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HAVING THEIR SAY:

Six Pacific girls talk about their experiences in a New Zealand Secondary School

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ABSTRACT

The problems faced by Pacific students in the New Zealand education system have been examined over the years, but very often the analysis of learning problems has been complicated by factors associated with wider issues such as socio-economic background (for instance, Hawk & Hill, 1996). The participants in this present study generally come from professional backgrounds, have succeeded well in their home schools and are studying in New Zealand on scholarships. They live in the secure environment of a hostel where after-school study is actively provided for. Thus, by removing socio-economic and home factors from the situation, it is possible to focus more on the learning situation itself.

The factors that contribute both positively and negatively to the learning situation are explored by following the progress of six, secondary school girls through an academic year; four were new arrivals to New Zealand and two were in their second year here. Through a series of interviews, the year is seen through their eyes, as closely as possible describing the girls' experiences as they saw them. Teachers are also interviewed, their interpretation of the classroom situation presenting interesting points of comparison and contrast to the girls' perceptions.

The results of this study indicate that both teachers and students can underestimate the problems faced by Pacific students. The teachers, misled by the students' very fluent communicative ability, are not sufficiently aware of the problems that the students face when working with academic English. Further,

the girls' quiet demeanour in class can be interpreted as passivity or lack of ability. The students on the other hand, applying their own cultural experiences to a New Zealand classroom, misunderstand the rules in play. They see nothing to emulate in the New Zealanders' behaviour, yet are frustrated and bewildered when these students do better than them. Academic expectations in New Zealand are different and the extent of these differences are not fully appreciated by either teachers or students and require greater changes both in teacher delivery and in student study habits. There are also affective factors such as leaving home, culture shock and stress which can further impede learning.

The study maps the factors that appear to contribute most as constraints on learning and proposes a two-way model which recognises and addresses these factors. Additionally, it makes some recommendations for schools, recognising not only the constraints but also the factors that appear to facilitate learning. The study suggests that in proposing this model, it may be possible to better understand the learning situations of other Pacific students which are currently often overshadowed by socio-economic concerns.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

The lack of success experienced by Pacific students in the New Zealand education system has been well documented over the years in the Ministry of Education statistics and a number of reasons have been presented to account for this. The most recently comprehensive of this research has been the report *Towards Making Achieving Cool: Achievement in Multi-Cultural High Schools* (Hawk & Hill, 1996), which cast its net wide both in terms of the size of the sample as well as the number of issues examined. It makes for fascinating reading as does Alison Jones' book *At School I Have a Chance* (1991). The only problem with these studies, and indeed most others I have read, is that the students they are studying are very different to the students at my school and very often the obstacles these students meet are not encountered by my students. Yet my students continue not to do as well as might be hoped.

The Pacific students attending our small-town, girls' boarding school are by and large scholarship girls who have come to New Zealand for anything from one to five years. Being scholarship girls, they are expected to be the cream of their peers. This is not always the case but certainly the majority of the girls have succeeded well in their own educational systems. They generally come from professional backgrounds with parents who well recognise the value of study and encourage it. The students who are not on scholarships have families prepared to

pay a comparative king's ransom in order to ensure the girls enjoy every academic advantage. This immediately sets my students apart from those in the majority of studies where the Pacific students come from low socio-economic backgrounds, with poor self-esteem and few role-models, these factors being seen to inhibit success. The differences continue. The AIMHI Report discovered that many of the students had health-related problems caused by tiredness, poor diet and undiagnosed ailments such as glue-ear. In addition, a number were identified as using alcohol or drugs. Their home conditions did not encourage study as there were no quiet places where the students might work and besides their time was very often taken up with helping the family or attending church functions. Our students on the other hand enjoy good health. They live in a hostel which provides nutritious food (albeit bland). They have two hours supervised study each night as well as after school tutorials being offered in all subjects. They go to bed at a reasonable hour. There is little opportunity for them to get hold of drink or drugs.

Yet the girls still do not blossom as one might hope. Certainly they usually do better than the majority of the Pacific students in New Zealand and usually enjoy greater educational opportunities than their peers left back in the islands but generally they still do not live up to expectations. Their dreams become compromised. Those who aspire to be doctors might enrol in nursing courses. Those who wish to be accountants settle for a Diploma in Business Studies. This is not to decry their achievements, but when I took a job at the school and saw their results, I was troubled. If we cannot help these girls to fly high with

seemingly every advantage behind them, what chance do the other Pacific students have?

In our school, the Pacific learn alongside the Palagi and the Maori girls, as a very small minority. They enjoy a general popularity among their teachers because they are well-behaved and willing. They have not been recognised as second-language learners as such up until now because they are fluent English speakers. When I arrived at the school as an ESOL teacher there was no expectation that I would teach them. Their lack of success was attributed to lack of content background, some laziness and a general (but unspoken) belief in lack of individual ability. Also, while their comparatively poor academic results were regrettable, it was pointed out to me that the mere experience of being in New Zealand gave them tremendous advantages on their return to their home countries.

Interested in their plight, I compiled a report for the Board of Trustees about the Pacific students. Interviews with a number of the students had uncovered an interesting range of factors. Many of them had been completely thrown by their mediocre performance in New Zealand. They were used to getting As and now their whole self-image was threatened as they began receiving Cs or lower, yet felt they were working harder than they had ever done before. Most were frustrated by the poor behaviour displayed by the New Zealand students in class and were aggrieved by the seemingly undeserved success of the Kiwis in tests and assignments. The Pacific students themselves found it hard to account for their lack of success. Certainly some of this was due to lack of application, but often they had worked hard and still had not done well. They were demoralised and

frustrated yet communicated these emotions to me in such a laughing and relaxed manner that I, used to the intensity of Asian students, was unsure how much it really bothered them. Problems seemed to result from a complex mixture of language, attitudes, behaviours and expectations.

My colleagues were very supportive of my investigations for the report and some approached me afterwards to find out what they could do to help the Pacific students in their classes. Their concern for the students' success and well-being is great. Yet at that stage, my mind was a tangle of "Well, it could be this, maybe that." I was very unsure of which were the most significant factors to attempt to address. I therefore began my thesis with two desired outcomes in my mind. Firstly, I wanted to be able to share with my colleagues the Pacific girls' views of the school and their classes so that the teachers might understand their students more and can therefore develop strategies which might enhance classroom interactions. Secondly, I hoped to present the school with a set of proposals aimed at raising Pacific achievement.

As a Palagi teacher who has never been to the Pacific nations, I felt the best way to understand what these students faced in New Zealand was to follow a number through the year. I wanted to chart not only their perceptions of what was happening, but also those of their teachers. I believed the discrepancies between these perceptions would be at least as illuminating as the similarities.

I felt it was important to go back and conduct more interviews but in greater depth and over a length of time to see if any patterns developed. I was aware that this

case study approach might well replicate many of the findings in previous research such as that done by Alison Jones, Kay Hawk and Jan Hill, however, I hoped it would also highlight factors in Pacific learning which may have been masked by the socio-economic concerns which dominated much of their research. In order to do this, I decided to follow a group of students through an academic year. Interviews at regular intervals would, I very much hoped, help me see with their eyes. These interviews were designed to cover all aspects of their lives here: their studies and their experiences in the classroom, in the hostel and in New Zealand. Interviews with their teachers at similarly regular intervals were conducted in order to monitor student progress from a different vantage point.

The subjects of this thesis will very likely go on to play important roles in their countries in future years. They are students who have already achieved beyond extraordinary odds. The aim of this thesis is to discover how we might better bridge their move from one educational system to another. Success for all students must always be the result of the interplay between linguistic, socio-cultural and affective factors. With bicultural students, the happy integration of the two different cultures and languages is also essential if they hope to succeed. By identifying the most important needs of the students, we can then set in place systems to facilitate meeting them.

In order to get as wide an understanding as possible of the needs of these students, the present study looks at language, socio-cultural and affective factors in the learning process in chapters two to four. Chapter five examines these factors with particular reference to Pacific students in New Zealand. The methodology of the

case study is outlined in chapter six and the interviews with the different girls and their teachers are contained in chapters seven, eight and nine. In chapters ten to twelve, the findings are discussed with reference to language, socio-cultural and affective factors and chapter thirteen contains the conclusion and recommendations.

Chapter Two

LANGUAGE FACTORS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The subjects of this research are all bilingual: in different languages and to different degrees perhaps but the salient point they have in common is that English is not their first language although all have been educated in this medium most of their school lives. The degree to which their learning has been affected by this factor has never been measured, yet its influence has undoubtedly been experienced, if not formally acknowledged. However, despite considerable research into the relationship between bilingualism, cognitive development and academic achievement, there are still no obviously easy explanations as to why so many bilingual children fail in school or why, indeed, some others succeed. If factors leading to success can be pinpointed, teaching methods can be adapted to accommodate these better. This section looks at some of the features which differentiate social and academic language proficiency. It also looks at the influence of the age of beginning to learn the second language, the length of time learning and operating in it, and the effect of first language literacy on second language literacy.

2.2 BICS and CALP

Students exhibiting good, fluent, socially appropriate language proficiency while experiencing failure in the academic arena have been a constant source of research, especially in the past thirty years. For example, there have been studies

of bilingual students in Canada (Cummins, 1979), immigrant Finns in Sweden (Kerr, 1984) and Hispanic communities in America (Collier, 1987). Educators have been confused by students who are seemingly completely fluent in their second language yet who still are unable to pass examinations. In Sweden in 1973, an Education Curriculum Supplement stated:

Experience has shown that the facility with which many immigrant pupils speak idiomatic Swedish can represent a superficial knowledge of the language, a facade which hides great deficiencies of vocabulary, reading, comprehension and concept formation, while the home language is also characterised by the same deficiencies.

(Kerr, 1984)

In an effort to explain this phenomenon, researchers began looking at language proficiency in social and academic contexts, attempting to identify features which differentiated language usage in these separate arenas. It is clear that an essential distinction between the two sets of proficiencies is whether the language is contextualised, as in social situations, or decontextualised, as in many academic situations. In the former situation, communication is supported by contextual and paralinguistic cues which aid understanding. Further, the communicators normally enjoy a high personal involvement, immediate feedback which can lead to clarification if necessary, and they are subject to real-time constraints. Generally, the communication is marked by low explicitness in the expression of meaning and high subordination along with the use of interactive features such as gestures and facial expressions.

Where the language is decontextualised, as in academic situations, the meaning is dependent on linguistic cues that are independent of the immediate communication context. Academic texts have usually undergone considerable editing and thus the lexical content is highly explicit. Lower frequency words and complex, embedded grammatical structures are often employed to ensure greater accuracy and conciseness. There is little - if any - interaction, feedback or personal involvement. These distinctions between contextualised and decontextualised situations show then how second language students in a classroom can communicate extremely competently with the teacher and fellow students in conversation and discussion but can be completely mystified when moving onto the reading matter. Similarly, while conversation with a lecturer can be maintained well, the lecture itself might be impossible to follow.

The definition and labelling of these proficiencies has proved to be a complex and subtle task. Cummins (1991) outlines the varying approaches: Bruner (1975) made the distinction between communicative and analytic competence, Olsen (1977) posited utterance and text, Donaldson (1978) spoke of embedded and disembedded thought and language, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1982) used conversation and composition. Cummins (1981, 1984) himself suggested the terms context-embedded and context-reduced language, then renamed them as conversational and academic language proficiency before finally coming up with the acronyms BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) and CALP (Cognitive and Academic Language Proficiency). BICS is “the manifestation of language proficiency in everyday communicative contexts” (1992, p.17). The

language is context-embedded, supported by a range of paralinguistic cues and elicits immediate feedback and response and is thus seen as easier to assimilate. CALP on the other hand is the manipulation of context-reduced or decontextualised language in an academic scenario. However, these new terms met with some resistance.

Spolsky (1984) strongly opposed the acronyms BICS and CALP, decrying them as too vague and allowing for sloppy or inaccurate application. He objected too, to the implied value judgements, pointing out that while the words *proficiency* and *skills* might be aligned, certainly *cognitive* and *academic* were far more valued than *basic*.

Genesee (1984) continued the challenge in a similar vein, feeling that Cummins was too simplistic in his definitions and that it was erroneous to suggest that high cognitive skills were required solely at school or that students only encountered context-reduced language in the classroom. Social psychology stresses the notion of social cognition and Genesee pointed out that there is no reason to suppose that all social interaction is undemanding - quite the opposite, in fact, especially if the person is acting in an unfamiliar cultural milieu. This is a valid point for many bilingual students are highly fluent and skilful in interpersonal communication, demonstrating a sensitivity to nuance and appropriateness in different social situations. Martin-Jones and Romaine (1986) likewise objected to notion of CALP, saying it "can only be understood as appropriate display of schooled language or, as Edelsky (1983) has more aptly put it: 'test-wiseness'" (p.30). Unfortunately for many second-language learners, it is this 'test-wiseness' which

generally dictates their success or failure in national examinations. This in turn has a powerful effect both on how individuals regard themselves and how society at large views them.

Troike (1984), with tongue firmly planted in cheek, floated a new acronym, SCALP (Social and Cultural Aspects of Language Proficiency) as a reminder that academic success cannot be attributed only to linguistic mastery but is reliant on numerous other factors such as socio-economic background and teacher expectations. These are indeed important considerations and will be discussed more fully in Chapter Three, section 3.5.

Despite these objections, BICS and CALP are terms that are still often employed in describing two sets of linguistic proficiencies and they do serve to underline the major problems faced by teachers and their bilingual students. The fact is, much of language teaching concentrates on equipping students with BICS proficiency at the expense of CALP and to the detriment of their academic success. As Cummins explains:

Some heretofore neglected aspects of language proficiency are considerably more relevant for students' cognitive and academic progress than are the surface manifestations of proficiency frequently focused on by education, and that the educators' failure to appreciate these differences can have particularly unfortunate consequences for language minority students.

(1992, p.17)

Cummins' research indicates that while it takes one and a half to two years to achieve BICS, it can take upwards of five years to gain CALP equivalent to that of a native speaker.

2.3 INTERDEPENDENCE

Having made the distinction between the two types of language proficiencies, researchers have tried to account for why CALP is so difficult to assimilate in comparison to BICS and to identify significant contributing factors to achieving it.

Age on arrival (AOA) and length of residence (LOR) are two of the most obvious variables to be considered. In Sweden, research into the relationship between first language proficiency and literacy, and second language acquisition have uncovered some interesting and sometimes unexpected data. Kerr (1984), when discussing the Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukamaa (1976) study of Finnish children in Sweden, notes that those students who moved to Sweden within a year of starting school had "poorer chances of learning Swedish than children older or younger at the time of moving, and were weaker than many children who had not been in the country as long" (p.177). This suggests that mother tongue preservation is more important for those who move country before starting school, or who were born in Sweden of Finnish parents. As Kerr states, "Children who start school in Finland first have less risk of becoming semilingual, because they already have a basis on which to build" (1984, p.178).

Collier (1989) based her research on language minority students on the East Coast of the United States and her studies revealed that students arriving between the

ages of eight to twelve with at least two years of L1 learning, take from five to seven years to achieve native-like proficiency in subjects such as Social Studies and Science, while Mathematics and the language arts (spelling, grammar etc.) may be achieved in two to four years. Adolescents may take a similar length of time but often run out of school years before they can gain peer-appropriate levels. Many drop out of school or leave with results showing them to be on the 50th percentile, even when they come from good educational and social backgrounds. The most interesting data, however, is that relating to young arrivals who come to school with little or no previous schooling in their first language. It can take them from seven to ten years to reach average proficiency in reading, Social Studies and Science. In fact, some never reach this at all. These results suggest a strong link between a firm foundation of learning in the first language and later success in learning in the medium of a second language.

While these results obviously indicate a strong link between proficiency, AOA and LOR, it is not as straightforward and as self-evident as might appear. Collier (1989) refers to studies made by Cummins in 1981 showing that LOR particularly affects oral and written skills but, perhaps more importantly, it also affects both teacher and student perceptions of proficiency. Teachers rated students who had been in the country a long time as proficient users of the language although objective analysis of the students' reading and writing did not support these views. It was thus found that teachers are inclined to judge student competence on such factors as fluency and pronunciation. Even the students see themselves as being very proficient which is a further complicating factor as they therefore do not see the need for extra help linguistically but then are left with no other

explanation of failure except lack of intelligence, a trap into which many teachers and indeed, the society at large, likewise fall.

AOA then, is significant in that older students can initially pick up the new language more quickly but younger students, after a slower start, can achieve higher levels of native-like proficiency, especially in such areas as pronunciation. LOR is important as obviously the longer a student is exposed to the target language, the better the resulting competency will be. However, Cummins (1991) cautions against attaching too much weight to these variables as he found the effects for both AOA and LOR considerably diminished after the first five years.

In order to further explain the link between proficiency in the first language and proficiency in the second, Cummins (1991) posits the notion that this link is a manifestation of an underlying general proficiency. He terms this underlying proficiency *interdependence* and provides the following definition:

To the extent that instruction in L_x is effective in promoting proficiency in L_x, transfer of this proficiency to L_y will occur provided there is adequate exposure to L_y (either in schools or environment) and adequate motivation to learn L_y.

(1991, p.166)

He cites a number of studies which support this principle (Hukuta & Diaz, 1984; Kemp, 1984; Ramirez, 1985; Treger & Wong, 1984). To put this in simpler terms, Cummins believes “a transfer of cognitive-academic or literacy-related skills across languages” (p.167) can and does occur. Hence, if a child is literate in their

first language, the learning to read and write in a second language will be that much easier.

This has important implications for the acquisition of CALP. It strongly indicates that students should gain and maintain literacy in their first language as this will benefit their literacy in their second language. Collier (1989) supports this notion as she found that the five-year-old arrivals did not achieve at the same level expected for their length of residence and felt this finding supported Cummins' notions of thresholds and interdependence. Her data indicates that a minimum of two years L1 schooling is required for students to make most rapid progress in CALP development in L2.

Saunders (1991) also supports and extends this view, feeling it enriches student self-esteem if their culture, through language, is valued. He maintains,

It is psychologically important for children to be aware that their parents' language is also, like English, a fully-fledged medium of communication, with its own literature, its own writing conventions etc. Children tend to regard a language which they can speak but not read as not being equal to the language of the school which can be used for all functions.

(1991, p.108-9)

2.4 ADDITIVE AND SUBTRACTIVE BILINGUALISM

When students acquire a second language with no loss to their proficiency in their mother tongue, Cummins (1991) describes the bilingualism as *additive*. The learning experience enhances the students' knowledge and very often there are

also positive spin-offs such as increased linguistic sensitivity and greater flexibility in their cognitive development. However, for additive bilingualism to occur, the students either need to come from a majority language group whose status is assured, or they require considerable L1 support, either at home, at school or both.

Students who come from minority languages often find that they learn their second language at the expense of the first, especially if the second language enjoys dominance and prestige. Receiving no L1 support in the school and sometimes little or none in the home environment, the skills in their first language are eroded while students seek to master competence in their second language. This situation is termed *subtractive bilingualism*. The outcome of this scenario is that very often proficiency is not fully achieved in either language, a situation which has been referred to as *semilingualism*. However, there has been vigorous opposition to this term which is seen to be slighting and derogatory (Martin-Jones & Romaine, 1986).

Cummins (1984) seeks to explain this phenomenon of additive and subtractive bilingualism. He suggests there are thresholds of linguistic competence (1984). The lower threshold must be achieved in the first language or subtractive bilingualism occurs. Additive bilingualism is achieved through the attainment of a higher threshold in the first language while in the "gap" between the two thresholds, neither positive nor negative cognitive effects as a result of bilingualism are experienced. This theory has been met with scepticism (Martin-Jones & Romaine, 1986) for being too vague, with threshold levels ill-described

in terms of actual skills. The general metaphor of linguistic competence being like a container which can be partially or completely full has been seen as simplistic and misleading. However, it has also met with support with such researchers as Collier (1989) and Kerr (1984).

2.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION

Awareness of the implications of whether students come from minority or majority language groups and the amount of education they have received in L1 should be taken into account both when designing language education policies and when dealing with the students in the classroom.

It must never be forgotten that while bilingual students are struggling to master a second language, monolingual children are progressing with their education. Thus, there is often a distance between the ground monolingual students cover and the ground bilingual students cover. Again, students who have enjoyed a number of years of L1 education can often transfer their content knowledge which can help but it is obviously far more difficult to understand new concepts in an imperfectly mastered language. Starfield (1994) outlines an interesting case of bilingual education in South Africa, focusing on the Black students. English is their second or third language but the main language in educational institutions and black students generally begin learning in English in primary school with all of their secondary schooling taking place in English. However, on entering university, Black students do not do as well academically as the “foreign students” (e.g. Germans) even though their English is far more fluent and they can often demonstrate their understanding of the subject orally but not in written

discourse. This has perplexed educators, some of whom believe this indicates a linguistic problem while others believe it shows the students are cognitively unable to cope with university study.

Researchers returning to the schools to try to account for this have discovered that literacy is barely acquired, if at all, in L1 before being replaced in the fourth year by English for all academic instruction. However, given the limitation of student English proficiency, teachers often fall back on rote learning as a means of transmitting content material. This means that relevant conceptual knowledge and text-based skills, integral to academic literacy, can be only partially acquired. The students themselves are aware of where they encounter difficulties, one student in the Starfield study remarking, "I was *taught* not to be critical" (p.176). The foreign students already have a sound grounding in these skills in their L1 and are able to transfer them to English. The Black students on the other hand, upon entering university not only need linguistic support but considerable assistance with the content itself.

2.6 CONCLUSION

In order for bilingual students to succeed in school, they must acquire two sets of linguistic ability. They need to be able to communicate effectively in face-to-face situations (BICS), and this they generally manage within the first couple of years. However, they also need to be able to follow and use a more academic, decontextualised type of language (CALP) in order to do well in the academic arena. Age on arrival, length of residence and literacy in their first language are all factors which influence their mastery of CALP. Failure to do so can result in

the teachers, as well as the students themselves, perceiving the problem to be a cognitive rather than a linguistic deficiency. Students also often need assistance in closing the gap in content knowledge which inevitably occurs when their time and efforts have been taken up in acquiring the second language. Language factors with reference to Pacific students in the New Zealand classroom are further discussed in Chapter Five, section 5.2.

Chapter Three

SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

New arrivals to New Zealand inevitably come under a series of cultural pressures they will not have previously experienced in their home countries. They encounter different cultural and social norms and find their place in society redefined. This is particularly poignant for the subjects of this thesis who have left the security of family and friends and have to face the challenge to their cultural roots and background alone.

This section looks at the definitions of culture and the stages of acculturation the individuals must pass through in order to take their place in the new society. It also looks at the stages of acceptance of different ethnic groups within a nation and how these tend to dictate the social ranking of minority groups. Finally it examines the role of the school in the perpetration of existing class systems.

3.2 CULTURE

Douglas Brown defines culture thus:

Culture is a way of life. Culture is the context within which we exist, think, feel and relate to others. It is the 'glue' which binds a group of people together.

(1992, p.73)

In order to make sense of the maelstrom of thoughts, actions, beliefs and facts which assail us each day, humans organise these into conceptual frameworks within which they can interpret and respond to the surrounding world. It is a sieve through which we pass life experiences to sort and explain. Brown (1992) quotes George Peter Murdoch who, in 1961, outlined seven universals of cultural patterns of behaviour (p.74).

1. They originate in the human mind.
2. They facilitate human and environmental interactions.
3. They satisfy basic human needs.
4. They are cumulative and adjust to changes in external and internal conditions.
5. They tend to form a consistent structure.
6. They are learned and shared by all the members of a society.
7. They are transmitted to new generations.

Culture is carried in the language, the beliefs and the mores of a people. It is expressed in their arts, their literature, the way they speak, they act and believe. These beliefs are acquired unconsciously, yet profoundly. Brown (1992) describes culture as a “blueprint for personal and social existence” (p.74), yet we have to be careful to recognise that it is no more than that - a blueprint for a certain group of people. There is a tendency to believe our ways are right, that we are objectively viewing “reality” whereas it is merely our perception, our interpretation of what is happening. This very fundamental misconception is the basis of many prejudices and much conflict and can have much bearing on the dynamics which occur in multi-cultural classrooms.

3.3 ACCULTURATION

The move from one culture to another is generally deeply unsettling as it often requires a reorientation of beliefs and behaviours. Brown outlines four stages of acculturation:

1. excitement and euphoria
2. culture shock
3. culture stress
4. assimilation/adoption.

Euphoria is the honeymoon period during which people are initially delighted by their new and exotic surroundings. To begin with they continue to interpret day-to-day events through their own cultural filter so everything seems reasonably similar and they feel relaxed and at ease. As time passes, however, they begin to perceive the cognitive and affective differences of the new culture and this leads to disorientation and culture shock.

Culture shock can range from mild irritability to panic and extreme distress. Some people become physically ill. Feelings associated with this stage are hostility, estrangement, anger, indecision, frustration, unhappiness, loneliness and homesickness. At this point people often seek out people from their own culture for support and validation of their world views.

Culture stress is the recovery stage. It begins tentatively, often with compromises or an acceptance of the more peripheral aspects of the culture, for example the

food or the clothes. Over time, new beliefs are subsumed into the old and people begin to feel at ease again.

Finally, assimilation occurs when there is an acceptance of the new culture, but not necessarily at the expense of the old. People feel comfortable, adapting to or adopting completely the new society. There are some, however, who are unable to achieve this final stage and find themselves instead in a state of anomie where they feel they do not belong anywhere.

The speed of acculturation is further affected by individual factors which are discussed in Chapter 4 section 4.2, and by whether or not the migrant becomes part of a minority group within the target society.

