledge in research. It is therefore important to question hegemonic knowledge and ideas that have been taken for granted as the truth, from the Samoan perspective. It is important that Samoan knowledge is brought to the fore to explain how they (Samoans) make meaning of the world. Recognising and validating Samoan knowledge allows spiritual and cultural awareness to be taken into account. Tofā'a'anolasi addresses issues of injustice and social change. It seeks to encourage autonomy,

control, self-determination and independence. It asserts the need to assist in the mitigation of negative experiences that disadvantage Pacific communities. Tofā'a'anolasi research seeks to be transformative, to produce positive change instead of replicating the same old status quo.

Tofā'a'anolasi and Pacific theoretical underpinnings

Sanga (2004) argues that Pacific research development needs to be influenced by Pacific thought. This ambition is reflected in the numerous 'methodologies' that have been discussed by Pacific scholars in fields such as education and health. Some examples include the *Fonofale* ('meeting house') model of health and the *Talanoa* ('talk') methodology.

The Fonofale model encompasses Pacific values and beliefs. Pulotu-Endemann (2001) explains that in this model, the concept of the traditional Samoan meeting house is used as an image to describe a Pacific view of important factors in health development. The roof of the house represents cultural values and beliefs that are the shelter for life. The foundation represents the extended family, which is the foundation for all Pacific Island cultures. Between the roof and the foundation are the four posts that connect the culture and the family. The posts represent the spiritual, mental and other variables that can directly or indirectly affect health(Pulotu-Endemann, 2001).

Talanoa methodology refers to personal encounters where people tell stories around the issues researched (Vaioleti, 2006). Talanoa removes the distance between researcher and participant, an ideal method of research because relationship is the foundation on which most Pacific activities are built. Talanoa is flexible so it provides opportunities to probe, challenge, re-align and legitimise stories and shared information.

The initiation of Pacific research methodologies such as Fonofale and Talanoa signals the gradual adaptation of Western research methodologies for Pacific purposes, allowing ethnic nuances to be exposed and understood (Anae, 2010). These approaches are advantageous to Pacific communities since they afford the capability to draw deeply on intra-ethnic, inter-generational sources. On the other hand, their specificity restricts Pacific-wide generalisation, since while there are overarching commonalities across Pacific nations, there are also very distinct traditions, languages and histories (Anae, Coxon, Mara, Wendt-Samu, & Finau, 2001).

Pacific research frameworks are underpinned by Pacific understandings that are intangible and internal to Pacific people's cognition (Sanga, 2004). Such frameworks accept that knowledge is local, relativist and contextual to the social realities of people. This is evident in the utilisation by researchers of constructs and metaphors, based on local knowledge, which are used to explain reality and to express the spiritual, cultural and social world inhabited by Pacific people, such as *kakala*—word meaning 'lei of flowers' (Thaman, 2003). The kakala framework is a six-tier approach to research from a Tongan perspective (Fua, 2009), which involves key concepts that are inherently valued in the Tongan custom of flower arranging. The key concepts in kakala are the following:

- *teu* ('conceptualisation and philosophies');
- *toli* ('data collection methodologies');
- *tui* ('analysis');
- *luva* ('reporting outcomes');
- *malie* ('relevance and worthiness'); and
- *mafana* ('application and transformation').

Pacific research methodologies identify and promote Pacific worldviews and ways to navigate meaning and reality and demand the active involvement of research participants in generating knowledge and understanding relevant to them. In accordance with this approach, Tofā'a'anolasi approach accepts the Pacific notion that knowledge, truth and value lie in the wisdom of the collective (Anae et al., 2001). It seeks to be culturally inclusive and values the relationships between participants, the researcher and the context, which in turn guides action in negotiating research relationships and enhances the

conversations that lead to the co-construction of knowledge, truth and value within the research community.

This framework is guided by indigenous and indigenised Western epistemologies and critical praxis engaged in by Pacific people. It capitalises on the already established practices of critical ontological, epistemological and axiological inquiry into the discourses that have been historically, explicitly and implicitly defining the social fabric of Pacific people's lives (Sanga, 2004). When Pacific people apply knowledge in development, they constantly theorise and re-theorise, create and recreate, and structure and restructure knowledge (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2002). It is customary to Pacific people to theorise and critique together, as communities, as they seek to reach consensus before final decisions are disseminated for people to act upon. For Pacific people who are living in their homelands, these critiques concern matters in social domains such as the village, school, church and also politics.

For Pacific people living abroad, these critiques are expanded to include matters relating to their residence in the diaspora. Such dialogue involves cultural analysis of underlying assumptions that conceal power relations that exist within society. In their work, Pacific scholars position their indigenity in research to help others to understand indigenous knowledge and to improve indigenous peoples' ways of life. This includes analysis of the ways in which dominant groups construct common sense and facts that contribute to the prolonged inequality and oppression of Pacific communities. These accounts build on Foucault's work on how dominant knowledge is set to be the 'standard', 'normal' and the 'truth', the standard by which every other knowledge is measured. This normalisation means that 'other' knowledge are subjugated and are omitted from official discourses, such as, those of the education system (McHoul & Grace, 1998). Such standpoints are evident in postcolonial writing by Pacific scholars such as Wendt (1996), Wendt-Samu (2006) and Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo (2002) that reinforce research by Pacific people for Pacific people and the need to retrieve spaces of marginalisation as spaces from which to develop indigenous research agendas. Tofā'a'anolasi seeks to be part of a necessary paradigm shift in the field of research that acknowledges multiple perspectives and alternative ways of looking at the world. It aims to critique the status quo to highlight the dominant assumptions masquerading as common sense that continue to constrain the life chances of Pacific families living abroad.

Tofā'a'anolasi and Kaupapa Māori

My search for a methodology and for theoretical understandings, as I explained above, led me to read about *Kaupapa Māori* ('Māori ideology') theory and research. Stewart (2010) explains how the Kaupapa Māori theory is localised critical theory. Its resistant positioning against the status quo has been an essential component in facilitating opportunities and space for Māori research and researchers (Stewart, 2010). The greatest potential of Kaupapa Māori theory and research lies in its ability to both challenge and uncover accepted but un-examined thoughts and practices (Mahuika, 2008). In the following paragraph, I provide a brief explanation of Kaupapa Māori theory and research to which Tofā'a'anolasi is analogous, but in the interests of Pacific peoples.

Kaupapa Māori is a discourse of proactive theory and practice (Bishop & Berryman, 2009). It challenges expressions of dominant *Pākehā* (New Zealanders of European descent) hegemony. In doing so, Kaupapa Māori intervenes and transforms unequal power relations that exist within *Aotearoa* ('New Zealand') and which continue to subordinate Māori aspirations (Pihama, 2001). Kaupapa Māori theory provides a platform from which Māori are striving to articulate their own reality and experience, their own cultural truth, as an alternative to the homogenisation and silence that is required of them within mainstream New Zealand society. This approach is based on the understanding that Māori have different ways of seeing and thinking about the world from that of mainstream society. Kaupapa Māori has become an influential movement and a coherent philosophy and practice for Māori conscientisation, resistance and transformative praxis (Smith, 1997) which is capable of advancing Māori outcomes in many fields including education and research. Kaupapa Māori research is collectivistic and is orientated towards benefiting all the research participants and their collectively determined agendas, defining and

acknowledging Māori aspirations for research, while developing and implementing Māori theoretical and methodological preferences and practices for research.

Ethical considerations in Tofā'a'anolasi research

Respect is important in the Samoan culture. This respect is demonstrated in the *fa'asamoa* ('Samoan') notions of *alofa* ('love'), *fa'amaoni* ('honesty'), *amana'ia* ('caring') and *fa'asoa* ('sharing'). Respect is also important in the Tofā'a'anolasi research framework.

Researchers working with Tofā'a'anolasi must ensure participants are physically and emotionally safe; their cultures must be respected throughout the research process. As Anae has pointed out with regard to research with Pacific participants, the researcher must develop and maintain respect, rapport and relationship with participants during and after the research project (Anae, 2010). It is disrespectful and unethical for a researcher to 'just turn up' to extract the knowledge and stories from participants and then 'walk off'. It is immoral, too, to use participants for research that has been designed solely for the researcher's own benefit. Therefore, it is important that research carried out using the Tofā'a'anolasi research framework must be of value (educational, health wise, or financial) to the community in which it is conducted.