3.4 MINORITY GROUPS

Where a majority and a minority group come into continual, close contact, in most cases it is the members of the minority group who suffer. They tend to be disadvantaged socio-economically and are very often viewed as second class citizens. Their cultural values can be completely overlooked or remain unvalued by the majority group. This can lead to loss of self-acceptance and feelings of disassociation and lack of personal worth. However over time, it is possible for a minority group to achieve status and standing within the wider society. Banks (1992) outlines six stages of ethnicity ranging from Ethnic Psychology Captivity where rejection and stigmatisation occur and assimilation is impossible, through to Globalism and Global Competency where all ethnic groups feel accepted not

only in the nation but in the world. Singapore and Switzerland could be seen as examples of this stage.

These stages are valid in placing New Zealand within a framework. Not only does New Zealand need to protect the rights of the Maori, but also the rights of those from the Pacific Nations as well as, more recently, the growing Asian communities. While stage six is the ideal, philosophically New Zealand more likely straddles stages four and five where the minority groups have a strong desire to operate in both communities, thus preserving their cultural identity while achieving upward mobility. At the same time the majority culture expresses its commitment to a multiethnic nation through educational and political reforms. However, the reality for many Pacific migrants may well be stages two or three where there is little assimilation and those who do manage it, become ostracised from their own community. The majority group perceives itself as superior and this attitude is apparently supported by the socio-economic status of the different groups. In New Zealand, Pakehas tend to be well-represented in the political, professional, business and academic arenas. Maori are beginning to make inroads into these areas but the Pacific Nations are still under-represented in all spheres. A key player in the shaping of society is education.

3.5 THE SCHOOL AS A SOCIALISING AGENT

There has been considerable research deriving from a Marxist perspective in which schools are portrayed as instruments of the elite to perpetuate the prevailing class structures and thus protect the privileges of the ruling class. Bowles (1976) presents the arguments.

With the introduction of industrialisation, many of the labouring class lost their autonomy as home-based industries collapsed and they were forced to seek jobs in local factories. A need for compliance, a respect for authority and punctuality was required in people who hitherto had been in control of their performance. The outcome in most emerging capitalist countries was mass education and schools took over from churches as being the major socialising influence in society.

An ideal preparation for factory work was found in the social relations of the school: specifically in its emphasis on discipline, punctuality, acceptance of authority outside the family, and individual accountability for one's work. The social relations of the school would replicate the social relations of the workplace, and these help young people adapt to the social division of labour. Schools would further lead people to accept the authority of the state and its agents - the teachers - at a young age, in part fostering the illusion of benevolence of the government in its relations with citizens.

(Bowles, 1976, p.33)

Certainly schools today continue to be very successful in reproducing the culture from which they spring, although the reasons behind this are far less blatant and self-serving than the above Marxist scenario suggests.

Schools are set up by the ruling classes - in New Zealand's case, by the Pakeha middle and upper classes. These schools are run according to principles these classes hold dear and they produce the scales on which success and failure are

measured. While schools are open to all, there is a tacit understanding that all children are not born equal: some will always be more intelligent, more innovative, more driven than others. Ostensibly, schools are there to assist everyone to achieve to their potential and it is generally understood that the cream will float to the top of national exams and flow on to universities. It is this belief that equal education is available to all, that in point of fact masks the realities of what really does occur in classrooms.

Pierre Bourdieu (1974) marries the processes occurring in the classroom with those abounding in society at large. The family is obviously the first socialising factor in a child's life. From the parents and the immediate social circle, the child absorbs what Bourdieu terms "a certain *cultural capital* and a certain ethos" (p.37). These are deeply-rooted attitudes and values packaged in distinct ways of thinking, talking and speaking. The closeness of match between the child's cultural capital and that of the school (a product of the ruling elite) determines the ultimate success of the child in the educational system. Of course, this is not overtly recognised and indeed, society perceives education to be completely objective, rewarding "gifted" children and assisting less able students. Complex systems of testing, grading and ranking are extensively employed to ensure neutrality and yet they too are hostage to the culture from which they derive. They cannot help but recognise and reward the children who are most familiar and deft with them. Even though teachers would be horrified to term themselves as "government agents" as Bowles describes them, they unwittingly buy into this

scenario. Bourdieu states that,

the teacher who, while appearing to make judgements on ‘innate gifts’, is in fact measuring by reference to the ethos of the cultivated elite conduct based on a self-sacrificing ethos of hard and painstaking work is setting up one type of relationship to culture against another, and all children are born into one or the other.

(1974, p.114)

Children from “other” cultures are penalised from the start and must begin to make changes in their perceptions. Some make changes to accommodate the new *cultural capital* but even here teachers assess them on different scales. The students’ efforts and successes are interpreted negatively. “Application becomes pedantry and a respect for hard work grinding, limited pettiness, with implications that it is intended to compensate for a lack of natural talents” (Bourdieu, 1974, p.39). The few who do break through the barriers to achieve success ironically merely reinforce the notion that education is indeed impartial and that the talented will always be recognised and nurtured. These are uncomfortable notions but research by Heath (1987, 1992), Wilcox (1982) and Jones (1991) does show how patterns of talking, thinking and behaving in the classroom can perpetuate the social system.

Wilcox spent considerable time in two primary schools: one lower-middle class and one upper-middle-class. In both cases she observed teachers identified as “good” by both the school and the community. Not surprisingly, she found the teachers’ view of the students affected their teaching but what was interesting, was the way these perceptions moulded their interactions with the students. The

teacher in the lower-middle-class school, Mrs Jones, identified her students as “an awful lot of average, everyday Joe Smiths” (Wilcox, 1982 p.298) while the other, Mrs Newman, saw her job as to help future leaders on their way to social and academic success. The way the two teachers taught then, helped perpetuate these views.

Mrs Newman encouraged individual excellence and independence in learning. She was specific both in her praise and her correction so students were very aware of what aspects of their work led to success and what needed modification or change. She presented many opportunities to make children think in an internalised way about what they were doing and why and encouraged them to evaluate their efforts. She made constant references to the students’ successful futures and urged them to set high goals and standards. If a student had a learning problem, Mrs Newman believed with time and attention it could be remedied.

Mrs Jones was far more directive in her teaching style and did not encourage internal motivation to nearly the same extent. She regulated the students’ behaviour and graded their work. They were never given the authority to judge the merits of their own efforts. She helped them to consider the implications of their behaviour but not of their academic work. She did not help them to set academic goals and never referred to their future, except occasionally in a negative way by saying the students would not be ready for the next stage if they didn’t do as she said. A learning problem was seen as par for the course for such an average range of students and was met with philosophical resignation.

In this way, Wilcox shows how students under Mrs Newman were being prepared for managerial roles or professional roles which demand an ability and a confidence to think and act independently while Mrs Jones' students were being trained into an acceptance of authority and guided activities where independence is not required at all.

Wilcox also acknowledges the very large role parents play. Just as Bourdieu showed how parents first prepare their students for school, Wilcox goes on to demonstrate that parental expectations powerfully affect teaching practices. Mrs Newman was answerable to very influential, concerned parents who expected success. The lower-middle class parents were also concerned about their children's welfare, aware that they were not achieving as highly as they might, and made efforts to improve the school and community yet they lacked the influence that the other parents could muster on their children's behalf.

Heath's research (1992) tracked three communities: Trackton (lower class, black); Roadville (lower class, white); and Gateway (middle class, white). Her research amply demonstrated the disadvantage suffered by students who do not share the same *cultural capital* as the schools they attend. Trackton children were not used to being asked questions as children were not seen as information-givers in their community. They had a special difficulty with "why" questions, never having encountered them before. Even producing an appropriate response to "What is your name?" gave problems as they were used to a network of nicknames and family relationships which affected the answer depending on who

was asking and why. Trackton students had different time and space frames and were inclined to view objects holistically rather than as clusters of attributes. They therefore found it hard to compare, label and discuss. As a result, these students were seen as unwilling and stupid. They found reading difficult as they had little exposure to written material at home. Clever put-downs and insults were seen as a sign of intelligence at home but at school were punished. Highly exaggerated stories, especially about personal exploits, were received warmly in their community but at school were seen more as “junk” or, worse, as deliberate lies intended to deceive.

Roadville students fitted the system somewhat better. Their parents had prepared them for school by asking them questions, reading to them, and raising them in strict time and space frameworks. However, once at school, parental input ceased as it was now seen as the school’s job to educate their children. They had some exposure to reading matter but creativity in making up stories was quashed in favour of chronicity and factuality.

The Gateway children fitted the system well. Encouraged to be verbal at an early age, they were quick to participate in all activities and the time/space frameworks were comfortable and familiar. Constantly surrounded by reading material at home and warmly encouraged by parents, they learned literacy skills fast. Parents nurtured creativity. Thus, by aged seven, students were already set into patterns which schools would judge, not at all objectively, and social systems would continue to be perpetuated.

This Pygmalion Effect, where students tend to achieve according to teacher (and parent) expectations, has long been recognised in teaching. Student achievement is often closely linked with teacher social or ethnic prejudice. An excellent example of this is the success of Finnish students outside of Finland (Saville-Troike, 1984). In Sweden, Fins are generally not highly regarded. They are seen to be lazy and untrustworthy and they tend to occupy the lower rungs of the socio-economic ladder. Finnish students do not do well, as a rule, in the Swedish educational system. In Australia, however, Finns are viewed as Northern Europeans and therefore intelligent and motivated. Finnish students do extremely well in Australian schools where other ethnic groups such as the Aborigines and Pacific students struggle enormously.

3.6 CONCLUSION

It is very hard for multicultural societies to exist equally and without prejudice. Minority groups in particular are judged against cultural norms which are foreign to them, and are found wanting. Schools unconsciously tend to replicate the cultural norms of the dominant cultural group, rewarding the students who “fit” and penalising those who do not, with teacher perceptions and expectations very often shaping student success. These issues are further discussed with particular reference to Pacific students in New Zealand in Chapter 5, section 5.3.

Chapter Four

AFFECTIVE FACTORS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

While learning is strongly influenced by external influences as exerted by society, the school and family, the internal influences brought to the learning situation by the students themselves cannot be ignored. These affective factors do often have their origins in the surrounding circumstances but they are also a result of the students' individual personalities and experiences. Undoubtedly intelligence and language aptitude are very important individual variables that affect success in an academic, second language context. However, this chapter will focus on other important affective factors which have the power to explain success or the lack of it, such as motivation, anxiety, locus of control and the role of excuses.

4.2 MOTIVATION

Motivation is critical for student success. Yet it is not always easy to identify or indeed generate, for motivation comes in different degrees of intensity and from different sources. We can examine motivation both as inherently located within the individuals themselves as well as induced by the tasks students engage in.

Motivation within the individual has been differentiated into two types: instrumental (where the target language is viewed as a practical asset for jobs and upward mobility) and integrative (where the learner identifies with the culture of

the target language and seeks group membership with native speakers of the language). Gardner and Lambert (1972) were surprised when their hypothesis that integrative motivation would always be the more powerful was refuted by their Philippine study where they found instrumental motivation to lead to better language acquisition. They acknowledged that apparently “when there is a vital need to master a second language, the instrumental approach is very effective, perhaps more so than the integrative (p.130). Yet they also noted that when students combined the two and could identify themselves with the English speaking communities, their progress was that much better still. Their conclusion therefore was that while integrative motivation is good for students learning a foreign language, minority groups should be encouraged to develop both kinds of motivation. However, they also acknowledge that the real challenge lies in being able to maintain their own cultural and linguistic identity in the process. “Striving for a comfortable place in two cultures seems to be the best motivational basis for becoming bilingual” (Gardener & Lambert, 1972, p.130).

Related to the concept of integrative motivation is that of Krashen’s notion of club membership as cited by Young (1992). In the case of foreign language learning, for instance, Stephen Krashen suggests that the students learning French or Spanish who thinks of themselves as the kinds of people who speak the language well and who identify with the other speakers of the target language will make the best progress. This supports the notion of the benefits of integrative motivation.

As mentioned above, motivation can also be induced by the tasks presented to the student in class. Gaudry (1971) introduced the notion of task-induced anxiety and went on to describe the Yerkes-Dodson Law thus: the optimal level of motivation for effective performance lies in the middle ranges of tasks; those that are not too easy nor too hard. An inverted U-shaped curve illustrates the relationship between motivation and learning showing that as a task grows more difficult, motivation likewise develops until it reaches a point where it starts becoming too difficult whereupon motivation begins to wane. This can go a long way to explain why bilingual students can feel frustrated in Extra English withdrawal classes which they see as too easy in comparison to the work covered elsewhere in school yet they will often drop out of mainstream classes as well, which they find too difficult.

4.3 ANXIETY

Anxiety is a very wide term, commonly applied to feelings of apprehension, worry or fear. Anxiety can be very general, rather vague even, where an anxious person might not immediately be able to attribute causes for it, nor be sure of what outcome they are fearful of. It is also possible for people to be suffering from the effects of anxiety without even being aware that they are indeed anxious, especially if this situation occurs over an extended length of time.

Anxiety with reference to second language learning has been classified into three categories: trait, state and situational (Hembree, 1988). Trait anxiety refers to an individual's predisposition to anxiety. Some people are more susceptible than others to the effects of anxiety. These include impairment of cognitive

functioning, memory disruption and avoidance behaviours. Situational anxiety is triggered by a specific situation or event and will affect everyone from time to time. It can be broadly defined, as in the case of general communication apprehension, or more specifically, as in the case of stage fright. State anxiety can combine trait and situational anxiety and, while it is normally temporary, it can be emotionally unpleasant. The boundaries between these types of anxiety can obviously be hard to define and must therefore remain as generalisations.

Anxiety which negatively affects performance is known as debilitating anxiety. In this situation the student is assailed by self-doubts, resulting in poor self-esteem. This in turn leads to reduced participation in the classroom, and avoidance of learning overall, and is often manifested in the bunking of classes or the neglect of assignments. However, while experiencing anxiety is generally not enjoyable, it is not necessarily detrimental to learning. Researchers (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Scovel, 1978) have found that it can be helpful too. Facilitating anxiety motivates the student. Constant, mild worry seems to act as an energiser which sees heightened forms of concentration and a greater application to studies.

As Scovel remarked about facilitating and debilitating anxiety:

The attractiveness of the binary approach to anxiety lies in its common-sense viewpoint that learning, whatever the activity might be, is enhanced by both positive and negative motivation.

(1978, p.138)

He sees them working in tandem, both linked to the limbic system, that part of the brain controlling such basic survival drives as fight or flight. Facilitating anxiety

motivates the learner to “fight” while debilitating anxiety motivates the student to “flee” (p.139). Young (1992), when interviewing several language specialists, found support for the notion of facilitating anxiety even though the term itself was often changed. Krashen, although holding the view that language acquisition best occurs at zero anxiety, agreed with the idea in part, although substituting his own term *tension*. “You have to have a little bit of tension, I think, to create the desire to learn, to motivate, to get people to realise that, ‘Gee, this isn’t perfect yet, and I do need to work on it.’” (Young, 1992, p.161).

Tracy Terrell too, rejected the term *anxiety*, preferring to describe it as “a heightened level of attention” and the process to “attending to the input.” (Young, 1992, p.161). She feels it is essential for learning, saying that if a teacher relaxes the students too much, they “learn to attend to input just enough to understand what the question is, or what the comment is, and they ignore everything else” (Young, 1992, p.161). The student must make a positive effort to attend to input. Jennybelle Rardin agrees saying, “alertness, stress and anxiety are more or less inherent in the adult/adolescent learning process” (Young, 1992, p.163).

We have many labels but as Scovel himself notes, “the more researchers have investigated the topic, the more complex the relationship between anxiety and classroom performance has grown.” (1991, p.136). Trylong felt it necessary to conclude “that aptitude, attitudes and anxiety interact in unique and powerful ways as they relate to achievement” (cited in MacIntyre and Gardner, 1989, p.254). Bearing this in mind, other important factors which must be taken into

account are the levels of student aptitude, their degree of familiarity with the learning task, their perception of the task and the difficulty of the task itself.

4.4 PERCEPTION

Winne and Marx (1979) point out that perception plays a major part in learning. Perception entails the selection and attachment of psychological meaning to the environment and its stimuli. That is, students interpret their surroundings in accordance to their own set of beliefs and experience. This cognitive matrix enormously influences what we select and how we then interpret it. If something does not fit into our cognitive structure, we tend to disregard it. Thus students can leave a class, each taking from a lesson quite different understandings and responses.

Students from a different culture are particularly vulnerable because, as Winne and Marx explain:

We make cultural errors often because we don't even see the cue at all because of the absence of its psychological meaning in our cognitive structure. When schemata for teachers' cues are similarly absent from students' cognitive structure, the academic *faux pas* of inadequate learning is conceptually parallel to ours."

(1979, p.214)

Thus, Pacific students, used to the value applied to teachers' notes, will copy all information down off the board and OHTs but can fail to see the relevance of class discussion which they are not used to (Jones, 1991). Of course, these situations can be rectified by re-tuning the students' perceptions so they align with

the teaching methods and content, but all too often perception is confused with cognition and these students are simply regarded as not very bright.

4.5 CLASSROOM MORES

Classroom mores and expectations are closely aligned with the sociocultural values of society. Thus students moving from one set of classroom cultural expectations to another can experience problems. Richards and Hurley (1988) outline some examples. In America it was found that American Indian children would wander around the classroom, chatting to their peers while the teacher was talking, not realising they were violating a cultural norm and earning the labels “inattentive” and “disruptive” in the process. By and large, Asians and Hawaiians tend to avoid volunteering questions and answers in the classroom out of a reluctance to be seen as showing off or standing out. Teachers judge students by their own cultural norms. Thus an American teacher can see a Filipino boy as “hanging around” while Filipino teachers see him as “listening attentively”. Not being comfortable in the classroom interactions can induce anxiety in students and being reprimanded for behaviour they regard as quite normal can lead to distress and confusion.

4.6 LOCUS OF CONTROL

For the past thirty years, there has been considerable interest in the sense of responsibility students assume towards their studies and how much control they feel they wield over their performance. Broadly speaking, students who believe that they are in control of their lives and that their efforts will be rewarded with success are said to have an internal locus, while those who feel that luck, chance or fate powerfully affect their destiny, are described as having an external locus of

control. Performance in class and approach to study will of course be powerfully influenced by which locus of control students are operating from. However, it must be kept in mind that external and internal loci of control are not two separate camps as such, but rather a continuum with an individual often possessing traits of each. Nor is the individual's position on the continuum necessarily set for life. It can be changed by external forces, or the individual's reappraisal of a particular situation, or a move to a new one.

Wong (1990) outlines attributes of these two groups. Internals are generally well-motivated, interested at school, become involved, are confident and enjoy high levels of self-esteem and well-being. When faced with failure they can feel greater shame but will take remedial action and will soon forget the incident. Externals have a low self-esteem, they do not generally take part in classroom activities and often drop out of school. In test situations they experience greater anxiety as past failure is recalled. When they face a difficult task, they do not believe that perseverance and a greater effort will lead to success.

However, as Wong cautions, it is important not to slip into the trap of seeing internals as the "good guys" and externals as the "bad guys". Factors such as ethnicity, gender and socio-economic status can affect one's locus of control. She cites studies in America which showed that Chinese were less internal than Caucasian Americans. The individual-based American personality was seen to be pragmatic, placing high value on independence, self-reliance and problem-solving. In contrast the Chinese were found to be more situation-centred where the family was stressed and life was seen to be full of ambiguity with the vagaries

of fate and chance playing a large role in their destiny. Similarly, Wong explains, the extended Maori family structure encourages individuals to assume responsibility for each other rather than themselves and this may help to explain why Year 12 Maori students were found to be significantly less internal than their Asian and Pakeha peers. Success too, while greeted warmly in the whanau, is tempered with the understanding that an individual should not be seen to be better than the rest or become big-headed in any way.

The locus of control can also change depending upon the surrounding circumstances. Wong cites an interesting phenomenon in America where it was found that during the Watergate and Vietnam crises, teenagers became notably more external in their behaviour. Feeling helpless to control the situation around them, the teenagers began displaying a greater feeling of helplessness and hopelessness in their daily lives. This correlates with external behaviours found in low socio-economic groups and disadvantaged ethnic minorities.

However, as always, generalising must be treated with care. For example, in South Africa, Indian university students (a disadvantaged minority) were found to be more internally orientated than were their White counterparts, a result which researchers Barling and Finchem (1978), attributed to the political system of the time. They posited that Indians, trapped in apartheid which provided extremely limited opportunities for them, realised that considerable personal effort and initiative were required if they were to succeed.

4.7 EXCUSES

A final affective factor to be examined is the role of excuses and their effect on self-esteem. Snyder and Higgins (1988) found that excuses help shift the cause of a bad outcome from person-initiated to situation-induced.

The goal is to move the attribution from a more threatening and more central one (e.g., "I failed this exam because I'm stupid") to a less threatening and less central one (e.g., "I failed this exam because I didn't study").

(1988, p.23)

Of course this type of excuse does not relieve the individual entirely of responsibility but it does go a long way to alleviate feelings of failure and helps preserve self-esteem. Snyder and Higgins quote the philosopher, J.L. Austen who said,

Few excuses get us out of it completely; the average excuse, in a poor situation, gets us only out of the fire and into the frying pan - but still, of course, any frying pan in a fire.

(1988, p.24)

The relationship between locus of control and excuses is complex. Excuses and external locus tend to be seen together. Wood (1992) describes how external students explain away failure by saying the test was too difficult or the teacher did not like them. However, Wood does not see these as excuses as such. He suggests that the students really believe them, that they are real to them.

Excuses can serve a valuable function. In one study children deemed helpless in improving arithmetic skills were persuaded that their failure was due to lack of effort rather than to lack of ability. Thereafter, their skills did improve (Snyder & Higgins, 1988).

Internals typically assume complete responsibility for their success or failure yet this is not always advantageous. High-achieving students can deteriorate in performance when faced with an obstacle which they feel they do not possess the ability to tackle. Here, the excuse of lack of effort, whether raised by the student or a teacher, has been seen to spur the students on to greater perseverance and greater success (Wong, 1990). Thus excuses are not the terrain for the low achievers only, but are often used to good effect by successful types too.

While excuses do help preserve a positive self-image and sense of control, they must fit within the parameters of reality set by other people. "A negotiated reality thus reflects a biased compromise that the person considers valid and that outside sources (e.g., observers) would not seriously question should the person verbalise it." (Snyder & Higgins, 1988 p.32) An effective excuse is one that does not provoke challenge. However, Snyder and Higgins do point out while excuses may help a person in a failure situation to feel better about it, the embarrassment experienced by those caught out in their excuses can compound their sense of failure.

4.8 CONCLUSION

The students bring to a classroom a number of factors which will affect their learning: motivation, anxiety, perceptions and locus of control being some of the most important of these. While teachers cannot obviously change their students' make-up, they can be aware of and be sympathetic to the interplay of these factors. Student understanding of these factors can help to modify and shape their behaviour and thus further facilitate learning. Affective factors with reference to Pacific students in New Zealand classrooms are further discussed in Chapter Five section 5.4.

Chapter Five

PACIFIC STUDENTS IN NEW ZEALAND

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The lack of academic success experienced by Pacific students in the New Zealand schooling system has long been recognised (Hawk & Hill, 1996). There are a number of underlying causes which contribute to this lack of success and they are not always easy to identify, let alone solve. One reason put forward is that the Pacific community is a minority group which does not have much power in the existing political, economic or social frameworks of New Zealand. However, valid as this point may be, the language, socio-cultural and affective factors must also be taken into account. These factors will now be examined with respect to Pacific students in New Zealand schools remembering, however, that the term “Pacific” is extremely generalised, covering not only a large number of nations with their own languages, political and social systems, but also several ethnic groups as well.

5.2 LANGUAGE FACTORS

English is often the second or third language for most Pacific students and this, of course, has a bearing upon their academic success in an English medium education system. The problems are particularly acute for those who have had very limited exposure to English before coming to New Zealand (Talení, 1998). But even those who are socially fluent (i.e., those that have acquired BICS), may require assistance with more complex structures in specialised arenas, such as the

conditionals which are often used in History, or they need support for more specialised vocabularies such as may be encountered in Science or Economics (Sturm, 1984). Reading textbooks and writing academic essays are also activities which likewise challenge and daunt the students. The Pacific students themselves, as well as their families, identify language as a significant problem when they arrive in New Zealand classrooms. Teachers often speak too fast and students are embarrassed to talk in front of the class by asking questions. This reluctance is based on both linguistic and cultural reservations (Donn & Schick, 1995; Taleni, 1998). However, it does not seem that these problems are always sufficiently recognised or addressed in the current education framework.

Another complicating factor in the Pacific Nations is the proliferation of vernaculars, the widespread usage of Pidgin and the imposition of English over them all. The role of the vernaculars, Pidgin and English is of real concern for language planners. Bickerton (1984) outlined the complexities of language use in Papua New Guinea for instance. While the vernaculars remain the repository of individual cultures used within family groups, Tok Pisin, the Pidgin of Papua New Guinea, is most widely used in social contexts. It is a vigorous language which bonds the different language groups but it remains for most of its speakers their second language. English, however, is the language most commonly used in schools, especially in higher education, in newspapers and in business. English has become linked with upward social mobility. The problem therefore, of the person aiming to improve his social standing is explained thus:

The probability is that he will have had a much less extensive training in English than those he seeks to emulate; inevitably therefore, what he

speaks will be a kind of English heavily flavoured with Tok Pisin. By this time, the accumulation of features which are neither truly English nor truly Tok Pisin will be so considerable as to form a sizeable part of the input to the language acquisition device of any child growing up in the urban area, and since the input mix of English, Tok Pisin and the hybrid varieties will vary proportionately for every such child, it will not be long before we have an urban spectrum containing all linguistically possible varieties intermediate between Tok Pisin and English.

(Bickerton, 1984, p.114)

Cummin's theory of Interdependence (1992) indicates that for students to achieve CALP in their second language, it is of immense benefit to have good literacy skills in their first language. Cummins tends to equate academic success with high levels of literacy. Yet Gavin Brown (1995) in his thesis on literacy skills of Samoan students in both languages, produced evidence contradicting this hypothesis. To begin with, he found that students could master sufficient L2 literacy to cope more or less with school without making much progress at all in L1 literacy. He also found a lack of correlation between language proficiency and academic achievement. None of the students did particularly well, regardless of their reading abilities in either language.

Although Brown (1995) did not find any evidence to back up Cummins' claim of interdependence, further studies by Lameta (1998) in Samoa, indicate that the effects of AOA (or in this case, age of beginning to learn in English) and LOR (length of learning in English) are of enormous relevance both in development of

students' conceptual frameworks as well in the effects they have on teaching methods. She points out that the demands on students of limited proficiency in English are enormous as they are expected to use this language to understand expository texts, formulate arguments, as well as analyse, synthesise and evaluate ideas. While students working in a first language can apply themselves wholeheartedly to these tasks without the constraints of language to worry about, bilingual students can be "foreclosed from having equal opportunity to learn challenging content and higher skills" (p.53).

Lameta believes students should learn to become fully literate in both English and their native language (in the case of her studies, Samoan). The skills required for full literacy are:

understanding literal information to reflecting on the implications of what is said literally, to thinking beyond the text where inferences are transformed into generalisations. It further requires being able to synthesise and transform information into coherent written texts.

(Lameta, 1998, p.53).

Lameta feels there is an underlying assumption that Pacific languages are not capable of expressing more complex, academic concepts, nor for developing higher cognitive skills. This she feels devalues the language and further feeds the notion that they are not appropriate in the work place or international arenas. She does not accept this assumption, pointing out that all languages can develop new vocabularies and that furthermore, they develop and grow in response to the uses to which they are put.

5.3 CULTURAL FACTORS

Pacific students are vulnerable in our educational system. They are forced to participate in a cultural framework which is foreign to them and when they deviate from the perceived norm, their behaviour is very often interpreted negatively by the dominant Pakeha culture.

5.3.1 *At School*

Heubner, while acknowledging the relationship between first and second language literacy, noted that “the development of literacy in a language other than the mother tongue can occur before, alongside or after literacy in the vernacular” (1987, p.180). The point that he emphasises is that the introduction of literacy in a second language usually involves a shift from one educational system to another. The resulting differences in expectations and styles of teaching and learning are, in his opinion, too often disregarded or held in little account yet could certainly go a long way to explaining some of the problems experienced by the migrant students. It is interesting to put this into a New Zealand context.

New Zealand schools have been set up by Pakeha and, not surprisingly in the light of Bourdieu’s theory, it is the Pakeha who by and large succeed more often and more highly than any other group. As stated by Donn and Schick (1995):

A history of cultural dominance by a particular group results, as it has in New Zealand, in an educational system which has a particular structure

supportive of the values of the dominant culture and associated with the greater success of members of that culture.

(1995. p.23)

This is not intentional. Quite rightly, Donn and Schick go on to point out that many who work in these institutions actively and vocally oppose such inequalities.

Students initially educated in the Pacific Nations encounter a different schooling system on arriving in New Zealand. To begin with, they feel intimidated by the colourful classrooms, the abundant technology, the wealth of subject options (Auelua, 1990; Taleni, 1998). The greatest shock, however, comes with the teacher/student interactions as New Zealand students are seen to be unruly and rude and teachers far too mild (Auelua, 1990; Jones, 1997; Schoeffel, 1996; Taleni, 1998). The notion of class discussion and the challenging of the teacher can be quite alien to the new students, added to which, quite different discipline structures are in operation although their presence may not be immediately perceived by the Pacific students who are used to a more formidable range of punishments.

Often there is a mismatch in learning styles. New Zealand schools tend to be competitive in nature whereas the preferred style of learning in the Pacific is more co-operative. A few moves to accommodate this difference have been made (Gerritsen, 1997; Rzoska & Ward, 1991) but it is still not addressed in most schools.

Jones (1991) also discovered that teachers were inclined to talk to Pakeha students quite differently than they did to Pacific students. Their interactions approximated most closely those of Mrs Jones and Mrs Newman in Wilcox's study. Teachers were inclined to exhort "able" Pakeha girls to work hard and showed them ways in which to answer examinations better, to study more effectively. They bullied and cajoled in order to push the girls to work harder. They asked questions which required reflection. With Pacific students they tended to ask factual questions and backed off any "hard" questions out of a fear of making the girls feel stupid. They gave the Pacific students easy "outs" saying, "Don't worry" if they did not do well in a test, and laughing good humouredly.

Classroom discussion is seen as integral to the New Zealand school system. Through questions and challenges from both parties, teachers are able to assess how much the students understand and the students have a chance to plug gaps in their knowledge, test hypotheses etc. This dynamic has long been recognised as primarily benefiting the more vocal students, however. A major criticism of co-educational schools has been that the boys dominate the teachers' time and attention. Pacific girls have been identified as by far the quietest group, even in girls' only schools (Mara, 1987).

Jones (1991, 1997), explored this phenomenon in greater depth. Firstly, she discovered that the Pacific girls hated to be singled out to ask or answer questions. They were unhappy to stand out from the group. But more importantly, the girls themselves did not perceive the value of class discussion. Through observation,

Jones realised how much the girls themselves controlled the classroom dynamics. When a teacher asked a short, simple question, the students would answer in unison. Interpretative questions were met by silence. The girls were particularly adept at waiting - waiting until the teacher gave them “real” work which, in their estimation, was copying down from the board. In keeping with their culture they viewed the teachers, as all adults, as the font of knowledge from which they could learn by listening and following obediently. Unfortunately, as Jones points out, interpretative thinking is a pivotal skill, both demanded and rewarded by the school, and is vital for success in school.

Teachers themselves, can be at a loss to explain why so many Pacific students tend to fail. Some feel that teacher expectations are not high enough, while others feel that it would be better to measure the students at an academic level appropriate for them rather than to continually fail them on a testing system that is clearly too difficult. Many teachers feel frustration and anxiety, putting in enormous effort for what they see to be little reward. Most heartbreaking for them, are the students who have worked very hard and have still failed (Hawk & Hill, 1996).

5.3.2 At Home

The AIMHI Report (Hawk & Hill, 1996) notes that the family circumstances for many Pacific students living at home in New Zealand can be detrimental to their chance of success. The majority come from low socio-economic backgrounds and this affects their physical and mental well-being. Many students come to school hungry, unable to see or hear properly due to ailments, are often tired,

stressed and may be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Pacific attitudes towards discipline and child-rearing are different (Schoeffel, 1996). In interviews with the parents it transpired that:

Life revolved around the household and children were expected to stick close to home, be available to help with the indoor and outdoor work of the household, to run errands for their elders, and to help take care of younger brothers and sisters.

(Schoeffel, 1996, p.135)

Strict discipline, including physical punishment such as beatings, is seen as right and proper in order for their children to grow up well. Jones (1991) found that Pacific students, even the ones born in New Zealand, feel torn between the two cultures, trying to find a balance between two very different sets of beliefs.

In the Wilcox (1982) study, it was found that while the parents of Mrs Newman's students were concerned about their children's academic progress they lacked the understanding and influence to improve their children's situation. Likewise many Pacific parents believe in the value of education but do not understand the New Zealand schooling system. Often their expectations are unrealistically high and this places a greater stress on the students (Hawk & Hill, 1996). At the same time the parents believe, "based on their own cultural experience, that the school and its teachers are responsible for other areas of their children's development" (Henderson, 1996, p.2). By assigning complete responsibility for the students' academic success to the school, parents unwittingly fail to support their children's learning outside school hours. There is often little provision in the home for study. There are few books, no quiet place where the student may study and there

are constant interruptions because the child is expected to help around the house regardless of assignments or examinations.

There have been some efforts to bridge this gap. Henderson (1996) for example, writes about how in Wellington, one school was extremely concerned by the poor academic results of the Pacific students and listed the major cross-cultural concerns they felt had a bearing on both the academic performance and overall development of the girls:

Most of these issues related to perceived family attitudes to attendance at school, a lack of emphasis placed on study compared to other activities, practices in the home with regard to discipline, diet, the involvement of older children in child care of younger siblings, and the extent to which school children were involved in sharing cooking and other domestic duties. However Pacific Island parents did not come along regularly to opportunities the school provided to hold discussions with teachers.

(1996, p.2)

In response to these identified concerns, the school set up a programme which involved the parents and the Pacific communities as a whole in their children's education. Parents were rostered on for lunch-time visits to the school to become better acquainted with the systems, staff and pupils. Supervised evening study groups were set up and these included programmes to improve students' self-esteem and promote a more active learning style. Sunday seminars were held where issues concerning the needs of students could be discussed. Successful role

models were brought in to help the younger students. At the end of the year, the academic results were significantly higher than those of previous years.

5.4 AFFECTIVE FACTORS

5.4.1 *Locus of Control*

Many teachers have noted the “passive” learning style of Pacific students (Hawk and Hill, 1996; Hotere, 1997, Jones 1991, 1997). Paul Wood (1992), in his paper provocatively prefaced *For white, middle-class teachers only*, writes about Wong’s claim (1990) that most Maori and Pacific students tend to have an external locus of control and that this accounts for many of their learning difficulties. He believes the problem is compounded by the fact that most teachers probably have an internal locus of control leading to considerable communication breakdowns. He explains his point.

When they (the students) say, ‘I was lucky to pass,’ they mean and believe that their pass was due to luck; when they say, ‘I failed because the teacher didn’t like me’ or ‘they passed because the teacher likes them,’ it is a true fact for *them*.

(Wood, 1992, p. 2)

They truly do not believe that any work on their behalf could better their marks. Teachers of course interpret behaviours associated with an external locus of control as lazy, uninterested and unmotivated.

This fits with the Pacific “passive” style noted by so many teachers (Hawk & Hill, 1996; Jones, 1991). “They expect that they will pass (or fail) the test or exam as a result of their teacher’s hard work and ability to fill them with the appropriate

knowledge” (Wood, P., 1992, p.2). However, Basow (1984) suggests this may be more complex than just locus of control. She believes that the communal and oral background of ethnic Fijians, for example, leads them to value educational and occupational achievement less than the other ethnic groups in Fiji so that while they might be indifferent in this arena, it does not necessarily mean that they are externals as such.

5.4.2 Anxiety

While anxiety can be facilitating, students who fail generally experience the debilitating kind. The AIMHI Report identifies two major sources of anxiety: the fear of failure and the fear of success. The fear of failure is not cultural, nor is it restricted to unsuccessful people only, but it can be especially sharp for those who have already failed a number of times and who identify with an unsuccessful group. This is the problem faced by many Pacific students. One teacher said, “There are real class differences and our kids feel it. There is an automatic failure syndrome... ‘We are going to be beaten by them.’” (Hawk & Hill, 1996). Jones, when interviewing the Pacific students, was struck by how one said that Pakeha were brighter. On being questioned further, the girl elaborated,

I know it’s nothing to do with prejudice and all that. It’s got nothing to do with it. Maybe it’s the way they’ve been brought up. I don’t know, reading books since they were little, being bright all the time, knowing

school and asking the teacher what all these complicated words mean, that they already know how to say.

(1991, p.160)

This perhaps reflects Krashen's notion of group membership, but in reverse. Krashen believes that students succeed in language learning when they identify with members of the target language. He feels they buy into a type of group membership which positively affects their learning. In this situation, Pacific students identify themselves not with successful Pakeha students but as poorly achieving minority students. This affects their desire and confidence to learn. Students will often miss classes they find difficult, or fail to complete assignments they don't understand. As one Pacific teacher told me, "It is crazy to say but they feel it is better to miss the exam than to try and maybe fail". This fear sabotages their chances and becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Yet this behaviour is quite understandable when the notion of any frying pan in a fire is recalled. It is no doubt more comfortable to the self-esteem to know failure is due not to lack of ability but rather to lack of attendance. Further, by opting out, the student gains a control, albeit precarious and self-defeating, over her life, rather than relinquishing it to an anonymous, punishing, examination system.

The fear of success stems from a fear of being different from the group. There is a strong pressure for the students not to stand out, not to achieve. Basow (1984) administered a Personal Attribute Questionnaire (PAQ) to a number of high school students in Fiji and found ethnic Fijians scores on the Personal Unconcern scales revealed a fear of success. This she felt indicated a group norm against

individual success, a trait noted by other researchers of Pacific students. For instance, Jones (1991) observed that in class, students tend to monitor each other, gently mocking those who volunteer answers to questions. Hawk and Hill (1996) found that studying is not seen to be cool so it is often necessary to break away from the group in order to find the time and confidence to work. Jones also noted that one of the two successful students “seemed different, a bit of a loner - she usually sat by herself and was not part of a close-knit friendship group like the others” (1991, p.180-181). There is also a lack of successful role-models. With no-one around to emulate, students often feel the barriers they face are insurmountable.

5.5 CONCLUSION

There are many factors to be considered when looking at how to improve Pacific student success in the New Zealand education system. Schools need to be aware of the language problems these students face, as well their different learning styles which have developed out of their cultures. The acknowledgement and addressing of these factors would help to facilitate the Pacific students' move into a Palagi world. Immigrant students are especially vulnerable to culture shock and experience difficulty in adapting to a quite different school environment. Teachers should be sensitive to affective factors such as anxiety and locus of control and, by making the students aware of them, provide some strategies in controlling these. But families too, have a responsibility in supporting their children in their studies. They need to become acquainted with the New Zealand education system and to ensure their children enjoy good health and conditions which enable study at home or in other out of school contexts.

Chapter Six

METHODOLOGY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

As discussed in the introduction, while there were already a number of studies on Pacific students in the New Zealand education system, the Pacific students at my school were different in many ways. They are generally well-motivated and academically successful in their own countries and come from comfortable socio-economic backgrounds where education is respected and encouraged. In New Zealand they live in a hostel which, although unable to emulate the comforts of home-life, provides a secure base that supports study. Yet their academic performance was still lower than their expectations. I hoped to find ways in which the school could then maximise on all these advantages, enabling the girls to succeed to the best of their ability. I therefore resolved on using qualitative research for, as Merriam explains, "Often qualitative studies are undertaken because there is a lack of theory, or existing theory fails to adequately explain a phenomenon" (1998, p. 7).

I was very conscious that as a Palagi teacher, my experiences and views of their school we all attended would be vastly different from those of the Pacific students. Qualitative research recognises this. Indeed, "the key philosophical assumption upon which all types of qualitative research are based is the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds" (Merriam, 1998, p. 6).

I strongly desired to understand the students' reality so an ethnographic case-study approach was the obvious choice. It had to be ethnographic because the students are operating in a very different socio-cultural milieu from the one they grew up in. I chose to do a case-study as it was only through a series of interviews conducted over a year that I could begin to see the world through their eyes and begin to understand the many transitions they must make in adjusting to their new lives.

A case-study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in the process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation.

(Merriam, 1998, p. 19)

The approach was thus set. Framing my research within this context proved more complex for there seemed a myriad of factors which needed consideration. To provide boundaries as well as a guide, I grouped these factors under the fields of interest: *linguistic*, *socio-cultural* and *affective*. With the skeleton of the research in place, I was then able to turn my attention to the interviews themselves.

I decided to take six students and interview them at regular intervals throughout a year. I was especially keen to interview new students sitting the Bursary and School Certificate national examinations at the end of the year. Yet while newly-arrived students were my primary focus, I was also curious to know how perceptions, expectations and actions might change in the second year as the acculturation process progressed. I thus decided I would try to interview two girls in their second year at our school. As I already had Year 11 and Year 13 students, I decided these girls would be in Year 12. This had the added advantage of being

an internally-assessed year so I could get some idea of how students performed in a non-examination dominated programme.

I felt it would be best to interview the girls in pairs as a modified focus-group, hoping that two students might be more forthcoming than one. This number also suited the tape-recording of the interviews; it is easy to distinguish between two voices and I could keep them close to the condenser microphone.

6.2 SETTING UP THE RESEARCH

The sample of students for the research was pre-selected in that there were only two new girls going into Year 11 and two into Year 13. This left the selection of the Year 12 students. In the end I opted for one student who had done extremely well in School Certificate but who was a little reticent and one student who had experienced far more difficulty with her studies but who was frank and outgoing. I thought they would be good foils for one another.

I approached the chosen six individually to explain the research and ask for their participation and then gave them some time to think about my request before committing themselves. I had expected some shy reluctance on their part but in fact they were delighted at the idea, flattered to be chosen. When I assured them I would change their names to protect their anonymity Louise asked, “What if we *want* you to use our names.” I have changed their names, however, because some of the information is sensitive. We agreed to one interview per couple towards the end of each of the first three terms.

A meeting of all Pacific students followed to explain the research project to the group and the selection process so that the six girls did not seem unduly singled out. Volunteers to provide extra information if necessary, were called for and to my surprise, the whole group signed consent forms.

I then went to a full staff meeting to talk about my research and asked if teachers would be happy to be contacted regularly about the girls' progress. The support I received was warm and interested. There was a strong feeling among the staff that anything that could help lift the Pacific students' performance would be welcomed.

6.3 THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The questions for the first interview (Appendix I) were general and non-threatening. They covered the girls' backgrounds, previous education and reasons for coming to New Zealand. The questions also sought first impressions of the school, the classes, the hostel, the town and New Zealand in general. They ended with the girls' future plans and ambitions. Obviously the questions for the Year 12 students had to be modified slightly as this was their second year.

In the second interview, questions were constructed around their linguistic background and then focused in more depth on their subjects, assignments and tests. I also tried to gauge which teaching styles they preferred without entering into a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of my various colleagues so I

kept the questions (Appendix II) focused on the *actions* of the teachers rather than their general classroom demeanour.

The third set of interviews took place immediately after the mid-year examinations but before the results, in order to see how the students viewed the examinations and how accurate their perceptions of their performance in them were. As a consequence, the questions (Appendix III) very much focused on the examinations: how much preparation the students had done, how they thought they'd performed, how they were feeling about the whole process.

I had also been through the previous two interviews closely, adding questions to clarify points that had cropped up earlier in the year. Very aware that this would be my last opportunity to interview them, I was keen to tie up all loose ends. It was at this point that I fully realised the enormity of the task I had set myself. I felt I had gained sufficient insight perhaps to now know how little I still understood the whole process. Perhaps this is the nature of research: the information gained merely pointing to the knowledge waiting to be explored.

After completing the three major interviews, the process seemed to lack a conclusion. Having followed their "stories" all year, I was keen to know how they ended so a final, informal half hour interview was added at the end of the year with each couple to see how their examinations went and glean any advice they had for the school to better support future Pacific students.

The ongoing interviews had the added advantage of allowing me to check back and clarify any points as well as enlarge upon areas only briefly alluded to in earlier interviews.

6.4 STUDENT INTERVIEWS

I arranged to have the first interview with the Y12 girls at the hostel, this being their “home” where I thought they would feel most comfortable. Concerned to make the interviews as pleasurable as possible for the girls, I contacted a Samoan teacher for advice. “Just take them a big feed, they’ll be happy,” she said. I arrived thus armed with drinks, a bag of crisps and a packet of chocolate biscuits.

The first interview was not a success. The games room which had conjured up congenial images in my mind proved to be a bleak room at the end of seemingly endless, echoing corridors. The girls were overcome with shyness and unexpectedly reticent. The presence of the tape recorder seemed to exacerbate the situation, as they kept glancing nervously at it. They were far too inhibited to touch the food in front of me. The final straw was the intercom which continually interrupted our conversation with its announcements.

Not surprisingly then, I moved the venue for the second interview to my classroom with which the Year 11 students are very familiar and it has the advantage of being a bright, sunny room. Equipment failure meant I could not use a tape recorder, a very lucky break as it turned out. Note-taking proved to be far less intrusive than I had thought it would be, and the girls were happy to wait while I summarised what they said, got down quotes and clarified anything I

wasn't sure of. The added advantage was that I was able to make a note of paralinguistic features which I had had to commit to memory in the first interview. With this first stage of editing already completed, typing up the results of the interview took less than two hours as opposed to the *five* hours the recorded interview took (the girls had spoken very softly!). From then on, I resolved on note-taking only. Freed from the tyranny of tape-recorders, power sources and outside noise interference, we were able to enjoy a number of different venues such as the park, Burger King, the Food Hall and various cafes. This also worked well as my "shouting" them their meals and snacks felt more natural than off-loading grocery bags onto them. Eating and drinking as we talked gave the interview the informality I had been looking for and being away from school meant our roles of teacher/students became far less noticeable.

6.5 TEACHER INTERVIEWS

In contrast, the teacher interviews, though far less formal, were considerably less easy to organise. Anxious about the placement of the two Year 13 girls in several heavy-content subjects, I held a meeting for all their teachers in the sixth week of Term One. Most teachers were able to attend and were warm in their support of the girls. However, when I tried talking individually to teachers of the Year 11 and Year 12 students, I realised it was too early in the year as teachers were still getting to know their classes as a whole and had certainly not had the chance to formulate opinions on the very quiet Pacific students. There was also a dearth of results to go by, with many assignments due in at the very end of term. It was interesting to discover just how long it can take to begin to gather information about students who are quiet and not obviously excelling or failing.

In the second and third terms I tended to phone teachers at home (with their consent) and they were happy to talk about the students. It particularly helped if they had their mark books with them. It became necessary to duck beneath their warmth and affection for the Pacific students with the realisation that the adjectives, “wonderful” and “very good” referred to their general demeanour rather than to their academic success. The other factor I had to be careful with was when the teachers said, “They are doing well”, it quite often meant in relation to their expectation of Pacific students rather than to their actual place in class. This was quite unconscious and certainly not meant to be racist, these expectations having evolved over years of teaching overseas students. It did alert me to the notion of the Pygmalion Effect, however.

I asked the teachers not only about the students’ academic progress but also about their behaviour in class, how well they were integrated with the New Zealand students, where they chose to sit, whether they ever asked questions etc. I hoped to see the Pacific students through their teachers’ eyes, as well as compare what the teachers saw to be happening with the students’ perceptions of classroom interactions. I tried not to value one perspective more than the other. Qualitative research views all “realities” as significant.

With such a wide number of teachers, it was not always possible to get to all of them as they’d come and go for professional and personal reasons. If nothing else, it taught me how much movement in fact goes on under the seeming placid surface of the teacher pool.

6.6 WRITING UP THE INTERVIEWS

Not surprisingly, the interviews with the different year groups developed their own flavour and character. Emphases fell on different topics, different deviations occurred. Wanting to preserve the distinctive voices of the girls, along with their pre-occupations, I wrote up each of the interviews following formats best suited to that group. Thus, while similar ground was covered in all the interviews, the results are all presented in different ways.

6.7 EXPANDING THE PARAMETERS

As the research progressed, I began to crave some “concrete data”. I wondered about the girls’ reading ages, the size of their vocabulary. I was tempted to ply them with motivation quizzes and locus of control tests. Yet I kept coming back to the original premise of the thesis. In the end, it was primarily a record of the students’ view of their year, set alongside teacher observations. Neither party had access to the quantitative data I thought would be illuminating - as indeed it may well have been - and therefore had no place in this research.

I did, however, widen the basis a little. A British teacher came onto our staff, having just completed two years as a teacher in the Solomon Islands. In the first term he appeared to go through culture shock similar to that of the Pacific girls, upon encountering New Zealand classes for the first time. His views on the differences in curricula, expectations and learning styles were illuminating and I have therefore included an interview with him, plus excerpts from several VSO documents which were of interest (Appendix IV).

In order to make an informal check that my very small sample of girls was in fact reasonably representative, I did one interview with two of girls who have been at the school for four years. (Appendix V). I also got a group of mainly Year 11 students who were in their first or second year to brainstorm in groups about some of the topics covered in my interviews. Their comments supported the general trends that had emerged from the interviews. (Appendix VI). These appendices are referred to in Chapter Twelve.

6.8 THE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

I was very aware, all year, of the inadequacies of my "case study" approach in terms of my overall aim to get as full an understanding as possible of what it is like to be a Pacific student in our school, in New Zealand. For a start, my selection was tiny and therefore vulnerable. I had to be careful not to over-generalise the students' individual perceptions as necessarily being representative of the whole. I was straddling not only quite a wide age range (where in schools, every year carries quite different goals, behaviours etc.), I was also blanketing five separate nations. It would perhaps have been a far stronger research project if my sample had been, for example, six Solomon Islanders, all sitting School Certificate. Yet my selection is valid in that it represents the reality of the situation at school. Individual nations are not recognised at all, the girls are simply classed as the "Pacific Islanders". The girls themselves band together and apply this same label to themselves. Teachers usually only have one or two in a class so over-generalised perceptions and expectations are all they have to go on.

I also experienced qualms about widening the base too much by including the second year students but I was curious to know if things are indeed different for students once they have become accustomed to New Zealand.

In the end this thesis is a Palagi teacher's research about Pacific students. Of course there will be cultural issues of which I am oblivious. Inevitably, I did have to prune the material somewhat and I was aware that in this process, my Palagi notions of what was relevant and what was less important may not always align themselves with the students' priorities. Likewise, my interpretations may not always match what the girls intended to convey. While I have informally talked to Pacific teachers and teachers who have taught in the Pacific Nations, I still lack the understanding that comes from experience of actually living there. Sometimes I felt the weight of my ignorance but at the same time I have come to realise that all research must operate under constraints and that in the end, my thesis is merely one tile in a mosaic.

Table 1**STUDENT PROFILES**

Student	Country	Age in Feb	Year	Subjects	Language used at home	Language used in the class previous to NZ
Agnes	Solomon Islands (Fijian parents)	17	11	English Mathematics Art Economics	Pidgin mostly English Fijian	English
Joanne	Vanuatu	16	11	English Mathematics History	Pidgin mostly English mother tongue	English
Rosalie	Tuvalu	18	13	English Mathematics Geography Economics Accounting	Tuvalu Some Gilbertese	English
Maria	Samoa	16	13	English Mathematics History Geography Economics	Samoan	Saomoan until Yr 4 then English
Catherine	Papua New Guinea	18	12	English Mathematics History	Pidgin English local languages	English
Louise	Papua New Guinea	17	12	English Mathematics Tourism Science	Pidgin English local languages	English

Chapter Seven

YEAR ELEVEN

7.1 BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

7.1.1 *Agnes*

Agnes (17 at the start of the year) was from the Solomon Islands and identified herself as such although both her parents were Fijian and she was born in Fiji. Her parents owned a construction company which built hotels, schools, bridges etc. This meant that Agnes had moved around a lot in her life. At home they mostly spoke in Pidgin but also English and Fijian. Even though she identified herself as a Solomon Islander, she never learnt any of the indigenous languages because Pidgin was spoken most commonly around her.