Furthermore, the selection of participants needs to be justified. Selected participants are the ones who have earned the right to be in the *fa'afaletui* ('focus group'). As explained further below, these rights include having knowledge of the topic being researched and therefore the authority to speak about it. For example, for my research that aimed at examining the unacknowledged issues in assessment practices, as I have explained previously in this article, the rightful participants in the fa'afaletui were the assessment designers, assessment administers and assessment takers. It is disrespectful to the issue researched and to those who have the knowledge necessary to answer research questions if they are not selected for the research. Researchers utilising this research framework need to be caring of the participants and the issues researched, as explained further in the next paragraph. In circumstances where Tofā'a'anolasi is used in fields other than mainstream education, special justification is warranted for vulnerable participants, such as those in prison, minors and persons with mental disability. Psychological and social risks must also be considered.

Caring in Tofā'a'anolasi includes making sure any stories gathered and any observations made of participants remain confidential. Participants need to understand the research topic, and the issues and the expectation of them as participants. To achieve this understanding, written and verbal communications need to be bilingual: in both the participants' first language and English. It is the researcher's responsibility that participants are not disadvantaged by language barriers. Caring also means that the participants are given the chance to opt out of the research project with no questions asked and have the right to hear and see the results of the research once it is complete. Honesty, in Tofā'a'anolasi research, is regarded as reciprocal. Participants and researcher need to tell their stories as they are; the participants, of their experiences, and the researcher, of the results. Honesty also entails acknowledging intellectual ownership of literature, knowledge and the methodologies used in the research.

Data collection in Tofā'a'anolasi research

Tofā'a'anolasi combines two main methods of collecting data: *iloiloga o le gagana* ('examining of language') and *fa'afaletui* ('focus groups'). The following two sections explain these processes.

Iloiloga o le gagana ('examining of language')

Iloiloga o le gagana is a concept that is commonly used in Samoa, but about which there is no academic literature. It is a process whereby language is examined and interpreted. It is carried out whenever two or more people interact: during casual conversations, in meetings, in Samoan traditional speeches, in church, in politics, in family discussions, in court, in all jobs and in schools. This process applies to and

debates meaning. It considers participants and the role they play in the context, whether they are in power or in defiance (Tupuola, 2009). The procedure carries challenges such as potential misinterpretations of participants' intentions and meanings because the Samoan language is couched in allusion and allegory (Tui Atua, 2005).

Language is therefore at the heart of *iloiloga o le gagana*. It is the medium for expressing meaning and conveying the culture of thought of a community. This means that texts, whether oral, pictorial or written require different ways of reading, to generate their different meanings. For the project described in this article, the iloiloga o le gagana is carried out through the interrogation of written assessment policies, test items and participants' narratives in which they share their experiences, opinions and ideologies, during the *fa'afaletui* (focus groups), as discussed below.

For Tofā'a'anolasi, a key task is to consider the types of texts suitable for analysis. Foucault (1972, as cited in McKenna, 2004) asserted that a text is a set of social practices; a group of rules that are immanent in a practice and define their specificity and occurs in an enunciative field in which it has a place and a status. Texts do not speak from a single viewpoint. Instead, they invoke through the semantic patterns they activate, the larger system of viewpoints in the community in which they have their meanings. Drawing on Foucault's discussions, all texts examined using the Tofā'a'anolasi research framework must be appropriate to the topics of research (Foucault, 1992).

Fa'afaletui ('focus groups')

In my experience of a traditional Samoan context, a *fa'afaletui* is regarded as a 'meeting of the wise'. Those who are considered 'wise' in the Samoan way of life are usually older men and women who have knowledge of Samoan ontology and epistemology that has been passed down through generations. The participants have therefore earned their right to participate in the fa'afaletui. These rights include the right to be present, to hear the information discussed and to have his or her input woven into the new knowledge to be generated and gained within the fa'afaletui.