Agnes did well in her early education in the Solomon Islands and gained entry into a school for “bright students”. However, it did not seem to provide a better education than other schools and was vulnerable to considerable vandalism. The teachers were generally from other countries such as Japan, America and Britain, and many were called away on research or personal ventures. No relief was provided in these cases yet if the students went home and were caught, they were punished. As a consequence, Agnes transferred to a town council school and found this far more satisfactory. There were many student teachers (mainly Solomon Islanders) as well as a few volunteer Japanese teachers in science and physical education. She loved

reading and enjoyed her subjects. Although she always did her homework, she did not enjoy studying very much and so, while she did well all year, she often fell down in examinations. Her parents never enforced study and didn't mind where their children came in class saying, "It's up to you." Agnes could see both sides to this. Many of her friends rebelled against their parents' influence but she herself would have liked a bit of supervision.

She had always been unusual, possibly due to her Fijian background, but it was more than that. "I've always been the weird one." A rather contrary nature saw her taking different routes and she especially liked to fly in the face of prejudice. Having been told at her school in the Solomons that girls could not take Agriculture, for instance, she insisted on joining the class and then ensured she came top of the subject to prove everyone wrong.

Agnes was very keen to come to New Zealand to further her education. Her sister had come over a few years earlier for her 7th form year and Agnes hoped to follow in her footsteps. She craved a feeling of independence and wanted to escape what she saw as a very narrow, materialistic society. She hoped New Zealand would be filled with creative people dealing with different issues from those she was used to in the Solomons.

Her parents supported her in her application as they believed she would receive a better education in New Zealand that would stand her in good stead on her return to

the Solomon Islands. “If they’ve seen you’ve been overseas, they look at you more closely,” she said of prospective employers. Her parents hoped she would train to be an accountant or an engineer. She began the year thinking she would like to become a dress designer.

7.1.2 Joanne

Joanne (16 at the start of the year) was from Vanuatu where she had lived all her life. Her father was an accountant and her mother was a hotel supervisor. At home they mostly spoke in Vanuatuan Pidgin but used English and one of the local languages as well.

Joanne attended an international primary school where she was taught in English by mostly ex-pat teachers. She went on to a private, church secondary school where most of her teachers were British or American with a few Japanese and Koreans. There were very few local teachers. Again, all classes were conducted in English. Joanne was an excellent student enjoying a close relationship with her teachers. She was also a keen reader and did up to four hours a night homework. This was largely of her own volition, although her parents would check her homework afterwards.

Joanne applied for a CITEC scholarship because her parents encouraged her to do so. Not only did they feel that she would receive a better education here, they thought the experience of living in a different country would be invaluable and hoped it would make her more independent. Joanne was happy enough to apply as she could see the

potential advantages and besides, her favourite aunt lives in Auckland.

Joanne came from a close family and everyone had contributed ideas about what she should choose for her career. Her parents wanted her to become an accountant, her aunts and uncles all had different suggestions but Joanne herself though she would like to be an English teacher.

7.1.3 Language Use

The girls were similar in their use of language which depended on the situation they were in. When talking with teachers, they would use English. They would also use English with European friends. They both enjoyed reading and it was almost always in English. There was little opportunity to read in their own languages apart from the bible and a few newspapers. They did have comics in Pidgin, however. When applying for a job, they said they would definitely use English and there would be no expectation of their having to be fluent in their own language.

Pidgin was the language they were most comfortable in and they used it with both parents and friends. Pidgin is used in shops and churches and is the preferred language at most parties. They explained that they would use Pidgin in any situation involving another person of the same nationality because speaking in English would show they were above themselves - and they used their hands to mark a level above their heads. When telling a funny story or talking about a funeral, both were adamant that that they would use Pidgin. "It makes it more interesting," said Joanne. "We

have our humour in Pidgin and when you change to English it's not the same," said Agnes. About funerals they said, "Everything comes out when we talk in Pidgin. We have to think of the words in English". They also use Pidgin to discuss personal problems. Yet, when asked which language they would write poetry in, both agreed on English. "I'm not used to writing in Pidgin," said Joanne. "It's deeper in English. In Pidgin you have to use heaps of words," said Agnes.

7.2 THE SCHOOL

7.2.1 *The Classes*

While both girls immediately identified the noise and lack of respect for the teachers shown by the New Zealand students as their strongest first impressions, Agnes followed these observations up with some thoughtful comments:

At first it's quite frustrating because they talk back to the teacher and they can be very rude. But they also have the right to talk. They know their rights, they know where they stand.... At home, no-one bothers to argue with the teacher.

They were clearly ambivalent about the behaviour of their Kiwi peers. While they disliked wasting time when they could be learning, they also enjoyed the freedom of being able to ask questions if they wanted. In the Islands, Agnes explained, if a student asked a question, the others would mock and tease them. "They don't care what the teachers think, just what their friends think." Thus inhibited by their classmates, students will not ask questions so the teacher, taking silence as an indication of understanding, moves onto the next topic, leaving those who don't

understand to try to get the information from their friends later. "We don't ask questions so we don't learn much," Agnes cheerfully summarised.

Interestingly, having so clearly linked the asking of questions to learning, Agnes herself avoided asking questions in class all year. She explained that she had always been a quiet student and preferred working things out for herself. Her teachers confirmed this, saying that they always had to approach her to check on her progress. They all liked her but it was a small source of frustration for them that she would never volunteer herself in any way.

Joanne, on the other hand, admitted that although she did sometimes ask questions she was a lot quieter than she had been in Vanuatu. She felt shy in front of the New Zealanders. "When we talk to a teacher, the Kiwis all go quiet and listen to us." When asked why she thought this happened, she attributed it to being different and having a different accent, while "back home we were all the same". Joanne would sometimes go and speak to teachers after class but said, "I don't get on with teachers here, I don't know why." Her teachers without exception spoke most highly of her but she herself, felt less understood, a result she believed of being from a different culture.

However, Joanne did feel integrated in her classes and as the year progressed began to chat quietly with the other students and ask some questions when her interest was sparked, whereas Agnes remained on the outside. "I'm a loner," she said. Not only

did Agnes generally choose to sit by herself, she would often set up a second barrier by tucking earphones into her ears and listening to music at every opportunity.

7.2.2 Teachers and Discipline

The girls described the teachers as “professional” and felt they did a good job with higher expectations of student performance than they'd encountered in the Pacific schools. However, they were also seen as “too kind” and the punishment system quite literally laughable. They giggled at the notion of detention saying, “Here, if we didn't do the work, we would just have to sit in a classroom.” Stronger deterrents, they felt, were needed. “If they really want the students to get better, they should make them do things they hate.” They were used to punishments such as cutting grass with a scythe and cleaning toilets. Agnes was surprised at how open the naughty students are here. “At home they are more secretive. The naughty ones are really quiet - here they just show it.” They were also surprised at the “fuss” made about things they deemed unimportant such as uniforms.

7.2.3 New Zealand Students

Agnes had come to New Zealand with high hopes of meeting creative and interesting people. Her hopes were dashed. “All Kiwis talk about is clothes and boyfriends.” Back in the Solomon Islands she had hated the way conformity had been enforced by the peer group. “If you had a fancy hairstyle they'd put you out, talk about you, tease you,” but having survived weeks of gossip about the school ball she felt they had a point. “If you talked about a ball dress in the Pacific, they'd say, ‘Get real!’”. Agnes

was impatient too, with their immaturity. "They talk of running away from home but you know they won't do it, they just act tough." When asked if they found the Kiwi students to be hard-working, they said, "Not really hard-working - some try their best and are keen to learn. Most don't make enough effort." The girls were also amused by how little the New Zealanders know of the Pacific. Over the year they did begin making friends, Joanne in particular, and they realised that shyness was behind much of the Kiwi reticence towards them but neither made any close friendships with New Zealanders even though they had made a number among the other Pacific girls.

7.2.4 Assignments and Tests

While the girls both felt they were expected to go into a lot more depth in most of their subjects this year, on the whole they seemed to enjoy the challenge. Joanne in particular seemed to be an exemplary student who gained good grades in all her subjects except Maths. She enjoyed her other subjects and said Computers was good because this year she was learning to *use* them, as opposed to last year when she only learned *about* them. She always completed her assignments on time and started studying for tests a week beforehand, thus ensuring good results.

Agnes's progress was more chequered partly because, by her own admission, she wasn't working hard. "It's not good enough. I know I can do better but I'm so lazy, I'm just not studying." Although she got her assignments in on time, she would often begin revision for a test the night before. She described her reactions to her results:

When I study and I get a low mark, I'm angry. When I don't study and get a low mark, I'm mad with myself.... Sometimes I get a higher mark and I think it is a fluke.

She believed she could lift her grades and said, "I think of studying but I never do - I start drawing instead."

Below are some of the points raised when talking to the teachers and students about the individual subjects.

Mathematics

Agnes found the Mathematics far easier in New Zealand and was sometimes frustrated by the slow pace of the class. Apart from some problems with geometry, she did well in all the tests.

Joanne, on the other hand, experienced problems with the subject. She felt this was due to the teacher as she had loved Maths the year before. The teacher felt some of her difficulties might be due to the class itself, "the most appalling maths class on record". Even so, her marks consistently sat quite a way below the class medium. The teacher described her as a methodical worker with a reasonable grasp of the maths concepts, but said that she often had a problem understanding what the actual questions were asking. She could not keep up with the pace of the class and her teacher felt this was partly because she was so meticulous; everything had to be copied down so exactly, so neatly. "It would be better if she'd just scratch it down

and speed up more.” He also went to the hostel once a week to give the girls extra help. Initially he used to walk around the prep room and during this time she would quite often stop him for an explanation but later he was allocated an office and the girls had to stand in line for his assistance. Joanne never sought his help after that but found a quiet, after school tutorial with another teacher and she found the different approach very helpful.

English

English was very different for both girls. Agnes especially complained about problems in learning the terms for films and static images. While Joanne had had some exposure to literature study, Agnes had had hardly any but both girls coped well in any case. Research, unexpectedly, threw up some difficulties and highlighted differences in approach between the Pacific and New Zealand students. For a start, Agnes found it difficult to settle on a topic and flitted from one choice to another for a few weeks, wasting valuable time. Joanne chose her topic reasonably easily but was quietly resistant to carrying out her interview and needed to be pushed. The teacher also had to take her to use the Internet as she would not do it herself. Both had difficulty in setting parameters in their key questions and in seeing the importance of using a variety of sources.

Agnes's teacher had four other Pacific students in her English class and made the following observations:

It was the processes they found tricky. They found it hard to choose a topic and then they were very clear about where they wanted to get their information from and were not keen to diversify into newspapers, the internet et cetera. They were single-minded rather than lateral.

They didn't like asking key questions, they just wanted to "research". They were very happy just writing pages and pages out but found it hard to sort out their sources. They couldn't distinguish between the different sources and did not see it as important where you got the information, it was the information itself that was important. The Kiwi students on the other hand, acknowledged their sources very happily and knew exactly what the different types of sources were.

They also tended to choose different sorts of topics: Kiwis often chose issues such as abortion or smoking where the Pacific students went for more factual topics.

On the whole the English teacher was delighted with Agnes's work, finding her to always be right on track and up-to-date with her work but worried she might be

“bored stiff by the mundanity of the class” as Agnes was so much more mature than the others.

As part of the syllabus, the girls had to make a speech and they found the preparation for these talks far more thorough than they were used to. Even so, when given the choice between doing their speech in front of a Kiwi or a Pacific audience, both chose the latter. Agnes didn't feel prepared enough for a Kiwi audience while Joanne felt shy. “I think they might laugh when you talk and all that.”

French

Joanne's Vanuatu background gave her an edge in her French classes as she had “done it all before”. Her listening was especially good, her teacher describing it as “stunning”. Difficulties were noticed in translations, however and her teacher put this down to the fact that English is not Joanne's first language. She did not display the same feeling for the language, the same subtlety as her classmates. However, as she was coming second in the class, the problem was not grave.

Economics

This subject caused some headaches for Agnes although she also said she had enjoyed some of its assignments most of all because they really made her think. She said she found Economics difficult to understand, particularly because of all the terms. Her teacher, however, was pleased with her progress as she was generally passing the tests and said that all the students, regardless of background, had

difficulty with the terms and that the only way to overcome this was with some good, old-fashioned study. The teacher liked Agnes and felt she seemed far more mature than the others but she said, "The problem with the Island girls - although they do it very graciously - is that they are still on Island time, they plod along."

There were three other Pacific students in the class and in their written evaluations of the class, they had cited the speed at which the teacher spoke as a problem. But she said, "I can't speak slower for only four girls out of a class of twenty. I have some very bright students and pitching it that low wouldn't be fair on them." She also felt they were hampered by language to some extent. "It's not just the terms they don't know, some are fairly basic English words". She said they sometimes had problems understanding some sentences. "It's a phrase thing."

Art

Agnes, who loves Art, found the subject quite different in New Zealand and found it extremely hard to adjust to in the beginning. She disliked what she saw as a fairly uncompromising programme and found the sheer volume of work daunting. "I stress about Art - in homework I can't fit it all in."

After the initial difficulties of introducing Agnes to a different way of approaching art, the teacher became happier and happier with her progress. In August she reported, "Agnes is doing really well; lovely strong work, very bold. She's keeping up with the work and managing fine. She probably won't pass with flying colours

although it's hard to tell as her work is so different, but she will pass." The teacher thought Agnes's work had "a rather 60's feel" and that although her skills were developing well, they were still not as developed as the others. She also noted, "Agnes doesn't ask for help and doesn't take suggestions very much."

7.3 THE HOSTEL

To begin with, both girls found it extremely hard to settle into hostel life. The food was bland and the lack of freedom cramping. "You can't even go for a walk anywhere. You don't get to go anywhere." They were used to later bedtimes and found some rules such as tying up their hair and putting on shoes for meal-times irksome. As the year progressed, Joanne became accustomed to the way of life and began to enjoy the camaraderie so much that she reported being very happy in her third interview.

Agnes, on the other hand, swung more in her responses. Initially she became increasingly frustrated to the point where she said in the second interview that she just wanted to go home. She explained how her views had changed:

I used to think everything was so boring that I'd never go back home but now I'd rather study at home and travel later. It's more comfortable and I have more freedom.

She felt so strongly about this that she did not want to return to New Zealand to study although she said, "If I could get out of the hostel, I would definitely come back."

However, by the third interview her views had softened and she seemed more resigned to hostel life. Having heard about other boarding schools, she concluded this one sounded better than the rest and although still loathing the boredom of the weekends, she had decided that she would return, if possible, the following year.

7.4 CULTURAL IDENTITY

The girls were acutely aware of being different when they first arrived. They felt people stared at them in the streets and they were self-conscious in class. However, they did become used to being a minority and especially valued the support and close friendships of the other Pacific students. When asked how they felt being lumped together and labelled “the Islanders” they said that they were quite happy about it although Agnes pointed out that the Polynesians tended to be more rowdy than the Melanesians and sometimes they felt a bit “shamed” in public when the Polynesians drew attention to the group with their behaviour.

Both girls participated in the annual “Island Night Concert” but felt it could have been much better. They implied that it was very commonplace and were frustrated that their suggestions had been overlooked. However, they liked the way all the Pacific students had pulled together at the end and they had enjoyed the audience’s enthusiastic response. Joanne had been gladdened on hearing her name being called out by friends in the audience saying, “It makes you do better, not be so shy.”

An incident in Agnes's English class was interesting. Only one Pacific student had given her speech in front of the class and her topic was the Bride Price in the Solomon Islands. This speech generated interest among the New Zealanders and they asked the Pacific students questions about why they had come to New Zealand, what their lives back home were like etc. "It was the first time they'd ever really acknowledged the Pacific students" the teacher told me. "But only one of them would answer. They were so shy but it was also like we weren't allowed to know how they feel and think which is a shame." When Agnes was asked how she had found the incident, she replied,

"It was nice them being interested in us. I always used to think we were so boring in the Solomons but I realised we were quite unique, really."

"Why didn't you answer the questions then?"

"If I talked, I'd keep on going. There's so much to say."

Agnes felt her time in New Zealand had altered her ideas somewhat. Before she had always tried to avoid things Fijian but having seen the pride the Maori girls at school took in their culture she thought, "Oh well, I might as well be proud of my culture too." Her mixed background was still confusing, however, and she had concluded, "It's better to just come from and live in one place." Joanne's views had changed less but she had learned to value more the quiet respect shown in Vanuatu.

They had also become more aware of the hypocrisy of the Pacific society, citing cronyism and the womanising of church ministers and politicians as examples. In

New Zealand they felt things were more honest or open to criticism, with problems being sorted out in the courts rather than in private disputes which could involve the whole family instead of just the individuals.

7.5 MID-YEAR EXAMINATIONS

The examinations at the end of Term Three provided the girls with valuable practice for School Certificate. Joanne started studying for these exams in the middle of the term. A focused student, she managed to concentrate, making notes and memorising, despite the distractions of the hostel.

Agnes began studying the day before the first exams and was far more susceptible to being distracted. Her preferred method of study was to read through her notes, “looking at what I don’t know” and trying to understand rather than to learn them. However, she did make a special effort with Economics, reading all the notes, from beginning to end, and writing out the hard words. But she felt she hadn’t studied enough. “I didn’t really try hard - I’m regretting it now. We had a lot of time to study but I kept drawing,” (for her own pleasure, not her Art portfolio).

Both girls had said they hadn’t felt nervous. Joanne felt well-prepared, “I knew what was going to appear in the exams.” Agnes said she never usually felt nervous but later described how she reacted at the beginning of these examinations. “I freeze - everything stands still for a while.” When asked why this should happen in New Zealand she explained:

Here everything is so different. How they lay out the questions, the paper they used. It's all so professional. When you see all the paper with writing on it, you panic a bit.

On the whole, the girls were reasonably confident about their exams, except for Mathematics. "Oh my god, Maths was so hard, the English they used. If it was just equations it would have been okay but they put it in words." Neither girl finished the paper but in fact all the students had difficulty with the paper which was very long with lots of reading and the class medians generally sat between 40% and 45%. Joanne's teacher agreed with the Pacific students that the reading penalised them. "Everything is put in context which takes a long time to read and is quite irrelevant. The probability questions are dynamite when it comes to language".

Their misgivings were realised. Agnes got 42%, a mark which disappointed her teacher. Joanne got 22%, a mark which her teacher had regretfully half-expected.

Agnes also left out a section of the English paper by accident ("I forgot") which was worth 25%, although she still managed a very respectable 53% overall. She did not complete her Economics paper either. There were lots of questions she explained, and she had to think how to put her answers into "eco terms". She began by writing all her answers in pencil and going over them in pen but towards the end of the exam she gave this up and used pen only but by then it was too late and she ran out of time.

7.6 STUDYING IN NEW ZEALAND

The list of advantages flowed freely. Joanne said it was good to get out of home and come and explore. Agnes valued the feeling of independence. Both cited the close friendships with the Pacific students and developing relationships with New Zealanders as being a big advantage. Cultural differences still remained, however. A Maori class-mate of Agnes was determined to throw Agnes a birthday party at her house and Agnes was dreading it, never having had a party in her honour before. "I don't want to be the centre of attention and they'll be so noisy."

The problems were less easy to immediately identify. Agnes did not like being "treated like a kid" in the hostel and didn't like the weather. Joanne agreed about the weather and added "Food". Yet these did not really come over as major grievances.

Both girls had changed their minds about possible careers. Shy, quiet Joanne had gained in confidence during the year and had decided to pursue Tourism. "I like meeting new people," she explained. The fact that the Tourism course is internally assessed with no examination made it even more attractive.

Agnes had resolved on becoming an engineer because "It's a man's job" and she wanted to "prove" herself. She enjoyed Science and was very good at it and felt she could do Art in her spare time. She did not see it as a sensible career option. "You

have to get known before you can sell your stuff.”

They both felt that they had been very fortunate in being able to study overseas. If they had remained at home, they were candid about the choices open to them. While the University of the South Pacific was one option, young girls in general were more likely to marry and have babies. “So boring!” they chimed in together.

7.7 FINAL INTERVIEW

Both girls were in high spirits, pleased all the exams were over. English they had found “okay” and although the change in layout and wording was confusing, both had finished everything. The comprehension was fine, they thought. The Mathematics examination was long but Agnes finished and Joanne only missed out two questions. They found it much easier than the mid-year exam. Their other exams had gone well, and though Joanne felt she would have studied a bit better in a home environment, both felt they had studied sufficiently. The girls were looking forward to next year although they both were a little unsure as to their subject choices, especially Agnes who was trying to keep her three career options - engineering, law and writing - open. Joanne was set on Tourism.

When asked what we could do to make things easier for incoming students, they were full of comments and advice. They definitely felt it was important to have the Pacific students time-tabled together as much as possible. Agnes had felt very left out in Science experiments and hated it when the Kiwi students wouldn't work but didn't

feel she could say anything “and if I leave them to do it, they might think I am relying on them.” She also felt the teachers went to help the Kiwis first. Joanne felt she would have coped better in Mathematics if she had had some Pacific students with her. In group work they preferred to be with other Pacific students so they could talk in Pidgin to clarify their ideas. Yet Agnes did see some drawbacks.

In Eco. I don't make an effort to do extra because I can just ask them (her Pacific peers) after class. I hate asking the teacher. If I was by myself, I'd have to do more reading after school and then I would learn heaps more.

They felt the English examination needed to be explained in more depth at the beginning of the year. They wanted more model answers of literature essays and transactional writing to know what standard was required. Their perception was that in New Zealand the questions are more focused and the teachers do not worry about the actual writing style so much. They also thought more help was required with Film Studies and Static Images “because we panic with all the hard words.”

They supported the idea of tutorials starting earlier in the year and wished that in class the teacher would come over to ask them how they were going as they felt it was too awkward asking the teacher questions in front of the class.

Overall, they seemed well pleased with their year's work and were looking forward to returning. They felt they had received a better education because things were more modern (with the use of calculators and computers) and simpler as the teachers here

were reassuring. Back home the teachers tried to frighten students about the following year and the heavier workload which meant the students had been focused on the workload only and not on what they were actually learning.

Chapter Eight

YEAR TWELVE

8.1 BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

8.1.1 *Louise*

Louise (17 at the start of the year) was born and raised in Papua New Guinea. Her father was a lawyer and her mother worked in a law office. She spoke several Papua New Guinean languages but none very fluently. At home she spoke a mixture of Pidgin, English and the local languages (these were mostly with relatives, especially her grandparents). She was educated in English, in an international school. Louise hated reading and was not a particularly good student so her parents wanted her to come to New Zealand in the hopes that this would improve her attitude towards her studies. She was not keen to come, thinking that New Zealand would be “cold, strange and rainy.” On arrival she was placed in Year 11 and sat School Certificate, passing two subjects and failing four.

In her second year, when these interviews took place, she was doing a combination of Year 11 and Year 12 subjects. She particularly enjoyed computers and planned to make a career in them. She did not envision returning to Papua New Guinea to work - she hoped to live either in New Zealand or Australia.

8.1.2 Catherine

Catherine (18 at the start of the year) was also born and raised in Papua New Guinea and both her parents worked for the government. She too, had been educated in English all her life. At home she spoke a mixture of English, Pidgin and two of the local languages of her region. She was not completely fluent in the latter.

She was educated in an international school and was a good student, generally at the top of her classes. She loved reading and her mother always referred to her as a bookworm. It was her parents who suggested she come to New Zealand as they wanted her to benefit from a better education. Initially Catherine was not keen to come but quickly saw the benefits of an overseas education. In her first year she sat School Certificate and passed all five subjects comfortably. In her second year she was doing five Year 12 subjects. She planned to be an engineer and hoped to find a job either in New Zealand or in Australia.

8.2 THE FIRST YEAR

8.2.1 The Classes

Both Louise and Catherine remembered their first impressions. The classes seemed extremely rowdy. “The girls scream a lot here and they talk too much. They don't respect their teachers...it was pretty intimidating.” Catherine found her self-image underwent a bit of a battering. “At home I was so used to being top of the class and when I came here, I'm like in the middle.” There were some advantages however. Louise said that although she struggled, help was available

in New Zealand. "When I was back home, I was too scared because I was at a co-ed school and that changed things when I came to this school - all girls."

While they found the classes very noisy and believed the teachers should use firmer discipline, they did acknowledge that the Kiwis themselves seemed to thrive in class. Louise began:

"It's surprising because some of them are so noisy and then when it comes to taking - "

" - the tests, they do *so* well," Catherine continued.

"And then we get all frustrated and stuff because we are the ones who are quiet and doing the work and they are always like - "

" - talking and they never listen and yet they get the highest marks!"

"Why do you think that is?"

"Naturally brainy?" Catherine surmised, with a shrug.

They themselves did not participate in class discussions and would not even ask the teacher questions. Catherine said that she had always been quiet but Louise admitted that she used to be noisy back in Papua New Guinea. When asked what made her change, she explained that the classes were bigger here, more difficult and the "noise and stuff from the other girls" was such that she did not want to have to shout to make herself heard. She was also afraid of holding up the class if the other girls all knew the answers to her questions.

8.2.2 *The Work*

The ease with which the girls could adjust to the New Zealand Year 11 syllabus was very much determined by the subject. Mathematics, for example, they agreed was about the same as in Papua New Guinea. English, on the other hand, was very different. They were used to studying grammar and vocabulary with many debates and a few short stories by Papua New Guinean writers. They did write essays but “not really the different types like poetic and transactional writing. We just wrote stories on legends, myths, things like that,” Catherine explained. They had not studied literature as such and had never encountered static images and film. They had also done a lot of work on comprehension but in New Zealand they found it more difficult.

“I think the questions are harder,” said Catherine, referring to the content.

“Some of the questions are a bit difficult to understand - the way they phrase them,” said Louise, referring to the actual language used.

Louise also described Geography as difficult, then amended it to “different”.

“Here they study more about other countries - what sort of problems they have. Back home they just give things about the land, the climate, things like that.”

She also struggled with the fact that so many assignments were New Zealand based and therefore she did not have the background knowledge the other girls had.

8.2.3 *Examinations*

When asked whether they felt they had started revising early enough for School Certificate, Louise felt she hadn't, although both she and Catherine said they had begun revision in the middle of Term Three. I enquired about their revision techniques and Catherine talked knowledgeably of making notes, memorising dates etc. Louise murmured about summaries and key words but it did not sound very confident. Neither found working in the hostel easy as they were used to the quiet solitude of their bedrooms back home. Both girls were emphatic that the examinations in New Zealand were a lot harder than the ones they were used to. When asked in what way, they answered,

“The hard questions.”

“The words. Some of the words in the questions.”

They found this especially so in Geography and Economics.

8.2.4 *The Hostel and Life in General*

I asked them how they felt about the hostel and was surprised at the vehemence of their replies.

“I hate this hostel,” said Catherine.

“Yes, hate it,” said Louise.

“What is it you hate?”

“It's the rules and things.”

“It's everything... so many rules - you've got to watch your step, whatever you do,” Catherine said.

Louise had run into what she saw as cultural differences in humour in the hostel.

“It’s a bit hard because, I mean, for me, so others don’t understand... my character, my personality. When I say something, they take it seriously and hassle me.”

Catherine nodded in confirmation to this observation. They were also surprised at how little Kiwis know about their Pacific neighbours.

Both missed their family, friends, climate and home town deeply. Although they enjoyed more freedom in New Zealand compared to Port Moresby with its high crime rate and curfews, Catherine said darkly, “It’s a freedom with conditions.”

8.2.5 *Returning Home*

They had loved going home and both said their parents had noticed changes.

“They said I’ve put on weight,” said Catherine with a grin. Her parents also said she had become more “boyish”. When asked whether they meant assertive, aggressive, rude or independent she said, “Probably all of the above” but wasn’t sure that she would necessarily agree with them.

Louise’s parents thought she had matured, had “grown up to be a beautiful young woman”. She tried to quote them in ironic tones but her smile revealed her delight. Louise herself felt she had changed; she was more respectful towards her parents and working far harder than she had been in Papua New Guinea.

Seeing their friends was good although it felt strange catching up on all that they had missed out on. They were seen as lucky by their friends.

“And do you agree?”

“Mmm, I think so - with conditions,” said Catherine.

8.3 THE SECOND YEAR

8.3.1 *Their Classes.*

“Pretty good” and “all right” were the immediate responses to “So how is this year going?” In many ways they were finding it easier. Louise said:

“It's different from last year because I've settled in and know the place, the people, things like that. The teachers too. If I need to say anything, I can ask them in private afterwards.”

Catherine felt there was a lot more work and not enough time. Louise agreed.

“They just pile homework on us every day, always. Just small things - ”

“- for each subject so it's piled on.”

For the first half of the year, both girls still found Kiwi students to be infuriatingly noisy and rude. “The girls have no respect for *anyone*”. They very strongly felt the need for tougher punishment and even a course in manners! But as the year wore on, they became more accustomed to the noise to the point where Catherine said it no longer bothered her and Louise only minded it when she was having difficulty in understanding the content of the lesson. Nevertheless, they still felt they had a different relationship with their teachers to that of their Kiwi counterparts. When asked in what way, Catherine said, “It's the respect thing”.

“Manners, just manners,” said Louise.

However much they despaired over the teachers' disciplinary habits, both girls felt they were working harder to meet higher expectations than they would have encountered in Papua New Guinea. This gave them a sense of pride and achievement, especially important to Louise. The teachers they liked were ones who took time to ensure they understood. Of one teacher Catherine said, "If you don't understand, he'll explain until you get it. He'll also explain in different ways. Bad teachers just explain exactly the same way and that confuses you more." Other teachers moved on regardless, after a second explanation and the students just let them, lacking the confidence to hold the class up any longer. They also liked teachers who explained the syllabus. Louise had some problems in seeing the relevance of the Mathematics she was studying. "Some parts just seem dumb". They did not like teachers who talked too fast or rushed too much.

8.3.2 Classroom Behaviour

Both girls still tended to sit at the back of all their classes, "it's habit", but were beginning to relax and talk more. Several teachers commented on how well Catherine related to some of her classmates. "She just mucks in like everyone else." The girls said they were still quieter than they would be in Papua New Guinea but that they would be considerably noisier if there were more Pacific students in the class. However, the inhibitions had some advantages. "It's quite good because you can do your work," said Catherine.

They preferred to work alone, rather than with other students. "It makes you think and helps you to understand what you are doing. If you don't, you can ask the teacher." But if group work was necessary, they said they would choose to

work with Pacific students over Kiwis because they came from the same background and understood each other. Louise in particular felt Kiwis had little understanding of how Pacific people think.

For the first half of the year they still found it hard to ask questions. Catherine said she preferred to leave it to the Kiwis or to figure it out for herself. She said her classmates were “too loud and it’s a hassle to get the teacher’s attention.” Louise would try to ask questions but often the teacher did not hear and then she would just leave it. However, as the year progressed, both became much happier about asking questions and agreed with the suggestion that maybe it took eighteen months to feel comfortable to do so.

8.3.3 Assignments and Tests

Catherine was most stressed by the Science Fair because it was her first year to enter and she did not know what to do or what to expect. What made it even worse for her was the fact that “the Kiwis were also stressing.” She found it quite hard to compete with the other students for the teacher’s help. In the end, her project went well and she was very relieved it was over.

Otherwise, she was happy in her classes, enjoying the mix of science and arts subjects. In the middle of the year her History teacher noticed that several of her assignments came in late. “She always had a good reason but no-one has that much bad luck,” she noted dryly. When I asked Catherine about this, she looked sheepish. She had never studied Russian history before and found it harder than the other topics so put off the assignments because she knew they would be

difficult. She and Louise both admitted to leaving some assignments until almost too late. "We never get going straight away - I don't know why."

In both Physics and Chemistry, Catherine was among the top students. She chose to sit with another Pacific student at the back of the classes and was still inclined to be quiet, especially in the first half of the year. "She'd slip through the cracks if you let her," said her Physics teacher meaning she found it hard to ask for help, especially if her Pacific neighbour was not in class. However, her confidence to speak out did grow, to the point where she was prepared to challenge the Chemistry teacher on occasion, much to the teacher's delight. "She wouldn't have said 'Boo' to begin with."

Catherine was also inclined to be late to class and her lab book, which she had to monitor herself, was woefully behind. Still, both she and her teacher were confident that she would catch up in time. The Chemistry teacher was displeased, however, by the fact that the two Pacific girls had requested a tutorial and then had failed to show up for it. It later turned out that there had been a communication breakdown but the Pacific girls have a bit of a reputation among the teaching staff of being unreliable as far as tutorials go and so the teacher had jumped to conclusions.

Louise struggled more with some of her subjects. While feeling confident in Computers and English, she battled with Tourism and its high reading and writing component. To add to her problems, her first teacher spoke fast and moved swiftly from one topic to the next. Luckily for Louise, in the second term a new

teacher came and she went at a slower pace and provided more examples which Louise found very helpful.

Both girls were inclined to leave revision for tests until the last minute. “I try to study but it’s usually the night before because there are so many other things to do,” Catherine explained. On the whole, their tests went well although time could be an issue, especially for Louise.

8.3.4 Examinations

Despite their good intentions to begin study earlier this year, neither Catherine nor Louise began revision until a week before the exams. They still found it hard to concentrate in the hostel and often invited distraction. Louise admitted to walking around the hostel, looking for something to do while Catherine played cards or sat in the hallway telling stories.

They went into the examinations feeling less nervous than the previous year, knowing the system now. Catherine did excellently in Mathematics and Physics but fell down in Chemistry, getting a lower grade than expected, much to her teacher’s disappointment. Her mind went blank in the middle of the exam. Both English and History went well and her History exam is discussed in more detail in Chapter Eleven, section 11.5.

Although achieving quite well, Louise found the year stressful and suffered from insomnia and headaches. Her parents tried to help with reassurance and advice but these ailments plagued her for the rest of the year. She maintained high

grades in Computers, coped well in Mathematics and Tourism but struggled all year with English, failing the mid-year exam. In English she always participated in class discussions, asked questions and generally was a hard-working, motivated student but her language skills pulled her down. She missed subtleties in reading and her essays were weakly constructed with poor grammar skills. It grieved her English teacher because Louise never gave up and deserved better for the effort she sustained.

8.3.5 The Hostel

After their initial revulsion in returning to the hostel, the girls settled back into the routines within a few months. Philosophically they said, “It helps keep us in line.” They valued having prep-time and enjoyed the freedom from household chores which would have been their lot at home. Catherine was still more inclined to resent the constraints of hostel life but realised that she must abide by the rules if she wanted to stay on for Bursary which she very much wanted to do. As prefects in their second year, they had their own rooms and “heaps of privileges” which helped to sweeten their views.

8.3.6 Cultural Identity

Both were aware that their personalities have been affected by being a minority. While quiet in class, they were both much noisier in the hostel because, “everyone’s there.” They also felt marginalised in some ways. Catherine described how in class she would put up her hand and ask the teacher to come over to help but that often the teacher would never arrive, having been waylaid by other students demanding attention. Louise felt frustration with the hostel

matrons who, having had the political problems of the Solomon Islands outlined for them several times, still failed to understand what was going on.

They felt they had different values to New Zealanders and cited the freedom to live with boyfriends as an example. They despaired over how much girls in New Zealand talk about boys. On the other hand, they admitted to differences of their own. Island time, for example, they said, is real. "Let's face it," said Catherine, "we're always late."

The Island Night Concert was a highlight especially as they knew the ropes this year and both were looking forward to the following year when they would have more control. They enjoyed the positive feedback from the audience and it made them feel more patriotic.

8.3.7 Studying in New Zealand

While feeling satisfaction in being able to survive alone, the girls also found it hard work. They felt hopeless in minor situations like always feeling "broke" and having to do *everything* for themselves like booking airline tickets. Yet they spoke warmly of their independence, their (relative) freedom, the excitements of new friends and new places. They appreciated the higher standard of education they were receiving and felt their minds in general had been opened up. Missing family and friends and the weather were the main disadvantages listed yet these were dealt with briskly. "I miss my home but I've got to work."

Both girls still clung to their original resolution of becoming an engineer and a computer consultant and neither saw a place for them, long-term, in Papua New Guinea. The high crime rate and lack of jobs were seen as the primary disincentives, added to which New Zealand qualifications would not necessarily be recognised.

8.4 FINAL INTERVIEW

Catherine finished the year on an excellent note, her report was better than she'd expected. She was facing the following year with confidence, especially with the return to external examinations which she felt she did better in than internal assessment. She intended to start working earlier and ensure all assignments were completed on time. However, Catherine felt that help in time management and drawing up study time-tables would be beneficial. She thought the idea of a teacher who could help with this by going to the hostel in the evening to forestall excuses, and she hoped tutorials would start in the second term, "so that you know where you are and what you know".

Louise had also had a good report. "I'm pleased with what I've done. I know I've worked hard." She had found the School Certificate English examination difficult. "Oh my gosh, it wasn't fair. It was so confusing. It was worse than last year. Everything was different. All the lit. questions were different and they used different words and so understanding what they were wanting was hard." She found the reading comprehension difficult and confusing because they used "high tech words". Still she finished everything.

Louise was less confident about the following year. Although she was happy she had tried her best, Year 13 filled her with apprehension, especially with the thought that the year after would involve tertiary study. She too embraced the notion of having a teacher with an overview of the students' progress, someone they could ask questions and check up more with. She also felt the need for tutorials to start earlier and for a course in Study Skills.

Both girls still held to their original goals of Engineering and Computing as their careers.

Chapter Nine

YEAR THIRTEEN

9.1 BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

9.1.1 *Rosalie*

Rosalie (18 at the start of the year) was born and raised in Tuvalu. Her mother was Gilbertese and so although the family mostly spoke Tuvaluan at home, Rosalie could also understand Gilbertese. Her father was a businessman and her mother had had a variety of jobs from senior positions in the government to working for non-profit organisations.

Rosalie attended primary school in Tuvalu where tuition took place in the vernacular but all written work was done in English. For high school she was sent to live with an aunt in Fiji as the education there was perceived to be superior. The school had a multi-national clientele. She described them as Fijians, Indians, part-Europeans and Islanders (students from other Pacific Nations). The teachers were all Fijian (or part Fijian) but her English teacher was Australian. All instruction was in English. The classes were very noisy and the school had quite a reputation in Fiji. When the English teacher chose to go to that school, the Ministry of Education warned her that she would get a headache working there! Although the students enjoyed more freedom with speaking out, the fear of being seen to be “dumb” still inhibited them from asking too many questions. Rosalie also spent one year at a boarding school in Tuvalu which, although in idyllic surroundings, was very restrictive. She did well at school but said she always left

things until the last minute. "I don't know how to study bit by bit." Her parents did not supervise her, she always monitored her own study.

Both Rosalie and her parents felt she should take the opportunity to study in New Zealand and this was reinforced by her brother, a doctor who had graduated from the University of South Pacific and who recommended that she should get a "better" qualification if possible.

9.1.2 Maria

Maria (16 at the start of the year) was born and raised in Samoa. Both her parents were Samoan: Her father was a high-ranking government official while her mother had been a teacher but at the time of the interviews had returned to her studies at the University of the South Pacific. At home they spoke Samoan.

Maria was educated in government schools in Apia where she was taught in a mixture of English and Samoan until Year 4 when all instruction then took place in English. The school was traditional with strict rules regarding uniforms, punctuality etc. and detentions involved picking up rubbish early in the morning. The teachers were mainly from the Peace Corps: British, American, Indian and New Zealand Samoan. She only had one teacher who was native Samoan. Students were encouraged to ask questions and they did so quite freely. Maria worked well in the evenings because she was often alone at home. "All I had was my homework." At school she was inclined to be a bit naughty, talking, bunking, coming in late but nevertheless, she finished college last year and gained entry into the National University of Samoa. She chose to come to New Zealand

instead. With the establishment of a local university, the Samoan government would no longer sponsor students to study overseas so Maria and her parents felt she should seize the opportunity to gain a scholarship while it was still available.

9.1.3 Language Use

Both girls had been taught in English most of their lives. Maria knew the basics only of English (“Hello, how are you?”) when she went to school where, until Year 4 she was taught in Samoan before changing to English. Rosalie had had some knowledge of English from sitting with her mother’s friends when they came to visit. Rosalie had no choice but to use English all the time when she attended school in Fiji because she couldn’t speak Fijian.

Both agreed that if they are speaking to another person of the same nationality, it would be seen as putting on airs to speak English. With friends and family, they are happy to use a mix of English and their language. This would be the same for parties. When speaking about problems, they prefer their own language but might use the odd English word to clarify nuance. When talking about a funny story or funeral, they definitely prefer their own language - they both strongly felt that they could express themselves much better in it. “It really goes with what you want to say,” Rosalie explained. Church services are in the vernacular. For shopping it depends on location: if the shop is in a rural area, the home language is always spoken but in the bigger cities, both languages are used.

Neither girl particularly enjoyed reading and they didn't do it much, limiting their choice mostly to *Mills and Boon* and *Sweet Valley High* books. Rosalie's mother used to take her to the library every week and this, she says, put her off. Maria also had access to a wide range of books and used to read when a child. They certainly did not want to read in their own language. They were fluent in the conversational vernacular but not in the formal one and reading would require use of the latter. In fact, Maria never passed Samoan - it was not compulsory in her school. Rosalie scraped passes in the 50s and felt that was quite satisfactory. Their parents never really comment on their proficiency in their home languages - Rosalie's mother was pleased she could at least understand some Gilbertese while Maria's parents were more concerned by the American slang she used like *gonna*, *wanna* etc.

English was a most definite requirement for employment and applications for jobs in both countries would be in English. In Tuvalu they would expect you to be fluent in one of the native languages as well, but in Samoa it would depend on the job.

9.2 FIRST INTERVIEW

The first interview with the two senior students flowed easily. Both were mature, open and co-operative. Rosalie, in particular, was very forthcoming but Maria also talked serenely and confidently on every subject raised.

9.2.1 *First Impressions of the School and their Classes*

The girls had settled into the school very easily. They said the school, the classes and the teachers were all pretty similar to the ones back in their home country although the Kiwi students were slightly noisier and the teachers more easy-going.

As to their actual subjects choices, both girls felt their studies were going well, especially Maria. She said Geography was very similar to the content studied in Samoa and the process of taking notes and having discussions was a familiar one. Rosalie felt the curriculum was a little different from what she was used to. Although the content was similar, in Fiji it had not been so specific, had not required the same depth of knowledge or understanding as in New Zealand. She was finding the first major assignment “different” but would not go so far as to say it was difficult.

Their responses to English followed the same pattern. Maria felt the approach was very similar to that in Samoa where she’d studied *Of Mice and Men*, *Macbeth* and static images. However, she was finding the poetry unit on Wilfred Owen more difficult. Rosalie found English quite different. In Fiji they had not really studied literature much. The previous year her class had done *Julius Caesar* but they hadn’t used “big terms to express stuff”. They used “everyday English” in discussions and hadn’t really looked at the play in terms of character, plot, theme, etc. The students had been encouraged to do independent study much of the time and the average essay length was 250-300 words. Bursary essays, in contrast are expected to be 600-800 words. Given all this, for her first assignment, Rosalie had still managed to get 14/20. Like Maria, she was finding the current unit on

Wilfred Owen perplexing on several fronts: she had no background in the First World War, she had only ever read Pacific poetry before and was not used to in-depth analysis. She found it hard to catch inferences and to properly understand what the poet was talking about.

Both girls were finding Statistics tricky. Rosalie confessed that she had always hated Mathematics and in New Zealand she had hit the added complication of computers. She was not used to them and found she had to work more slowly due to poor computer skills. Maria laughed at the mention of Mathematics. She said the teacher was “different” and, despite sitting in the second row, she had difficulty in hearing him due to the noisy class. He was very obliging however, and would come over to answer her questions but she still found it more difficult than the Mathematics in Samoa.

Economics was viewed enthusiastically by both girls. They liked the teacher and the textbook and found the work very similar to that covered in their previous schools. Rosalie also felt confident with her fifth subject, Accounting while Maria was enjoying History. Despite the different topics, Maria liked the teacher and felt comfortable in the class. Interestingly, at this point, neither girl felt they were being given much work and consequently felt very much on top of their studies.

This general bonhomie was shared by the teachers who, in their first interview, were unanimous in their praise of the two girls whom they saw to be mature, bright, well-motivated students and of a higher calibre of most other Pacific students. They liked the fact that the girls obviously had a good grounding in

their subjects and that they were prepared to come and ask when they did not understand. The students also could and would participate in class when called upon. There was a feeling of optimism although, as they all said, it was early days yet and few assignments had been completed at that stage. A couple of teachers wondered what their writing skills would be like in a sustained piece of work but on the whole there was a feeling that these girls were bright enough to succeed.

9.2.2 Life Outside the School

Both girls were enjoying being in New Zealand, feeling relaxed and settled. Rosalie's cousin had enjoyed living in Auckland and had told her about the New Zealand lifestyle in positive terms before she came and this had helped to introduce her to the country. Maria had been on long holidays in Australia and the United States and so had not been nervous at the thought of coming here.

While they were missing their friends and family, they were well aware of their good fortune to be here. Their friends were envious of their opportunity to come and study in New Zealand mostly because it was seen that they would be receiving a superior education but also for having such a wonderful experience, generally. While Maria and Rosalie both aimed to complete their tertiary studies in New Zealand, their friends would go on to either the University of the South Pacific or the National University of Samoa.

9.3 SECOND INTERVIEW

In the second interview both the students and teachers had a less rosy view of the girls' progress. The contrast was interesting and is presented, subject for subject in the following section.

9.3.1 *Subjects: Student and Teacher Views*

Statistics

The Students' View

This subject was quite obviously the bugbear of both girls.

“I’m getting worse,” said Rosalie.

“It’s getting harder,” said Maria.

They could not understand it and had stopped doing their homework. Maria had begun bunking. “I just don’t want to be there.” Her explanations for this were a bit confused. “I ask him (the teacher) questions but everyone’s talking - I just don’t feel like asking him anything.”

Rosalie had not missed any classes but said with a laugh, “I don’t know why not.” She described her feelings when in the classroom. “I feel like I’m really dumb. I haven’t a clue what they are talking about.” She did ask questions sometimes but worried, “If I ask, then I’m really dumb. My class is all smart, they all know... I feel like I’m the only one.”

Maria also felt that most girls in her class knew what was going on. When I asked why this might be, Rosalie explained that she has come from a different system and Maria agreed, saying the majority of the work is completely new.

Both felt that was especially hard on them coming straight into Year 13 and believed that the girls in Year 12 seemed to be coping far better. When I asked if it would have been better to put them in a Year 12 Mathematics class, they both agreed it would have been easier. They were only doing Statistics for Economics and so they only needed to scrape a pass. However, they had failed most tests up to that point in the year. Maria said with some pride, “But I always sit the test.”

Another problem they cited was that they are not used to working for tests. They only used to worry about the end of year exam. When I asked if they are working now, Rosalie said, “Not really” while Maria lifted her eye-brow and just smiled. Rosalie said, “I really stress with Stats, we have to pass.” At the same time, neither girl was really working, just worrying. They acknowledged this with a rueful laugh. They did not do their homework. They sometimes tried or asked one of the other Pacific students for help but generally, “Once you’re stuck, forget it!” Rosalie admitted candidly, “I’m stressed about Stats but I don’t do anything about it.”

The Teacher's View

Rosalie’s teacher was very fond of her, describing her as a “sweetie” and believed she could do quite well, although it was hard to be sure. She had a grasp of most of the concepts and would do well for a bit and then would go through a bad patch. However, she felt Rosalie was trying hard, coming to the tutorials and was by no means the worst in the class, contrary to Rosalie’s perception.

Maria was doing very badly in this subject. Part of this was due to lack of background but this was compounded by her lack of application and relatively high rate of absenteeism (15%). She had not attended any extra tutorials which could help her. In class, she was the only Pacific student. The teacher noted, "She tends to isolate herself. She doesn't mix in with the other kids very well - but whether this is chicken or egg, I don't know." She never asked any questions, relying on the teacher to check to see whether she understood and although the teacher admitted that Statistics is hard conceptually, he was concerned that she did not even seem to grasp the fundamentals.

One factor he thought might be inhibiting her progress was the rowdy class atmosphere. He said, "Some of these kids (namely Pacific students) are shell-shocked by the disrespect shown by some of the students. They get scared I think - it throws them. They don't thrive in this sort of atmosphere." However, in the end he felt it was her attitude that was letting her down. He said ruefully, "She never talks, never asks. She just smiles and slips away - all you are left with is that smile." Still, he was certainly not giving up on her because in the assignment which counts for internal assessment, she got 52% (the median was 75%). With a different attitude and taking advantage of all the extra help available, she could still do well, he felt.

History

The Student's View

Maria was the only Pacific student in the class. She said, "History is okay but I don't talk in class. I just don't feel like asking him a question." The teacher

would go over to check on her and she would ask him questions then. She would also sometimes ask her neighbours.

The Teacher's View

“Surprisingly good for a Pacific student - not too bad at all,” said her teacher, “but she lets herself down with her writing.” He noted she would not contribute in class. “It’s like getting blood out of a stone,” but she would approach him after class sometimes. He believed she had the intellectual skills necessary to succeed, she just struggled with the language. He explained, “It’s not grammar or vocabulary as such but transferring her thoughts with a degree of speed. The length of essays demanded in the exam (six sides) is hard for everyone, an endurance test, but it will be particularly hard for Maria. Speed, sheer speed, is the problem.” However, she did her reading, was up-to-date with everything and was very focused.

English

The Students' View

They both loved English, because of the teacher. He always “pulls them in”. “The only classes we feel free in are English and Economics. We can ask questions and aren’t shy.” They felt both the teachers and the classes were friendly in these subjects. They were passing the essays, getting marks like 14 and 16 out of 20 and were feeling secure with him.

The Teacher's View

The teacher was warm in his praise of the girls. They both contributed in class, seemed to understand everything, were always up-to-date with their assignments.

“Lovely girls,” he said, “top drawer. They don’t come much better out of the Islands, do they?”

“Will they pass at the end of the year?”

Here the teacher hesitated, unhappy to commit himself. “There is a good chance they might,” was his eventual response.

Geography

The Students' View

Both students were finding Geography difficult. In class they felt like they were coping with the work, understanding everything but then the teacher “relates it to a place in New Zealand and we are lost.” They cannot give examples because they don’t know New Zealand and often they unable to relate it back to their own country. They felt insecure about how well they were working. If they were back at home they were confident they would do well on the amount of work they were doing but in New Zealand they felt less sure. “We feel like we’re doing enough but it ends up, no we’re not.”

They felt like they were not participating much. “I don’t really talk in Geography unless I have to ask - like ‘Can I borrow a book, I left mine in the hostel’ - I feel scared to ask the teacher, I don’t know why.” Later on they talked about an incident at the beginning of the year which may have caused some of this

reticence. “She gave the class a growling. Said we were the dumbest Geography class. I thought, ‘Okay, I don’t understand.’”. Although the teacher did say that the two Pacific students were doing well, this did not reassure them. On the contrary, it made them suspicious because they didn’t feel they were and wondered why she would say this. (I did not tell them that perhaps her expectations of Pacific students might be very low, based on previous experience). So in class, they said they talked to each other mainly, or sometimes with their classmates but seldom with their teacher.