As fa'afaletui allows participants to discuss a phenomenon from a first person point of view, to reveal how they understand, interpret and make meaning of their experiences, it is therefore an interpretive phenomenological approach (Sanders, 1982). The interpretive dimension enables the fa'afaletui to be used as the basis for practical theory, allowing it to inform, support or challenge policy and action. In the language of Foucault, the fa'afaletui participants are political subjects caught up in social situations—such as in education—that are deeply embedded in cultural, historical and ideological agendas. Fa'afaletui is therefore effective at bringing to the fore the experiences and perceptions of participants from their own perspectives, challenging structural or normative assumptions.

As a data collecting method, fa'afaletui supports the Samoan cultural perspectives, etiquette, protocols and expression of those participating in research (Thaman, 2003). Fa'afaletui fosters existing Samoan notions of collective ownership, which is pivotal in developing optimal relationships (Airini e al., 2010). Research involving fa'afaletui has not only successfully focussed on its cultural physicality, but has widened its scope as a way of deconstructing, re-thinking and re-contextualising, where issues are discussed and new knowledge is co-constructed from within (Tamasese, Peteru, & Waldegrave, 1997).

The strength of fa'afaletui lies in the relative freedom of participants to discuss issues, reflect on problems, prompt and bounce ideas off one another. During the process of fa'afaletui, participants discuss a topic without the constraint of guiding questions—which can generate responses that are guarded and guided by the questions chosen and how they are asked. In the fa'afaletui, participants talk freely about the issues at hand and the researcher is able to obtain information about the topic from the participants' point of view. Research participants develop ideas collectively, bringing forward their own priorities and perspectives, 'to create theory grounded in the actual experience and language of the participants' (Smithson, 2000, p. 116). Puchta and Potter (1999) call this conversational construction 'collective voice', which is not just facilitated by the 'focus group', but constituted by it (cited in Smithson, 2000, p. 119).

Fa'afaletui has limitations. First, one participant may dominate the conversation. In a traditional Samoan context, participants are guided by their deep respect for one another. This respect demands

that participants take turns to talk and critique in a polite and peaceful manner. A fa'afaletui with *students* is different because there tends to be a leader who starts the conversations and others follow. In such cases, more fa'afaletui sittings may be needed, with reassuring prompts that encourage all participants to contribute to the sessions. The researcher must capture the voices of all members of the 'focus group' whose knowledge is important to the topic of research by using either a voice recorder or by taking notes.

In the next section, I use a story about palolo fish to demonstrate how the Tofā'a'anolasi can be used in the analysis of texts. The story is a test item (cloze test and answers) taken straight out of the Supplementary Test of Achievement in Reading (STAR) test booklet, developed by Warwick Elley of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research in 2001. When analysed, the text reveals significant mismatches between the world knowledge likely to be held by some New Zealand Samoan students and that assumed in this test item. Although such errors may stem from the designers' ignorance, the effect on students' ability to respond correctly can be devastating.

The palolo story

> In Samoa, the palolo fish rise only [once] a year. Early in October, depending [on] the winds and the moon, the thread-like palolo worms [are/get] blown from their holes in the coral [reef], to spawn in the shallow [part/region] of the lagoon. Then, all along the coast, catchers go out during the [night] to entice the palolo fish [to] them, with their buckets, their torches, and their garlands of white flowers. Extract from STAR Years 7–9 Form A Test Booklet (Elley, 2001, p. 7)

The cloze test item has missing words (in brackets) that have been deliberately omitted to assess students' knowledge of 'English' and that of 'the world' (Brown, 1993). Students are expected to understand the text by building a mental image in their heads using clues available to them, before making an educated guess of the appropriate vocabulary to complete the paragraph.