They passed their first test and while this gave them some confidence, it did not help when it came to the next test, a report. Rosalie described how she had sat down to study for it. She flipped through the pages but wasn’t sure what to read. “I’m not used to assessments.” In the test itself she discovered that she could not even understand the questions properly. “Oh my God, they used words like *phenomena*,” she wailed. Although she had problems with writing essays which she recognised, she also said that she hadn’t read some of the “stuff” and agreed when asked if some of the problems were the result of lack of preparation. Maria too, felt that lack of preparation had let her down. They also found time a problem but apparently no-one in the class had finished.

The Teacher’s View

The teacher felt that both Rosalie and Maria have a very good grasp of the concepts of Geography, especially Rosalie. She was pleased that both girls were working very hard and passing the assignments which are part of the internal assessment. They appeared to understand everything in class and had no problems

with the textbook. However, she had noticed they did take longer to process the information (even though they were doing it well) and this meant they did drop behind at times.

The teacher said the two girls always sat and worked together and were a wonderful support for one another. She felt they tended to be a bit isolated from the rest of the class, particularly Maria. Rosalie was inclined to be more friendly and was prepared to contribute in class. She was quite happy to answer questions when she was confident she knew the answer and would ask questions too - more so than almost any other Pacific student ever had in the past. Maria tended to get by with a big smile but never spoke. Rosalie was also prepared to be assertive, the teacher noted with approval. When she realised there had been an error in the teacher's marking, Rosalie sought the teacher out to discuss it, extremely politely, and ensured her mark was changed.

All in all, the teacher believed they were performing well in the class although it was not a particularly high-powered group of girls as such. Many were just skimming over the surface so Rosalie and Maria, who were putting in a lot of effort, tended to stand out more. They - Rosalie in particular - were able to understand the New Zealand environment even better than the New Zealanders who seem to be trapped in their preconceptions and prejudices. This however, was different from the girls' perceptions of the class.

The teacher was concerned about the fact that in timed essays, both girls tend to fall down - Rosalie in particular. Her writing lost its fluency, became awkward

and pedantic and while she could use the conceptual language appropriately, it was painfully slow. “The major problem is to sort out the English skills because the understanding for the subject is right there,” she said. She went on, “I would be exceedingly hopeful for them if I didn’t know they have to sit an exam at the end.”

Economics

The Students’ View

Both girls were enthusiastic, “I like Economics even though I failed the last test,” said Rosalie. They liked the teacher because they felt they could argue and discuss with her. They felt comfortable in the class but when they did not understand something, were still inclined to ask each other after class or ask one of the other girls although they were happy to ask the teacher too. Rosalie did admit that she should read her notes in the evening, as preparation for the next day’s class like “university students”, but never did. “Sometimes I wish I was one of those girls who likes reading.”

The Teacher’s View

Both girls were described as going okay but on further questioning, it turned out that they were both sitting under 50%. When asked about whether the girls participated in class the teacher said, “Rosalie has come out of her shell and is asking questions - almost asking too many questions as she, and another extremely demanding student, are a bit inclined to monopolise the time”. The teacher was obviously fond of the students but felt a bit impatient with what she

regarded as inappropriate behaviour. While it was good that Rosalie was prepared to dispute points the teacher said, “She would rather argue than just accept the answer”. Maria, on the other hand, did not speak often, and the two girls always sat together.

Both girls obviously had a background in the subject, showing evidence of prior learning, Rosalie more so than Maria, but Rosalie was also more inclined to make mistakes in interpreting the questions. When asked if this could be a result of second language problems the teacher was hesitant. The mistakes were not obviously linguistic as Kiwi students were making them too. The teacher explained, “It’s not easy to identify just where or why they lose marks. The questions are often multiple-choice with answers close together”. However, the girls did seem to finish the tests, and this was a good sign.

Accounting

The Student's View

Rosalie liked the teacher, liked the class and felt comfortable about her progress. She had asked the teacher if she could pass and the teacher had said yes, if she worked hard. I got the feeling, as we talked, that Rosalie was *not* working hard yet, but intended to!

The Teacher's View

Rosalie was obviously familiar with the concepts and keeping up well. However, at the time of our conversation, the teacher did not have her mark-book and did not want to commit herself as to whether Rosalie was passing or not. While she

was comfortable in the class and asking questions, and always up-to-date with the work, the teacher felt she might have trouble with the exam, “experiencing it on our level”. The exams are becoming more essay-oriented and this, the teacher said, may cause problems for Rosalie.

9.3.2 Teachers

In an attempt to find out what qualities and teaching styles they responded to, I asked the students what they liked about teachers and what they didn't. They liked one teacher because, “she speaks to us as if we're the same level.” They liked the fact that they could ask the teachers questions. Another teacher actively encouraged them. “He keeps reminding us to ask - no shame, he says. He'll also ask us questions.” Rosalie liked to be specifically asked in class as it made her feel more involved, more included. With some teachers she felt uncomfortable to ask questions. “I feel really low. I put myself down. I think she'll think, ‘Oh my god, she should know that’”. This was ironic because the teacher in question actually loved Rosalie, especially because she did ask questions and this helped the teacher to know how much she understood. Maria said, “I don't really have a problem with teachers” but she never spoke in class at all, a fact noted by all her teachers.

Generally they liked the more relaxed relationship between teachers and students although they did feel that the teachers could afford to be more strict.

9.3.3 Assignments and Tests

Rosalie volunteered more information here. She thought the expectations in New Zealand were higher. “Last year we just wrote the answer - we didn’t have to explain. Here we have to explain, even if they don’t say why ...I used to get really angry because I’d have the right answer (and got no marks for it) but it was good to, to learn, I suppose.” Sometimes she had difficulty in understanding the “big words” in tests and assignments and felt her writing skills let her down in Geography. Rosalie also spoke of nervousness and how this affected her in tests. “I can remember I did the exercise but I’m stuck, I’m blank. I just can’t go back and remember how to do it...It’s funny, I never felt like this in my old school. I’d say, ‘It’ll be okay’ and it really was okay.”

Maria, on the other hand, said she always understood what was required in assignments although she tended to work hardest on History and English, her favourite subjects. She did not admit to nervousness in tests, saying, “I don’t really know how I feel.” She also said she was more interested in her studies in New Zealand. “Back home I hardly did any work. Here I’m not working hard but it’s different. I feel more challenged.”

9.3.4 Life Outside School

Both girls were feeling homesick for friends and family at this stage and Maria added “freedom” to the list. However, they were still happy to be here and felt the education they were receiving was superior and that it would set them up well for their future studies. They felt as though they had matured, grown more independent and were pleased about this. “It makes me feel good, like an adult.”

Having said this, they both admitted to feelings of depression and lack of direction at times.

“I can’t even think straight,” said Rosalie.

“Sort of,” said Maria, who went on to say that when she had a problem, she wished she had someone to talk to. She also admitting to feeling very angry with other people but would not elaborate on the details.

9.4 THE THIRD INTERVIEW

The girls were in high spirits for their third interview as they had just finished their last examination an hour before. They were very open about their preparation for the examinations and how they felt they had gone in them.

9.4.1 *Classes*

Generally they seemed happy with how their classes were progressing - except for Mathematics. Maria had virtually stopped attending the Statistics classes and never went to tutorials. Rosalie said she was talking more now that she knew her class-mates better. Maria still wasn’t talking much. “I don’t feel like talking. Sometimes I just like being quiet.” She added, “But I am talkative and quite naughty in the hostel.” Both agreed that if there were more Pacific students in the class, they would probably be much noisier.

9.4.2 *Examinations*

Both girls began revision the week before the exams. Rosalie tried to work equally for all her subjects and became very stressed by the volume of work. She did not really know how to study. “I just flipped over the pages for my eyes to

see". When asked if she had been distracted from her studies at all she said, "Oh my god, yes. I used to sleep, day-dream. Thoughts kept coming into my head and I'd say, 'Get out of my mind'". She also couldn't help watching television. The programme would finish and then it would be time for bed so she couldn't do any more study. "But it's okay, our Economics teacher is going to ask Matron if we can go to bed later so we can study more," she said cheerfully unaware of any irony in the situation. Maria concentrated her efforts on Geography and History, summarising the notes but she too found it hard to focus, falling asleep a lot.

The girls did have some tutorials but on the whole, did not find these particularly useful. Often they simply got the same lesson for a second time, even though they may have understood most of the information the first time around. They would have preferred to choose the material to be covered with the teacher, as a consultative process, before the actual tutorial and then have time to prepare. They wanted tutorials to target their weaknesses more. Thus, in English for example, they knew the characters, theme, setting etc. for the novel but were often confused as to which quotes to use in the different essays.

Rosalie's stress levels rose over this time, especially because the New Zealand examination system was new to her. Her mind went blank in a few examinations which annoyed her intensely. Maria said she never suffered from nervousness. On the whole they found the questions asked in the examinations much as they had expected but and recognised that with harder work, they could have done better. Rosalie said, "The questions were fine, it's just me. I didn't study for them." Both found Statistics very difficult. Rosalie did not finish any of her

examinations even though she wrote frantically. Maria did not finish Statistics or Geography but felt reasonably confident about the latter. In fact, she did not seem unduly worried by any of the examinations although she did think that maybe her essays were a bit short in History.

The examinations had left the girls with a determination to work harder for Bursary. “Next time I’m not going to do stupid things any more. Bursary freaks me out,” said Rosalie. However, both girls also felt they stood a good chance of passing. They had been told the mid-year examinations were harder than the Bursary exams and these had not shattered their confidence.

9.4.3 The Hostel

Both girls had had enough of the hostel.

“I could do another year if I really had to,” said Rosalie.

“I couldn’t,” said Maria adamantly.

They loved the warm support and friendships they had made with the other Pacific students. “If you’re lonely, if you don’t have someone of your kind, you can go and find them.” But they admitted they distracted each other terribly from their studies. “You can’t tell them to go away, it’s custom.” They had not really made any friends outside the hostel and had few Kiwi friends, lacking any common ground with them. Part of this was because it was not easy to mix after school but they also felt very different culturally. “There’s heaps of things we don’t have in common.” Asked for examples, they replied. “Kiwis talk about their boyfriends twenty-four hours a day.” They also said that Kiwis talk

nonsense but then admitted, “When we talk in the hostel, we talk nonsense too.” I got the impression it was a *different* kind of nonsense, however.

They also felt some of the matrons were “mean” towards the Islanders, picking on them. “They think we may do something really stupid” “I think they don’t want to be responsible for us if something happens”.

9.4.4 Cultural Identity

The girls had loved being involved in the Island Night concert, especially because of the contact with the boys at the neighbouring school. They also enjoyed the chance to showcase their cultures.

“We feel proud. We want to show our traditions and they (New Zealanders) are so amazed.”

“It makes you feel they appreciate your culture”.

“You get lots of compliments”.

They felt that their cultures were generally ignored and that the Kiwis were remarkably ignorant about all things Pacific.

Since living in New Zealand Maria had experienced a new interest and pride in her country. In Samoa she had never given it much thought and had shied away from cultural events but in New Zealand she realised how out of touch with some of the traditions she was and wished to rectify this. At the same time, she wanted a growing culture, feeling it important to move with the times. For example, she stated that if she wanted to achieve something and custom prevented her, she would have no compunction in breaking with tradition.

Rosalie who had always been proud of her Tuvalu roots, had come to question some aspects of her culture. She felt Kiwis were more up-front about how they feel and think and valued this, as well as the freedom young couples have to live together before marriage. It seemed to her a sensible way to go, especially as she did not like the shot-gun marriages back home. If her parents allowed her, she hoped to live with her prospective husband first to get to know him properly before making a lasting commitment.

9.4.5 Education in New Zealand

Both girls were still happy to be here and felt the education they were receiving was superior and that it would set them up well for their future studies. Both had changed their goals. Rosalie had shifted slightly from wanting to do a Bachelor of Commerce to Business Studies but was worried about entrance requirements. Maria too, wanted to do Business Studies instead of Law.

9.5 THE FINAL INTERVIEW

The Bursary examinations were not easy and both girls, but Rosalie especially, suffered from the time constraints. She did not finish any of her examinations although she nearly did with Economics “but I don’t know whether my answers are right or wrong,” she said. Maria attempted all questions but found there were some she did not know how to do. Neither found the questions themselves difficult but Maria felt she hadn’t prepared sufficiently for the examination. The questions in the English examination were mostly “okay” although Section A, which deviated a little from the format they had been prepared for, threw them

both. Maria nearly finished the paper but Rosalie did not do much of her final essay. Neither girl finished the Geography paper and while they did not find it hard, they did not feel they had studied hard enough to do well. Maria finished her History examination but said there were some horrible surprises and she forgot the events, again blaming this on lack of preparation. Rosalie almost completed her Accounting examination but found that she had “studied the stuff that mostly didn’t come up.” As for the dreaded Statistics examination, both girls burst into laughter.

“I totally didn’t finish,” said Rosalie

“Same,” said Maria. “It was *hard*.”

They had only started studying a week before the examination and wished they had started earlier. They both got distracted in the hostel although Maria admitted this only happened, “if I joined them.”

“Did you join them often?”

“Yep.”

When asked for advice for incoming students, both would caution against wasting time, balancing everything and getting homework done. Work in New Zealand needs more time than back home, they felt. Rosalie also felt it important to get to know Kiwis earlier in the year “to get help with school work and to talk to them about how things go.” To do this, she felt the Pacific students needed to make a big effort and participate in everything. Maria said with a laugh that they shouldn’t bunk!

Their advice to the school was to begin tutorials in the second term and focus on the problem of writing quickly.

“We only found out how fast you need to be able to write essays in the exam and it was too late by then.”

They left school with the hope that Maria would be able to do Business Studies at Massey University or, failing that, Management School at Waikato University while Rosalie intended to go to the University of the South Pacific to study Business.

EXAMINATION RESULTS

Year 11

Joanne:	English	39%
	French	35%
	Home Economics	41%
	Mathematics	23%

Agnes:	Art	75%
	Economics	43%
	English	65%
	Mathematics	44%
	Applied Science	61%

Year 12

Catherine:	Chemistry	4
	English	5
	History	5
	Mathematics	3
	Physics	5

Louise:	SC English	34%
	SC Typing	40%
	Various Unit Standards	

Year 13

Rosalie:	Accounting	46%
	Economics	46%
	English	38%
	Geography	43%
	Statistics	41%

Maria:	Economics	47%
	English	50%
	Geography	35%
	History	46%
	Statistics	25%

Chapter Ten

LANGUAGE FACTORS

10.1 LANGUAGE USE IN THE PACIFIC NATIONS

Saunders (1991) believes it is important to see how L1 is viewed in relation to L2 because the relative value placed on these languages affects the proficiency gained in them. In the Pacific Nations, native languages, Pidgin and English are all used in different arenas and it is interesting to look at the girls' language usage which was most specific.

None of the girls interviewed grew up with English as their first language as such, although four of them cannot remember a time when they didn't speak it. Rosalie and Maria began learning English when they started school but even they had had some exposure to it prior to this. Rosalie could understand some English having picked it up from listening to visitors and Maria knew a few stock phrases. All the girls are extremely comfortable in English but are very specific about when and where to use it. On the whole, all the girls saw Pidgin (or the vernacular) as the language most commonly used in family and social situations and it is the language they are most comfortable with. They all agreed that if they were telling a humorous story, they would use Pidgin. Rosalie said, "It really goes with what you want to say." Joanne felt it made the story more interesting while Agnes explained, "We have our own humour in Pidgin and when you change to English, it's not the same." Emotionally charged subjects such as describing a funeral would also be discussed in Pidgin. "Everything comes out when we talk in

Pidgin. We have to think of the words in English.” Yet interestingly, they said that generally they thought and dreamed in English.

As to their native languages, none of the girls claimed proficiency although they could all get by in their parents’ first language. At school they were happy to scrape passes in their first languages. Even Maria never passed Samoan but was entirely unperturbed by the fact, as were her parents. They were far more concerned with the predominance of American slang littering her English than with her failure to master Samoan. A few of the parents were a little concerned by the lack of fluency displayed by their daughters but it was not a major issue and only two girls, Joanne and Agnes, mentioned any regret over this, saying they felt a bit sad to think their children might never learn their native language at all.

Although none of the girls had much English when they started school, they have been educated solely in this language all their lives. Many of their teachers were American, British or even Japanese and this tended to reinforce the use of English in the classroom. In the playgrounds however, Pidgin tended to predominate unless there were international students involved, in which case English was used.

None of the girls could claim to be truly literate in any language other than English. While familiar with the conversational vernaculars of their native languages, they are not conversant with the more formal constructions and would find it very difficult to read or write. Pidgin is not used either, not even casually in notes, privately in diaries or evocatively in poetry. “English is deeper. In Pidgin you have to use heaps of words”. Perhaps this also a natural consequence

of the lack of exposure to literature in Pacific languages. However, their instinctive preference for expressing themselves on important or emotive subjects in Pidgin must affect their placement on the poetic and expressive strands employed in both primary and secondary schools to assess performance in written English.

10.2 INTERDEPENDENCE, BICS and CALP

Cummins (1991) believes that the proficiency and level of literacy attained in L1 will have a large influence on the proficiency and level of literacy attained in L2. Factors further influencing true proficiency in L2 are AOA (age on arrival) and LOR (length of residence). Of course, these girls were not immigrants when they began their studies in English but because it is their second or third language, it is interesting to apply the general principles to their situation.

The subjects of this study are, without exception, highly proficient in BICS. Their listening is at near-native levels although some of them have mentioned the speed at which New Zealanders tend to speak as being a difficult factor to contend with in classroom situations. They speak clearly and in social contexts I believe it would be hard to distinguish them from native English speakers, save for the accent and a few odd grammatical constructions. So comfortable are they with English that their mainstream teachers seldom include language as being a possible inhibitor of performance apart from identifying some problems with writing. Generally, they tend to attribute poor performance to lack of content knowledge or cultural background, a cultural *laissez-faire* attitude or an individual

lack of ability. However, these girls did not display the same ease with CALP, this showing up especially in their reading and writing.

10.3 READING

As the year progressed, I became increasingly interested in the role of reading, and believe the relationship between L1 and L2 usage and literacy warrants further investigation. The limited range of reading materials in Pidgin and various vernaculars narrows the girls almost exclusively into English language literacy. Yet much of the material available to them in English is of little relevance. One teacher from the Solomon Islands (Appendix IV) described the library at his school as a small room filled with books describing life in America or Britain, a far cry from the students' experiences. On their weekly visits to the library, many tended to gather around the newspaper as this at least had some bearing on their lives. The girls interviewed had differing views on reading. Catherine, the most academically successful of the group was a self-proclaimed bookworm. Agnes and Joanne both enjoyed reading while the others did not like it, despite having been encouraged from an early age back home.

There are numerous indications that Pacific students experience difficulties with reading. It has been the experience of the English teachers in our school that the Pacific students often fall down in the reading section of the School Certificate English examination. It was the opinion of two teachers that while they understand the main issues of the texts, they are often caught out by red herrings set to catch the unwary reader. In these cases, inferences need to be drawn or a deeper meaning needs to be unearthed. A surface reading is simply not sufficient.

This could show the Pacific students have difficulty in fully interpreting a text or it could indicate a lack of “test-wiseness” (Edelsky as cited in Martin-Jones & Roumaine, 1986). While the causes of this are not yet clear, Bailey (1998) in her research on Pacific students and the School Certificate English examination always recommends they leave it till last as they get often become bogged down and disheartened if they do it at the beginning.

In class too, the students experience difficulties at times. Louise found the heavy reading load in Tourism trying. In Year 11 Economics, the teacher noticed how the Pacific students would struggle with the reading, “they often just don’t understand the words - not just the terms, but fairly basic English words. It’s a phrase thing.” Part of the problem might well be due to a more restricted vocabulary than one might expect from students as fluent as these. Rosalie, when talking of literature studies, said in Fiji they used “everyday English” to discuss the works, not “big words like here”. Of course, one of the most effective methods of extending vocabulary is by reading widely, an activity many did not enjoy. It is also very possible that teachers in the Pacific Nations have become used to employing a more restricted vocabulary to compensate for the students operating in a second language or because of their own limited language proficiency, if they are not native English speakers.

These problems added to the students’ difficulties in assignments and tests when they struggled to understand what the question was in fact asking. Agnes and Joanne both fell down in Mathematics because, as the Mathematics teacher explained, “every question is put in a context which is completely irrelevant and

just confuses the students.” The Mathematics paper might be hard for everyone but for students with English as a second language it becomes extremely tough. Louise, on several occasions referred to problems in understanding what the question was asking. Often she would not understand the words themselves but once she had had them explained, she would realise that she did in fact know answer. Rosalie echoed this sentiment when talking about one Geography test where they used words like *phenomena*. Most of the girls also spoke of getting an assignment, thinking they understood it but, when beginning work on it, found it far more difficult than they expected and that they were not sure what was required - this last, of course, may well be the experience of many Kiwi students as well.

Yet the students are often reluctant to admit to having problems. It was only after I had told Rosalie and Maria that I hadn't enjoyed Jane Austen when I'd been at school that they laughed and confessed to not following the book at all.

“When the others start to laugh, I don't know why,” said Rosalie.

“I read the same page over and over and don't know what the words are saying,” said Maria.

The Year 11 girls were offered structured readers for their novel study. They found this embarrassing initially but the envy of some of the Kiwi girls in their class helped to allay these worries.

10.4 Writing

While they are verbally very competent, Pacific students lose marks when they have to write - a trend noted by Starfield (1994) among the Black students in

South Africa. One English teacher made the following comments about a group of Year 11 Pacific students:

They tend to use sentences which are too long; the first half doesn't relate to the second half. It seems as though they think long sentences are 'good' so they bumble on, saying the same thing in a different way. But the Pacific students lose track of arguments in their essays. I'd love to know Pidgin English - is that what they speak? I don't know but I think sometimes I can see traces of it.

They use lots of words where one will suffice. When asked if this was a vocabulary deficiency she thought it might be because they tend to use simple words. The teacher who had worked in the Solomon Islands (Appendix IV) thought their verbosity may be related to language issues as Pidgin often required a number of words to express a concept which could be dealt with far more economically in English. Agnes had mentioned verbosity in Pidgin as a reason for not using Pidgin in poetry.

Problems were further compounded by the fact that the girls had never been exposed to the same kind of writing that is required in New Zealand's senior classes. Essays were not written as frequently in their previous schools and were generally expected to be far shorter. Again, this may be due to the teachers compensating for the difficulties faced by second language learners. However, it becomes imperative that students on arrival to New Zealand are exposed to a number of model essays so that they can begin to understand the level expected of them. Even Maria and Rosalie, who coped reasonably well with essays during the

year, had difficulties. After completing one essay, they were told to underline the main ideas. "Oh my god," Maria cried after a few minutes, "I've only got one!". Her essay was one and a half pages long.

10.5 TIME CONSTRAINTS

Problems with reading and writing become exacerbated when time constraints are added. In class, girls sometimes fell behind (Year 13 Geography, Year 11 Economics) and in exams they were often hard-pushed to finish (Year 13 Geography and Economics, Year 11 Mathematics, English and Economics). This was noticed by a number of teachers, some of whom sought to explain it.

Maria's History teacher said, "It's not grammar or vocabulary as such but the transferring of her thoughts with a degree of speed. Speed, sheer speed is the problem." The Geography teacher felt, "The main problem is to sort out the English skills because the understanding of the subject is right there." The Economics teacher noted, "The problem with the Pacific girls - although they do is very graciously - is that they are on Island time."

Time constraints in examinations were seen as a major disadvantage for the Pacific students in a number of subjects but especially commented on by the teachers of English, History, Geography and Economics.

10.6 HIGHER COGNITIVE AND ANALYTICAL SKILLS

All the girls in this study felt that they were studying at a higher level in New Zealand. They felt they went into more depth in subjects and assignments and

examinations were far more challenging than the ones they had faced in their previous schools. Essays were longer, the vocabulary more difficult and greater analysis and discussion expected. For example, Rosalie was initially incensed when she discovered in Economics it was not enough to get the right answer, an explanation of how she produced it was required too.

It is impossible from this study to make any informed comment about education in the Pacific Nations but, from the girls' comments, it could be inferred that the demands on student performance are far greater in New Zealand. Lameta (1998) points out that when students are learning in a second language, they cannot learn subjects to the same depth as their peers learning in a first language. Further, she points out that the valuable cognitive and analytical skills which should be developed at an early age, may be neglected as students operating in a second language have neither the time nor the language proficiency for these. Starfield's findings in South Africa (1994) support Lameta's arguments. This may very well help to explain the gap in expectations of performance that the girls perceived. It could also account for why students like Rosalie and Maria initially felt comfortable in class, as they were oblivious of the academic performance that was expected of them and why Louise and Catherine began their second year with some apprehension, once they were aware of how different New Zealand expectations could be.

10.7 PRACTICAL SUBJECTS

The AIMHI Report (1996) recommended that Pacific students should avoid high content subjects and opt for more practical subjects instead such as Art, Music, Workshop etc. Several of the students did enrol in practical subjects.

Agnes was the only Pacific student enrolled in Art and this was against her parents' wishes as they wanted her to do "useful" subjects such as Accounting. Although language factors in this subject were not an issue, her approach to the subject and the skills she brought to the class were, and these are discussed more fully in Chapter Eleven, section 11.1.5. Still, she passed well with 75%, her highest grade out of all her subjects.

Joanne was the only student to enrol in Home Economics and said the assignments in this subject were the most enjoyable - I got the feeling they were the least stressful and Joanne was clear about what she was doing as it was very similar to Home Economics in Vanuatu. However, in the end, she got 41% for School Certificate, her examination results bringing down her internally assessed grades.