An examination of the language ('iloiloga o le gagana') together with a focus conversation ('fa'afaletui') with a 77-year-old Samoan mother reveals that the paragraph has misconceptions about the palolo that are likely to differ significantly from some Samoan students' knowledge of them. First, the palolo rise *twice* each year: first in October and then in November; not 'once' as the test item states. Second, Samoans have their own way of predicting the arrival of palolo. They count seven nights after the full moon in both October and November which does not necessarily lead to a date in early October (also Lefale, 2010; William, 1995). Third, the palolo do not rise all along the coast of Samoa. Since the palolo live in the coral reef, they can only be harvested in the lagoons of the villages where the coral reefs are closest to the shore. Fourth, describing the palolo as 'fish' and 'worms' is problematic. The palolo is a type of fish that is elongated and 'thread like' in shape. It is never regarded as a worm by Samoans. Palolo, in terms of the prediction of its arrival, its harvesting and distribution, hold a significant place in Samoan culture and traditions. The fish strengthen the reciprocal nature of the Samoan culture, because the collected palolo are shared and distributed as food parcels in return for gifts. Lastly, the bold description of 'white' garlands of flowers is also inaccurate, since the sweet-fragranced *yellow* moso'oi, the coumarine scented *green* laumaile, and the musky scented *brown* laga'ali are the lei-making materials used for palolo harvesting. Samoans believe it is the sweet scent of the garlands that attract the palolo (S. Filiomanaia Galuvao, personal communication, 11 July 2010).

In applying Foucauldian discourse analysis, that looks at the methods and practices by which the dominant discourse is normalised and gains ascendancy over others' thinking (Foucault, 1980), a Tofā'a'anolasi perspective considers the inclusion of the palolo story, in its current form, in a standardised reading test, as a technique used to normalise the achievement of students. Foucault points out that the standardised test is the most powerful individualising technique controlling students, with its normalising judgements that turn students into trained and corrected objects of 'power and dictated knowledge' (Jones, 2010, p. 96). The bold and incorrect assertions about the palolo in the test deliver a description that is 'different' for students who are Samoan and a truth that is 'inaccurate' for those that are not. This means that the Samoan students' already existing knowledge of the palolo is subjugated,

occluded and replaced by new information. This forged text, not only marginalises Samoan students' knowledge, it also exerts pressure to constrain the accessibility of texts' authenticity (Ball, 2010). In this case, students' thinking is led and influenced by the way the text is presented, at the expense of their own knowledge, propelled by their own determination to achieve a pass mark. With this misrecognition (Albright, 2006; Janks, 2010), one can only wonder about the impact of such assumed currency of 'truth' on students' ability, or not, to identify themselves with the text, along with its traditional Samoan knowledge, practices, beliefs, values and integrity.

Examining the palolo story using Tofā'a'anolasi has uncovered and challenged accepted but un-examined thoughts and practices. It has allowed counter reading of the text in the context of cultural knowledge of how the Samoans make meaning of the world.

Conclusion

Tofā'a'anolasi is a Samoan research framework that has been adapted from my understandings of the Foucauldian tool box. This research framework enables the critical examination of texts, from a Samoan point of view. Tofā'a'anolasi research questions the dominant assumptions that have been accepted as common sense and the truth, while, at the same time, seeking to uphold and validate Samoan solutions and ways of knowing. As this article has explained, Tofā'a'anolasi examines the way social power is enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in educational, social and political contexts. Tofā'a'anaolasi is underpinned by the Pacific understanding of collective construction of knowledge and utilises iloiloga o le gagana and fa'afaletui as method of collecting data. Drawing on the understandings of Kaupapa Maori theory and research, this research framework empowers a Samoan voice, processes and knowledge.

This method of critique entails analysis at both micro- and macrolevels of social order. At the microlevel, Tofā'a'anolasi examines language use, discourse, verbal interaction and communication. Conversely, the macrolevel of Tofā'a'anolasi looks at power, dominance and inequality. It establishes the notion that ways of talking and writing reproduce and change ways of thinking and that ways of thinking can be manipulated by wording and referential content and style. This means that every linguistic choice is strategic and every utterance has an epistemological agenda and a way of seeing the world. For readers to uncover such an agenda, Foucault (1989b, p. 109, cited in Wolf, 2013, p. 37) recommends 'not to ask for the background or real meaning of the texts, but for their mode of existence, 'what it means for them to have appeared when and where they did—and not others'. In this respect, Tofā'a'anolasi considers that discourses and their systematic ordering are the final result of a long, sinuous development, involving language, thought, empirical experience, categories, the lived and ideal necessities, the contingency of events and larger socio-political histories, and the play of formal constraints.

Disclosure statement

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Notes on contributor

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