Louise, who struggled in English and Tourism, coped extremely well with computers. Joanne enrolled in computers for the first time and the teacher was pleased with her progress, saying she easily kept up with the class. Possibly one reason why they could do well in this subject is that when errors occur it is immediately apparent and they are compelled to seek help as they cannot continue until the error has been rectified.

10.8 CONCLUSION

Language factors have certainly played a major role in the girls' struggle to come to terms with the New Zealand system. All experienced difficulty in the reading of texts, assignments and examinations. A more restricted vocabulary seems to be one of the contributing problems to this. Their essays skills were also found to be less advanced than those of many of their New Zealand counterparts and problems with both reading and writing were further exacerbated when time constraints were introduced.

These difficulties may well be assigned to the fact that the girls are not particularly literate in their first languages and that all of their schooling has taken place in their second language. It is possible that these factors influenced the ways their teachers presented information to them in their previous schools and in the comparatively short or regurgitative assignments they were used to. It would appear that not only are the girls not used to the depth of knowledge required, they are not prepared for the analysis of information that is expected of them either. It may well be that there has been less emphasis on higher cognitive and critical skills in their schools at home due to the constraints of learning content in a second language.

Chapter Eleven

SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS

11.1. AT SCHOOL

11.1.1 Classroom Behaviour

As has been well documented both in this research and in past studies, the greatest shock to Pacific students is the behaviour of their New Zealand classmates. They are appalled by both the noise levels and the lack of respect tolerated in the classroom. Coming from backgrounds where discipline is firmly maintained both at home and at school, the Pacific students feel the teachers here are far too lenient and that sterner rules and punishments should be enforced. As an aside, I must add that several teachers (from Britain and New Zealand) on our staff who had taught in the Pacific were inclined to agree. A balance between the two systems, they believe, would result in happier outcomes all round.

Yet the quiet behaviour of the Pacific students is not only due to cultural differences. Most of them admitted that in New Zealand they were far quieter than they had been in their previous schools. The only two girls who said their behaviour had not changed were those who had always been very quiet to begin with. This reticence in New Zealand classes is a result of feeling a minority for the first time in their lives. All agreed they would be far more outgoing if there were another eight or ten Pacific students in their classes. Their jubilant behaviour back at the hostel bears this assertion out. Unlike other new students to the school who are reserved for the first few months perhaps and then relax into their normal

behaviour, the Pacific students can feel inhibited well into their second year and beyond. Another cause for their inhibitions is that their self-image comes under attack. Used to being at the top of their classes and floating through the work back home, they find it a new and uncomfortable experience to be at the lower end of the class, failing tests and exams sometimes for the first time in their lives. They feel intimidated by the competence they see in the New Zealand students around them who, with minimum effort it sometimes seems, take the work comfortably in their stride. Their very quiet behaviour is not all negative however. Maria said, "I quite like being quiet" while Catherine said, "It helps you get on with your work."

Teachers themselves generally appreciate the quiet respect they receive from the Pacific students and are fond of these well-behaved, smiling girls. However, the teachers identify two sources of frustration with them: the girls' reticence and the slowness with which they work in class.

11.1.2 Questions

In New Zealand, the expectation is that if students don't understand, they ask. In the Pacific, students do not like to ask questions as this will lay them open to teasing and ridicule. The fear of seeming to be stupid holds many students back. Thus a lot of what Pacific students see as "noise" is really the cut and thrust of classroom discussion where a teacher parries questions and challenges. These exchanges are seen by both students and teachers as essential to the learning process.

In contrast, a VSO teacher wrote in his report of his experiences of teaching in the Pacific:

The pupils can be very subdued in class and need a lot of encouraging to participate in class activities. This is not through lack of enthusiasm but is partly shyness and also due to their previous experience of lessons in the majority of which they are expected to learn in an unquestioning, passive fashion. Once their confidence is won, the students are responsive and very willing to try something new.

(Appendix IV).

The Pacific girls in the Jones' (1991) study actively influenced the teachers' styles of teaching. Perfectly behaved when copying notes down or answering factual questions, they became inattentive and silent if a teacher tried to engage them in discussion. The Pacific students in my study, however, did see the value of asking questions but were inhibited not only by the lack of habit behind them but also the worry of being seen as "dumb" by their teachers and classmates. Rosalie and Louise feared holding up the class for something that everyone else might know. They also found it painfully difficult to compete against the more vocal New Zealanders. Catherine spoke of the "hassle" of getting the teacher's attention and said it was easier in the end to just let the Kiwis ask the questions. Louise was frustrated in her attempts as sometimes her question was lost in the general clamour and she lacked the confidence to try again in a louder voice.

Teachers can become irritated by what they see as lack of participation. "It's like blood from a stone," said one. "She never asks for help, I always have to go to

her,” said another. Teachers did try to make a special point of going over to check on the students’ progress but this does require more thought and effort on their behalf. One of the reasons Rosalie was so popular with all her teachers was because she would ask questions and attempt to answer others. She fitted with their view of a bright, motivated student. It must be remembered that she came from a school which, in Fiji, had been considered extremely noisy by the rest of the community. Students like Maria, Joanne and Louise would approach the teacher after class and the teachers were quite happy with that but when they asked questions in class, the teachers were delighted. Catherine’s confidence developed to such an extent in her second year that she even dared challenge the Chemistry teacher several times. The teacher was thrilled. “She would never say ‘boo’ last year.”

Thus to be viewed truly favourably by teachers, Pacific students must fit into the cultural norm of asking questions. This signals to the teacher that the students are engaged, interested, motivated and integrated with rest of the class. While teachers know the Pacific students are reticent about asking questions, I still felt it did tarnish their view of the students. They were seen to be passive and isolated - a fact enhanced by the preference of the students to sit either to one side or at the back of the classroom.

11.1.3 Speed

As noted by Jones (1991), Pacific students see real work as copying notes down from the blackboard. Coming mostly from chalk and talk backgrounds, not surprisingly, our students were happiest in this activity. Their painstaking efforts

at neatness, however, are not appreciated by teachers if it affects their speed. One teacher said, “Frankly, it would be better if she’d just scratch it down.” While language may certainly be a factor in their slowness, it is more than that. I have watched students copy notes down exquisitely, using different coloured pens; picking one up, uncapping, writing a few words, capping and then thoughtfully deciding on the next colour.

11.1.4 Group Work

The Pacific students value having each other in class. They always sit together when possible and both teachers and students comment on the help and support they give each other. As a rule they prefer to work alone or in pairs, several like Catherine and Josephine (Appendix V), expressing an active dislike for group work. They especially did not like to work in groups without another Pacific student there for support. It left them feeling inhibited and awkward. “They are...different,” Louise explained.

11.1.5 The Curriculum

Overcoming differences in both content and teaching styles in school subjects is a real challenge for newly arrived Pacific students. One teacher from the Pacific, described the education there as he saw it.

There is a twenty year lag. It’s still heavily chalk and talk. Students are used to right/wrong answers and answers that fit the question. They learn

by rote for tests and are rarely called upon to understand what they are taught. They have no idea of rationalising, of explaining, of discussing. They are not taught to question, investigate, form opinions, *think*.

(Appendix IV)

This last sentence has resonance with Starfield's (1994) study of Black education in South Africa. She found that rote learning was employed because it was the simplest way to teach content in a second language, that the students simply did not have enough English to be pushed into more abstract realms. A report by another VSO teacher would seem to support this:

For all students then, secondary education, which is through the medium of English, a third language for most of them, undoubtedly causing learning difficulties additional to those demanded by the syllabus.

(Appendix IV)

Collier (1987) found that while it took two to three years to gain sufficient English to master Mathematics, Social Science subjects often required five to seven years of English. This may help to explain why many of the Pacific students find the Mathematics, especially up to Year 11, in New Zealand similar to that back in their home countries. It may also account for problems they have in subjects such as Economics and Geography where they groped to explain their difficulties. Although much of the material is similar, in New Zealand they felt they went "deeper". Rosalie was also not used to justifying her answers and was outraged initially to have her correct answers awarded no marks because she had not explained them.

Catherine's History examination was likewise interesting. A bright student with an excellent command of English, she only got 48% whereas her teacher had expected her to get a good 5-10% more. A closer look at her paper revealed that while she answered the factual sections of the examination well ("she has excellent recall"), she had lost marks on the evaluative sections where her own opinions and interpretations were sought. Her essays were likewise thin, outlining the important events but not fully accounting for their impact on the societies.

The Pacific students' approach to their Year 11 research also becomes clearer. While very experienced at regurgitating copious quantities of information on given topics, they had never taken charge of their research as such, before. The concept of targeting specific areas of interest in the form of key questions was new to them and it was difficult for the teachers to ensure they did not simply disregard them as an irrelevant aside.

While our Pacific students are fortunate enough to come from private schools, still the facilities in our New Zealand government school are better, according to the students. The science laboratories here are extraordinarily well-equipped in comparison and this may help to account for why the Science teachers say the New Zealand students have better practical skills. The lack of computers in the Pacific schools can cause problems in a number of subjects. Rosalie found her painfully slow computer skills added yet another obstacle to be overcome in Statistics. Our large libraries with their range of resources are quite outside the experience of most Pacific students yet teachers expect students to use a variety of sources in assignments these days. Maria admitted part of her problem in

Geography was that she had not sought out a wide range of reference material from the Internet, newspapers etc. The English teacher had to personally take her Year 11 girls to the library and guide them through the Internet. "I'm scared I'll spoil the computer," said Agnes.

All subjects are different from the girls' previous experiences. Even Art is different in New Zealand. The girls must follow a programme rather than "create" on their own. Agnes is a talented student but still her skills were not as developed as her classmates. The "twenty year lag" may also explain why her art teacher fancied her work had a "60's feel".

11.2. THE HOSTEL

The girls' love/hate relationship with the hostel might be a microcosm of their general culture shock, although New Zealanders themselves can be ambivalent about boarding school life. Without doubt, the girls did feel the pressure of living with so many rules and regulations, made to seem even more petty, perhaps, seen through a cultural filter which saw the "fuss" about uniforms, and shoes on for mealtimes quite unnecessary. A number of them missed their "freedom" as well as the comfort and support of home life.

At the same time, the hostel provided an escape from being always a minority. In the hostel altogether, they formed close friendships and as a group were able to relax. Students like Maria and Catherine shed their quiet demeanour in classes to talk and "be naughty" within the sanctuary of the hostel walls. The value of prep-time and the freedom from household chores was appreciated.

11.3 CULTURAL IDENTITY

Because only a few girls come from each of a number of different Pacific nations, they tend to negate national and ethnic differences, seeing themselves as “the Islanders”. They learn each others’ customs and languages and the value of this can be seen at their annual concert, “Island Night”. As there are so few from each country, they all take part in the various items: thus Fijians sing Samoan songs and girls from Tuvalu perform Kiribati dances.

The Island Night concert is seen unreservedly as an important event. As a minority group isolated in a provincial town, it is the girls’ one big opportunity to make a statement about who they are, what they are like. The audience reactions are always very warm and it goes a long way to foster good relationships between all the ethnic groups.

As must happen, the girls do re-evaluate their cultural roots while in New Zealand. Some like Agnes and Maria, discover a new interest and pride in their culture. Having been exposed to the primarily Pakeha New Zealand culture, others find their sense of national pride is strengthened. Joanne learned to value the quiet respect shown in Vanuatu. Others learn to question some previously held beliefs and customs. Several girls were interested in and attracted to the freedom of de facto relationships. Agnes questioned the cronyism in the Solomons. Louise and Catherine could see no future in returning to Papua New Guinea. Thus, as always, travel both confirms some aspects of cultural beliefs and opens others up to scrutiny. The really interesting question is to know how

these bright, ambitious girls will settle back with their societies after being abroad a number of years.

11.4 CONCLUSION

Without doubt, all the girls suffer from culture shock on their arrival in New Zealand. This becomes particularly poignant in the classroom where the very different codes of behaviour leave the girls shocked. This, combined with the fact that often for the first time in their lives, they are part of a minority group, tends to leave the girls even more inhibited than they usually are. Adjusting to new styles of teaching also take some time and the students shrink from common practices such as group work. Feelings of estrangement and shyness are mitigated, however, if there are several Pacific students in the class as they provide valuable support for each other.

While teachers appreciate their courtesy, there is also a feeling that the girls are too quiet, too passive. They do not fit the teachers' perception of active, engaged students. Problems are often further compounded by the fact that school facilities that New Zealanders take for granted, might be new to the students who need extra help to use them effectively.

Some of the effects of culture shock are lessened by the fact that the girls live together in a hostel and the warmth with which Island Night is regarded by the community at large.

Chapter Twelve

AFFECTIVE FACTORS

12.1 MOTIVATION

With only one exception, the subjects of this study were all motivated students, well-used to success in their own countries. All of them came to New Zealand to seize the chance of what they saw to be a better education. Even Louise and Catherine, who were not particularly keen to come to New Zealand, saw it to be an excellent educational opportunity. Louise was sent to New Zealand in order to improve her attitude towards study. It does not appear that she was very motivated during her first year except in the subjects she enjoyed like Computers but in her second year she was very keen to do well and made a determined effort in all areas.

All the girls, I believe, combine instrumental and integrative motivation which is seen to be most successful for minority groups. They are primarily motivated to do well in their studies because all are clear about their career choices and tertiary study is essential to achieve them. But they have also enjoyed the experience of living in New Zealand, despite their homesickness, and over time they have felt more and more comfortable and integrated within the society. Gardner and Lambert (1972) say that finding "a comfortable place in two cultures" is the ideal for bilinguals. The secure "Islander" group identity they have at the hostel combined with events like Island Night, help the students maintain their own

cultural identity while being able to enjoy and take on aspects of the New Zealand culture that appeal.

However, motivation can also be broken down into more specific areas. The girls can be extremely motivated in some subjects but not others. Of course, this is typical of all students. Still, it is interesting to discover, if possible, the triggers and obstacles for motivation for the Pacific students. Perhaps by understanding these better, teachers can maintain a positive attitude towards their subjects.

The Yerkes-Dodson Law (Gaudry, 1971) states that difficulty stimulates the students to strive until it reaches a certain point whereupon it becomes "too difficult" and the students' motivation falls away. The case of the Year 13 girls and Statistics makes for an interesting comparison. While both girls found the subject extremely challenging, they responded in different ways. Rosalie was very frank in admitting that while she was prepared to try, as soon as a section got too hard, she gave up. "Once you're stuck, forget it." Yet she did in fact persevere, sometimes going to other girls for help and asking questions in class. She also went to extra tutorials even though all the time she felt it was a hopeless case. She did not know why she didn't just give up, miss classes etc. Her self-esteem in the class was very low. She felt she was the only one who did not understand, that everyone else was really smart.

Maria was less forthcoming about her anxieties. She too felt most of the class understood the work better than her. She began missing class although she found it hard to explain why. "I just don't want to be there." When asked how she felt

when bunking, she said, "I just put it out of my mind." According to her, the bunking was never pre-meditated but when the bell rang for class she would decide, "I don't really feel like going today." Maria was the only Pacific student in her class and was very isolated from her other classmates. She didn't like asking the teacher questions and didn't feel she could ask the Pacific girls in the other class because they were not always at the same place or doing the same exercises. She went to one tutorial but the teacher was late so she never bothered going again. She also missed a couple of assignments vital for internal assessment. Several teachers and deans spoke to her about her attendance and she would smile and nod but still continued to bunk. Because she never really explained how she felt and where the problems lay, it was extremely difficult to help her. Yet in other subjects such as English and History, she was a very good student.

Rosalie and Maria were very well-matched in all their subjects, generally only 5% separating them throughout the year, Statistics being the only exception, where Rosalie was ahead by more than 20% in both examinations. There are several possible explanations for these differences in attitude and success. Firstly they were in different classes and Maria was very isolated in hers. Even though Rosalie sat alone, she had Pacific students in front of her and behind. They could discuss the work afterwards in the hostel. They accompanied each other to the tutorials. The second difference was in the way the two students talked about their difficulties. Rosalie saw the fault as all hers. "I'm getting worse." She blamed herself for not working harder. She asked questions even though she quailed at showing how "dumb" she was. She confessed to enormous stress about

the subject but at the same time, said she was not working hard enough. Her teacher, on the other hand thought she was working hard, was up-to-date in her assignments and, although having difficulty in some areas, on the whole not doing too badly.

Maria was far more reserved in her comments. She merely smiled and raised an eyebrow when asked if she was working. She saw Statistics as "getting harder". Because she never participated in class, indeed didn't even attend a good many lessons, her teacher was not aware of how able she really was until marking her examination.

Affective motives are extremely hard to assess without in-depth testing. So, while it would appear that although both girls struggled, Rosalie achieved far higher results through greater motivation and taking more responsibility for her learning, yet I am loath to see the situation in purely motivational terms. For one thing, I feel that the support of having other Pacific students in her class must not be minimised. Then there is the fact that Rosalie was nearly two years older than Maria and was used to living away from home. Perhaps the greater maturity lent her more focus and determination. There is also one other factor which perhaps should be noted. Joanne, the only other Pacific student doing badly in Mathematics, shared the same teacher as Maria. Although a very caring, committed teacher who gave up much of his own time for extra tutorials and whose results for his Kiwi students certainly equalled the rest of the teachers in his department, he speaks extremely fast. Perhaps it was the sheer speed of delivery which added to the Pacific students' sense of confusion. They may not

even recognise it as a language problem, coping so much better in all their other subjects.

12.2 ANXIETY

Considerable research into the effects of anxiety in second language learning per se have been conducted (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991; Mak, 1996; Scovel, 1978; Steinberg and Horwitz, 1986). The Pacific students of this study are extremely fluent and confident in their use of English (especially in BICS) and thus many of the findings are not directly related to them. However, they do experience anxiety in some subjects such as Economics where they encounter many new terms or in other supposedly familiar subjects like Geography where unfamiliar words faze them. They also experience more general anxiety both about their studies and, to some extent, their lives in New Zealand as a whole and by generalising the notions of anxiety, it might be possible to have greater insight into its causes and manifestations in the lives of the subjects of this study.

Anxiety is not generally a word teachers associate with the Pacific students because they always appear to be relaxed and smiling, yet the students admit to experiencing it. In the interviews I began to wonder if Palagi teachers are simply not tuned into picking up the cues as we are with New Zealand students. For example, all the girls in the interview were subject to situational anxiety, not surprisingly for examinations or tests, but also when confronted with new experiences like Catherine's worry about the Science Fair and Agnes's avoidance of the Internet. Their behaviour in the hostel when studying for examinations typifies avoidance strategies. These examples of anxiety are most certainly not

restricted to Pacific students of course, but the situation is compounded, I feel, by cultural constraints as well. They are not comfortable in sending friends away when they want to study. "It's not the Island way." Visitors must be welcomed and general interaction entered into. One very determined Pacific student was never distracted from her studies and her grades in consequence were excellent but while the others admired her application, they had no desire to emulate her because her behaviour had estranged her from the group.

They also displayed other symptoms typical of anxiety. Agnes froze at the beginning of examinations, Rosalie's mind went blank in some questions. Louise and Catherine described how they would postpone doing assignments they knew would be difficult until the last minute.

Several of the students displayed trait anxiety. Louise suffered from headaches and insomnia all year and this she attributed to stress. In every interview, Rosalie talked freely of the stress she was feeling. She never felt she was working very hard, her perceptions shaped by anxiety perhaps, for all her teachers saw her as diligent and up-to-date, achieving well. Her term grades indicated that the teachers' perceptions here were right, yet in the end she performed disappointingly in several examinations. Time was always her enemy but anxiety on the day may well have further impeded her performance. Likewise, Joanne's final results in English and French were very disappointing and may well be a result of unacknowledged panic during the examinations. Certainly neither of her teachers predicted such poor grades.

Maria and Agnes both claimed they never felt nervous but then denial is also a symptom of anxiety. Agnes's "freezing" in examinations indicates anxiety, as does her leaving out 25% of the English paper, although she had time on her hands, because she "forgot". Maria's bunking is likewise typical of avoidance behaviour. In the third interview she said how earlier on in the term she had decided not to let Statistics hold her back from her goal to study Economics.

"That's good. Did you stop bunking then?"

She smiled and shook her head very slightly.

Although the issue has been discussed at greater length under Socio-Cultural Factors, it is also timely to remember that the students were uncomfortable asking questions in class, afraid of appearing stupid or holding up the class unnecessarily. Many were considerably quieter than they would be in their own countries and the Year 11 girls shrank from performing their speeches in front of New Zealanders. These are all behaviour trends associated with anxiety.

12.3 SELF-ESTEEM

This is a complex issue and can only be dealt with very briefly in this study. Certainly the girls' feelings of self-esteem were challenged by their shift into the New Zealand school system. They had to struggle to catch up with their peers in many subjects, they had to adjust to different approaches, new content. It is not surprising then that they became more inhibited, often seeing their classmates as "smart" and "more brainy". Yet they also rightly took pride in having survived a new world so well, without family to support them. "It makes me feel good, like

an adult," said one. They all relished the feeling of independence and maturity they had gained. Agnes and Joanne were very aware of how lucky they were. Many of their friends back home only had marriage and babies to look forward to. Catherine and Louise had been delighted with their parents' approving comments when they returned. Also, while finding the work harder in New Zealand, they all appreciated being extended.

12.4 LOCUS OF CONTROL AND PERCEPTION

Locus of control has been hard to gauge from observation and without having tested specifically for it. From all accounts, the girls, with perhaps only Louise as an exception, appear to have had good internal locus before they came to New Zealand. They all worked hard and even though this was supported by teacher and parental expectation, the girls claim much of the impetus to study was self-inspired. As they are all successful scholarship students, this comes as no surprise. Their educational background however appears to have supported a more external approach with rote learning, strict controls and little active participation on the part of students.

In New Zealand classes the Pacific students very often do come over as typically passive externals. Their lack of active participation and enquiry does not fit with New Zealand teacher expectations of successful students. Part of this is cultural. They are merely following patterns of behaviour which have always been rewarded with success in the past. Rosalie was notably different in that she asked questions and participated in all classes. However, their aversion to the noise in

New Zealand classrooms may not necessarily indicate they would prefer lessons catering to an external learning style. It may be that in fact, we have become used to the noise and distractions of our classrooms and no longer have an objective view of it ourselves. It is important to remember that teacher perceptions of a situation are no more valid than those of the students.

However, as all of the students also mentioned they are more withdrawn in New Zealand, I have wondered if in fact on arrival, they tend to flick into a more external locus as a result of a feeling of helplessness and loss of control due to culture shock, much like the American teenagers during the Watergate scandal (Wong, 1990).

Not surprisingly, Pacific students fare far better in their second year than they do in their first. Of course they have made the necessary adjustments to a new educational system and know the routines and expectations but is it more than that? Both Louise and Cilla (Appendix 5) reversed their trends of failure in their first year by changing their behaviour. Louise returned with a new determination and sense of perseverance, becoming more involved and actively seeking help. Cilla tackled the problem very logically, working out with her brother strategies which had served her well in the past and which would counteract the problems she had encountered previously. Both demonstrated behaviours generally associated with internal locus. Catherine who had done reasonably well in her first year, completed her second year with very pleasing grades.

The first year girls were interesting. Agnes who complained of not being able to study in the hostel in the first half of the year admitted she had changed her routines and could study well for her final examinations. Joanne kept up a steady pattern of work all year in all subjects save Mathematics but her School Certificate results were not as good as Agnes's in the end. It would appear that she simply did not perform well in the examinations, perhaps as a result of nerves. Yet she herself was unaware of how poorly she had done in the exams, having said they went well in her final interview.

Rosalie's own perceptions of the work she was doing swung wildly but all teachers were well-pleased with the consistent effort she made. Maria showed diligence in most subjects.

The girls' own accounts of how hard they were working were often contradictory. While they said they were working far harder than they ever had in their previous schools, still they felt they weren't working hard enough. Most of them said they could have done better in their examinations with harder work. Is this evidence of good internal motivation, taking responsibility for their results or a face-saving excuse? Perhaps it is both: generally there is more room for greater effort to be made by most students and it is also certainly not uncommon for students of all cultures to deny they have worked hard for a test just in case they do not perform well. Yet it has to be said that, from a Palagi perspective, they never really gave the appearance of making a determined, full-on effort. They missed tutorials and when a voluntary study skills course was set after school, most dropped out after the first couple of weeks, as it conflicted with sports and their town visits.

Not all girls do find their feet; this was the starting point of the thesis after all. Maria and Joanne both gave up on their Mathematics. This does not take away from the belief that essentially they are good internals but does show that high achievers can deteriorate rapidly when they believe the task is too difficult. Even though they knew they ought to attend tutorials and seek extra help, they never did. Nor could they provide a reason for why they did not. In fact, Maria was well aware of how foolish she had been and when asking what advice she would give to new students she said with a rueful smile, "Don't bunk". Josephine (Appendix V) is another student who appears to have been highly motivated before coming to New Zealand but who, in her own estimation, "lost it" and never fully regained her work ethic.

12.5 SUCCESS

The girls in this study relished success. They glowed when speaking about the good grades they had received. They sought it although not always with great energy. I could not detect a fear of success although I did notice that they were not prepared to deviate from the group identity to achieve it. None chose to emulate the one Pacific student who closeted herself away to study, enjoying exceptional academic success as a result. Although the girls interviewed admired the student greatly, the price of her success was one they simply were not prepared to pay. They also provided one another with excuses not to work. When supposedly studying, they gathered in hallways to talk and consistently interrupted each other's work with visits. While I do not feel that this behaviour is any way restricted to the Pacific students, it was fortified with cultural expectations. They

did not feel comfortable sending each other away or leaving the group as it was not “the Islander way”. They did celebrate each other’s successes and helped each other where they could but their collective view that to start study a week before exams was accepted by all (bar the one exceptional student) even though teachers exhorted them to start earlier.

12.6 CONCLUSION

The students of this study were generally well-motivated students who were used to and actively sought success. Yet all displayed symptoms of anxiety and often these tended to be of a debilitating nature, resulting in some avoidance behaviours such as bunking and not settling to study. Their self-esteem declined as they went from being high achievers to very average and this further inhibited their behaviour in class from the fear of being seen to be “dumb”. While they provided a warm supportive network for each other, this also had adverse affects on their study habits.

Chapter Thirteen

CONCLUSION

I began this thesis troubled that the Pacific students at our school often needed to modify their aspirations as academically, they simply never made the grade. To try to find out why this was, I felt it imperative to view their academic progress throughout the year both from the students' perspective as well as their teachers'. Within this framework, language, socio-cultural and affective factors which might affect academic success were addressed. My purpose in doing this was to present the school and students a list of strategies which might help to lift performance.

13.1 STUDENT/TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF PROGRESS

The girls arrived as high achievers with high expectations. In the first half of the year they were generally content with their progress, as were their teachers. As the year progressed, many of the teachers became more reserved in their predictions of success but not in their general praise for the girls. Some of the students (Louise, Rosalie and Maria to some extent) began to experience noticeable anxiety. All the students said they should work harder, except Joanne who felt she was working well, but none seemed to ever apply themselves wholeheartedly to their studies. The examinations proved harder than expected: differences in layout confused them, the language used was too complex, and a number of examinations, especially at the Bursary level, were not completed.

13.2 ASPIRATIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Maria began the year wanting to be a lawyer but fortunately changed her goal half way through the year to Business Administration. It is unlikely her Bursary results would have got her into law without the assistance of a quota system or the lure of her overseas fees. She has gone on to Massey University to study Business Administration.

Rosalie did not pass Bursary despite the hopes of her teachers. Time factors were always going to count against her in examinations. It is also interesting to note that Maria, who got 50% for English, had had more exposure to literature studies than Rosalie who only got 35%. How much did previous learning help Maria? In class, their English teacher had made little differentiation between them, seeing them both as “top drawer... as far as the Islands go”. Rosalie had wanted to pursue Business Administration but, because of her results, initially returned to Tuvalu to work but later the following year was reported to be studying at Wellington Polytechnic. Attempts to locate her at postal and e-mail addresses failed.

Agnes began the year wanting to be a dress designer and ended it with plans to be an engineer. Her 75% in Art would set her well on the road to dress design but her 41% in Mathematics does not bode well for engineering. It is interesting to note that, in the first half of the year, she found Mathematics frustratingly simple and slow.

Joanne began the year wanting to be an English teacher. Her School Certificate result in English was devastating - only 35%. In fact, despite predictions that she would do well by all teachers save her Mathematics teacher, she failed all her other subjects as well. She must have had a terrible shock on receiving her results because she felt she had worked hard all year, achieving satisfactory results for assignments. She had studied hard for the exams and came out sounding confident, except in Mathematics. She is now studying Year 12 Tourism in line with her goal to go into that field, while repeating several of her School Certificate subjects.

Catherine's results surprised me. While very satisfactory passes, the teachers' praise of her had led me to expect a few 2's and more 3's and 4's. It has renewed my awareness that when teachers say, "She is doing really well", it is often in relation to their expectations of what a Pacific student is generally capable of. They are a steady set of results but engineering requires minimum Bursary scores of 300 so considerably more hard work will be required to lift her performance into the top 20% of the country.

Louise's results are a mixture of good and bad. Fortunately, computers are her passion and she has been able to continue with them. She has given up on School Certificate English and is currently studying for the IELTS examination in order to gain some qualification in English.

Overall, it has been a mixed bag as far as drawing conclusions. Maria, Catherine and Louise appear on target for achieving their goals, provided they work

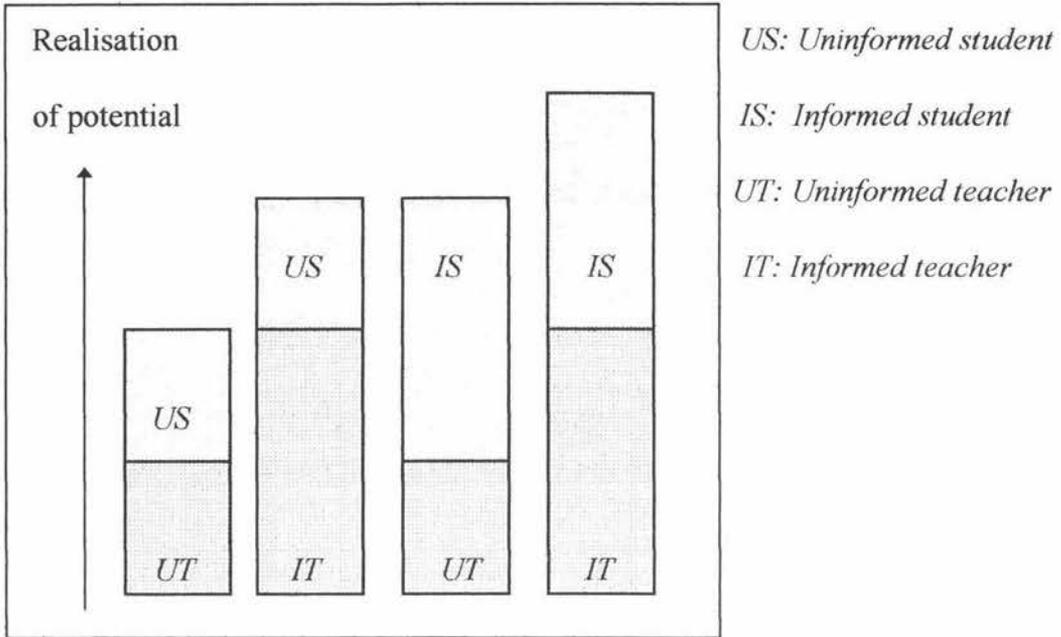
extremely hard. Rosalie, Agnes and Joanne face more uncertain futures. In the middle of the year, before the first exam results came out, I worried that I may not have a thesis at all, as the students and most of the teachers were buoyant and confident. In the end a number of the results are satisfactory but, returning to my argument that if these are the cream of the Pacific Nations, is “generally satisfactory” enough? Are the students fulfilling their potential and were their dreams unrealistic to begin with? Of course, academic success is only one aspect in these students’ lives. There are also the very real achievements of having survived the change in educational systems, the move to a country leaving family behind, and the adjustment to being part of a minority group. The students are justly proud of having coped well with all these major life changes. A final point does need to be mentioned. What criteria are used in the selection process of the scholarship students? Is the process rigorous and are the students who come to New Zealand indeed the most academically able?

13.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING SUCCESS

There are a myriad of factors influencing success. Both students and teachers need to be made more aware of the factors currently operating in the classroom. Being informed of the factors, and working to counteract them, could help to lift performance but it is necessary for *both* parties to be more active. Figure 13.1 illustrates the situation at the most simplistic level.

Figure 13.1

Awareness/Performance Relationship



So what do the terms “informed teacher” and “informed student” mean? I see “informed” as comprising two parts: one where the teacher and student have an awareness of the factors operating in the classroom and one where they actively take responsibility for controlling some of these factors. The most important factors as identified in the present study are summarised below, Figure 13.2 illustrating the fields of awareness and responsibility.

Figure 13.2

Fields of Awareness and Responsibility

<p>TEACHER AWARENESS</p> <p>→</p> <p>Culture Shock: questions participation</p> <p>BICS /CALP</p>	<p>STUDENT AWARENESS</p> <p>←</p> <p>Classroom mores: questions participation</p> <p>Anxiety: excuses</p>
<p>TEACHER RESPONSIBILITY</p> <p>Content gaps</p> <p>Test-wiseness</p>	<p>STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY</p> <p>Internal locus: tutorials</p> <p>study</p>

Teachers must become more aware of the issue of BICS and CALP as well as recognise how unconsciously their expectations for Pacific students differ from those of New Zealand students. They also need to ensure they give Pacific students time and attention, despite the rowdier claims of the New Zealand students. ESOL teachers can help here, by giving workshops in department meetings. Responsibility must be taken both in class and tutorials to fill in the gaps of content knowledge as well as prepare the students better for the types of questions that will appear in the examinations. These tutorials must be more

consultative. The students do not require a repeat of the lesson in class, rather they are needing help in learning *how* to apply the information to the questions. They need assistance in understanding the requirements of the questions. Part of this “test-wiseness” must also focus on the issue of time.

Students for their part, need a greater understanding of classroom mores in New Zealand and be aware of how their silent obedience can be interpreted. They need to be prepared to change to meet different expectations. They also need to be taught about facilitating and debilitating anxiety and watch for signs of the latter. The role of excuses should also be discussed. Their real responsibility come with taking a more positive control of their learning. They need to learn more about internal motivation (much of their previous learning is more externally-based) and to be more proactive in the classroom, in tutorials and in their personal study. Study courses in the evening at the hostel would provide good opportunities to present the students with this information, leading on to giving them practical study skills.

13.4 PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR THE SCHOOL

1. An entry “test” or set of exercises should be administered by each department at Bursary level to ensure that students have sufficient background knowledge and understanding of relevant skills to be able to study that subject.
2. A teacher (probably the ESOL teacher) ought to be appointed Academic Monitor for the Pacific students. The Academic Monitor would help in the placing of students in appropriate subjects and would monitor student progress

through the year by regularly approaching the appropriate teachers. This study has shown how easily the true progress of the students can be overlooked or unwittingly misrepresented.

3. Each subject should appoint a teacher in charge of the Pacific students. This teacher, with the assistance of the Academic Monitor, would identify the student needs and would provide tutorials to meet these needs. Extensive use of model answers should help the students understand what is required of them. Timed exercises and strategies to read faster could help the students improve their speed in answering.
4. The Academic Monitor should meet with new students once a term to help them adjust to the new education system as well as providing a forum in which problems and issues can be discussed.
5. An evening study programme ought to be set up at the beginning of Term Two to help new students with study skills. The Academic Monitor could then check up on the students' study habits before examinations.
6. A reading programme should be established for new students where they are encouraged to read at least one book a week. Structured readers can be used if necessary.
7. When placing students in classes, an attempt must be made to try to put Pacific students into the same option lines where possible so they do not feel isolated

in class. Teachers should be aware of students' feelings of isolation and encourage them to move to near the front of the class. Teachers also need to be sensitive to how Pacific students might be feeling in group or pair work.

13.5 FINAL NOTE

Reversing the trend of failure of Pacific students studying in New Zealand is of course, vital. The repercussions if we do not are far-reaching both for the Pacific students themselves and for society at large. I have been encouraged to see some excellent research being done towards this end, however they are comparatively few in number. For example, at the 1998 National Conference on Community Languages and English for Speakers of Other Languages, while there were close to ninety papers given, only three directly pertained to Pacific students. Is this because Asian students are more widely disseminated across all schools or because their dollars are valued income for the school? I do not know the answer to this, but I do worry that the Pacific minority may lose out to the Asian minority in the long run, lacking their economic and social resources.

Further research into the relationship between first and second language literacy is essential. Education policies in the Pacific Nations may need to be examined more closely if a meshing of Pacific secondary schools with New Zealand tertiary institutions is to continue. Likewise, New Zealand schools, polytechnics and universities need to make a greater effort to meet Pacific learning needs. However, perhaps the most interesting research, and the most telling, would be a longitudinal study to see what happens to these students with their international

education, over the next ten years. What do they take back to their countries, what do they gain and what are the costs?

The six girls of this study are bright-eyed with aspirations and optimism. This is how the youth should be. It is vital that we do everything in our power to nurture this sense of destiny and provide every assistance for its realisation.

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Appendix One

QUESTIONS FOR THE FIRST INTERVIEW

Before Coming and First Impressions

1. Why did you come to New Zealand to study
 - whose choice was it
 - why leave your own country
 - what do you hope to get out of it
 - how do your parents feel about your coming here?
2. What was your school in your home country like?
 - what were your favourite subjects
 - did you find the work easy or difficult
 - what were the classes like - size, discipline etc
 - how much homework did you get a night
 - did you find it easy to study in the evenings/weekends
3. What did you think New Zealand would be like before you arrived here?
4. What did you think Whangarei Girls High School would be like?
5. What were the biggest surprises when you arrived here?
 - about Whangarei
 - about the school

Enrolment

1. How did you choose which subjects to study here?
 - were you happy with your selection
 - did you make any changes: if so, why
2. How did you find your first two weeks in the school?
 - what were your first impressions of the kiwi students
of the teachers
of the school in general
 - did you have any problems
 - is there anything you can suggest that would make it easier for girls in the future

Your Subjects

1. Which subjects do you enjoy? Why?
2. Are there any subjects you don't enjoy much? Why?
3. Where do you generally sit in the classrooms?
4. Do you ask and answer questions often? Did you use to back at home?
5. Is the style of teaching different from back home?
6. Do the students behave differently?
7. Is the work similar to work you were doing back at home?
8. How do you find the text books you are using?
9. How are you finding the assignments?
10. Do you find you need to study much in the evenings?
11. What have you been doing in English so far? How are you finding it?
12. Extra help is available: which subjects would you like it in
are you receiving any now

Life Apart from the School

1. Is there anything you miss?
2. How are you enjoying living in the hostel?
3. What do you do in the evenings and weekends?
4. Is there anything you know now, that would have been useful if you'd been told right at the beginning?

Appendix Two

QUESTIONS FOR THE SECOND INTERVIEW

Language Background

1. At what age did you start to have lessons in English at school? Could you understand English before that? If so, how? (media, church?)
2. Which language would you use in the following situations:
 - talking about school work with a teacher
a friend
your parents
 - generally chatting with your friends
family
 - talking about a personal problem with family
a friend
 - talking about your future/career with your teacher
family
a friend
 - in shops
 - at church
 - at parties
2. How much reading do you do for pleasure? Are there many opportunities to read in your native language? Which language do you prefer to read in?
3. If you were applying for a job in your country, which language would you apply in?
4. If you were telling a friend about a funny thing that happened at school, which language would you use? If you were telling them about a funeral?
5. Can you give other examples of when one language is used in preference with another?

Home Background

1. Which language was used when your parents were at school?
2. Where did they do their further training? Which language was used there?
3. Do they think you speak well in your first language?

Your school work in general this year

1. How are the subjects going now? Which subjects are you enjoying most/least? Why?
2. How do you feel about your progress?
3. Are you getting a lot of homework?
4. Do you have enough time in prep time to complete it?

In Class

1. When the teacher is talking do you
 - understand
 - sort of follow
 - not really understand
2. What do you do when you don't understand? Do you
 - ask the teacher during the class
 - ask the teacher after class
 - ask another student
 - copy the work down and try to understand it later
 - use some other strategy
3. Do you feel/ behave differently in class to how you did in your last school?
 - i.e. do you talk more/less/the same amount?
 - do you feel a part of the class or a bit outside the group?
4. Do you feel Kiwi students learn the same way you do?
5. How do you feel about giving a talk to a class in New Zealand?
6. Are these reactions the same as the ones you would have had back home?
7. How do you see yourself academically in relation to the kiwis?
 - just the same
 - better
 - worse
 - different (explain how)
8. Do you prefer working alone, in pairs, in groups or as a class?

The school in general

1. Think of a teacher you think is good. What does the teacher do to make you think this?
2. Think of a teacher you don't think is very good (you don't have to use names!). What makes you think this?
3. Do the New Zealand teachers have a different approach to the ones in your last school?
4. What are the texts like in New Zealand compared to the ones back in your last school?
5. What do you think is good about New Zealand schools?
6. What do you think is bad about New Zealand schools?
7. Is there anything about your last school that you think was better?

Assignments

1. Which has been your best assignment this year? Why?
2. Which has been the worst? Why?
3. How do you feel when you are given an assignment? Do you
 - always understand what is wanted in the assignments?
 - generally understand?
 - sort of understand?
 - feel confused quite often?
 - find them really difficult?
4. What do you do if you find them a bit difficult?
5. Do you complete your assignments
 - three days before the due date
 - the night before
 - the lunch-time before
 - the day after
7. How do you feel when you hand them in (confident, a bit nervous, relieved etc.)?
8. How have you felt about the marks you have got for them? Compared to last year are you doing?

- about the same
- better
- worse

Tests

1. Are the tests that you've had this year similar to the ones last year? If they are different, in what way?
2. How much preparation for the tests do you do?
3. What strategies do you use to learn the work?
4. In the tests do you generally understand what the teacher wants
 - yes
 - not really
 - not at all
5. How do you feel:
 - before the test
 - during the test
 - when the marks come back
6. Have you done better, worse or as you expected in the tests?
7. When you lose marks, do you understand why?
8. Do you feel you would like to improve on your grades?
9. What do you think would help you to improve?
10. How did you use to do in tests last year?

Life in general

1. Have any of your feelings/plans changed since the beginning of the year?
2. Is there anything you feel homesick for?

3. Have you felt any of the following this year:

- physically sick (more than usual)
- panic
- exhilaration
- anger
- hopelessness
- a feeling of independence
- lack of direction
- loneliness
- pride in being able to survive alone
- lack of confidence
- stress
- shy/quieter/ more introverted than normal
- interest in New Zealand/your studies
- lack of confidence compared to last year
- increase of confidence compared to last year

Questions for the Second Year Students

1. Are you finding school different this year? If so, in what ways?
2. How are you finding the work this year, compared to last year?
3. How are you finding the Kiwi students and teachers this year? (if this doesn't come out in the first batch of questions)
4. How's the hostel going?

Appendix Three

QUESTIONS FOR THE THIRD INTERVIEW

Language

1. Do you ever write in Pidgin - a note to friends, poetry, in a diary?
2. Which language do you discuss politics in, think in, dream in?
3. How did you used to do at school last year?

General Questions

1. Have you been working hard/er this term?
2. Have you had more work than you would have had in the Islands (as didn't think they had much work at the beginning of the year)?
3. What do you think Kiwi students are like now? Still feel they catch on faster?
4. What do you think about Kiwi teachers now?
5. What do you think about the teacher/ student relationship? Do you have a similar one with your teachers? Why/Why not?
6. Are you still quiet in class? How do you feel about this?
7. Did you used to study much at home? Did your parents influence you in this?
8. Do you read much in your spare time?
9. How is the hostel going?.
10. How has it been having the other Pacific students in their classes and hostel?
11. What did you think of Island Night?
12. Has your view of your country and your cultural identity changed?
13. Has your decision of what you want to do in the future changed?

Exams

1. When did you begin to work for the exams
2. Which subject did you work hardest for? Why?
3. How did you study?
4. When you were studying did you - daydream, write letters, fall asleep, get distracted, find it hard to settle?
5. Which exam did you feel most prepared for? Why?
6. Which exam were you most nervous for? Why?

7. Were you expecting the types of questions you encountered in the exam?
8. Did you find anything unexpected in the exam?
9. Did you run out of time in any of your exams?
10. Were there any questions where you weren't sure what they meant?
11. Did your mind go blank in any of the exams?
12. Were there any exams you enjoyed writing?
13. Are there any exams you feel happy about ?
14. Are there any exams you feel worried about?
15. Did you feel more/less nervous or about the same for the NZ exams?
16. Have these exams made you decide to change any of your study habits for the ones at the end of the year?
17. What do you think of Ray's work habits?
18. In general, how would you describe the work habits of Year 13 Pacific students? Do you help or hinder each other?

Rosalie

1. How are your stress levels?
2. How is Economics going?
3. English?
4. Accounting?
5. Are you talking more in Statistics (you said it was a way to understand)?
6. Have you "double-studied" in Geography?
7. Are you still watching lots of tv? Why?

Maria

1. English?
2. History? Norman Kirk?
3. Economics?
4. In your Geography report test you felt lack of preparation let you down. Have you been working harder since then? Why/why not?
5. Statistics? Have you stopped bunking? Can you explain how you feel when bunking?
6. You spoke of getting angry and frustrated in the hostel in the last interview. Have you felt it again? What causes it

Study Skills

1. Would it be useful to have a course of study skills? When and where to hold it?
2. Which of these skills:
 - summarising
 - note-taking - from class and books
 - revising
 - research
 - writing essays
 - time management
 - reading academic texts
 - any others

Final

1. How are you feeling about your time in NZ now - advantages? Problems?
2. Future ambitions?

Appendix Four

EXPERIENCES OF VSO TEACHERS

INTERVIEW

James taught in Pidgin as he found new concepts *and* language too much of a barrier. He says our students at WGHS are very privileged. The Wantok (one language) system of supporting the family group does a lot to dampen ambition. Also, as there is no funding 90% of children go to primary school for free but only 10% go on to secondary school where they have to pay fees.

While he felt there were similar education standards to here, he did point out the school he had been at had problems not experienced by our school. For example, while there is no shortage of books, they are often irrelevant. For example, they talk about tuberous vegetables like potatoes rather than cassava and kumara. This, he said, turned the students off or they'd get side-tracked into discussing tar-seal roads and trucks in pictures. Sometimes books were just burned they are of more value as fuel. However there was one set of books, *Melanesian Science* from PNG courtesy of Australian Aid which were "fantastic".

The students get taken to the library once a week which had a reasonable selection but, as they were not really used to reading and so much was beyond their experience, they would often read the local newspaper instead as this was more relevant to their lives.

The education system itself had about a twenty year lag in his estimation. Inherited from Britain in 1970s, it still relied heavily on chalk and talk. Students were used to right/wrong answers and answers that fit the question. They had no idea of rationalising, of explaining, of discussing. They were not taught to question, investigate, *think* or form opinions.

When asked for recommendations of how to improve things for our students he agreed that study skills were important. James felt it would take several weeks, for example, to show how to give opinions. Also students have no concept of exactness, so precision in science is difficult. There are language difficulties too, as they are not used to using language precisely and accurately.

EXCERPTS FROM A VSO REPORT

From one report, giving information to VSO recruits by L. Harvey, VSO teacher of English 1986-87

Classroom teaching

“The pupils can be very subdued in class, and need a lot of encouraging to participate in class activities. This is not through lack of enthusiasm, but is partly shyness and also due to their previous experience of lessons in the majority of which they are expected to learn in an unquestioning, passive fashion. Once their confidence is won, the students are responsive and very willing to try something new.”

Language

“For all students then, secondary education, which is through the medium of English, is a third language, undoubtedly causing learning difficulties additional to those demanded by the syllabus. Volunteers are often involved in the teaching of lower forms where these problems are particularly acute.”

Curriculum

It used to be that efforts concentrated in providing a “life-skills based education” for those who did not get into academic National schools. “However, over the last few years, parental pressure has caused the original aim of the PSS’s to change. Parents are demanding a more academic education for their children so that at the end of Form 3 there is a chance they can proceed to Forms 4 and 5 in the NSS’s.”

“The problem is, Form 3 students leave and with education in academic study which will have no bearing on their lives in the village (ie, there’s lots of work on circles - but the only circles they’ll see are buckets and water catchment tanks!)”

However, field officer Morgan Armstrong, keen to “emphasise that though the official government statistics from a recent survey indicate that 75% of Form 3 students get “pushed out at this level, many do go on to decent jobs, using the qualification they have gained - the School Leavers Certificate. These jobs may be in town(s) or in the villages, working in the stores etc. and although this employment may only be short term work, this is typical of the Solomons and not a reflection on the qualifications the students have. Therefore at least some of the curriculum is useful”

VSO PLACEMENT DESCRIPTION FOR SOLOMON ISLANDS

Weight given to academic subjects, Mathematics, English and Science means resources to other areas often down and practical subjects under-resourced. This leads to situation where kids do not qualify for F4 entry and are “often less prepared in practical skills for the rural life to which they will return than those students who remained in their villages without secondary education. Rural Training Centers are established in an attempt to fill this gap but there are not yet enough places for all secondary students who do not make it to F4.”

“To direct resources away from these subject areas (Maths, English and Science) would further circumscribe the already limited opportunities for PSS students to move on to national secondary schools. The grounding in literacy and numeracy with which PSS students will return to their villages should not be underestimated in its longer term benefits. It should enable fuller participation in the local government structures such as area councils and provincial government and should increase the accountability of those in these offices as the rural population becomes more educated and more demanding.”

James’ EOS Report

He found “a huge improvement in students’ confidence and independent learning ability was needed if they were to succeed in the Form 5 exams. The students entering F 4 were too used to being ‘spoon-fed’ by teachers, learning by rote, not thinking for themselves, and they had no experience of practical work.”

He thought it crucial to relieve students of their “ ‘chalk and talk’ indoctrination and encourage them to think for themselves.”

Independent learning ability needed to be fostered in students. “There is little demand on students to *think* for themselves. They become accustomed to chalk and talk lessons, learning by rote for test, and are rarely called upon to understand what they are taught. While exams can be passed using this method, it is not desirable, nor is it adequate preparation for study past F3. By teaching the lower forms, especially F1, in such a way as to encourage independent learning, the volunteer can make a contribution which will outlast his/her time in country”.

On Staffing Shortages.

“The SI Ministry of Education has had one fewer vacancy to fill (by employing K). However, the Ministry has become dependent on volunteers to fill a quota of vacancies (as volunteers come more easily and cheaply than similarly -qualified Solomon Islanders) and this raises the issue of whether volunteer-sending organisations are contributing to sustainable development, or hindering development by sustaining their own numbers. Volunteer-sending organisations are aggravating the problem unintentionally.”

“While ‘development’ is a long-term process, there have been volunteers in the Solomons for decades, and numbers are still on the increase. However, it has been seen that when development agencies try to reduce their contributions with the aim of stimulating local government initiatives, their efforts are often in vain. If NGO assistance with secondary teachers ceased, could the SI government fail to

start training local teachers? This remains to be seen. I believe that VSO would make a longer-lasting contribution if it reduced the secondary teacher programme and began recruiting secondary teacher trainer to complement the work being done by PEDP.”

Appendix Five

INTERVIEW WITH CILLA AND JOSEPHINE

Both girls were very nervous before they came to New Zealand. They were scared of the different people “because it’s a different world, really.” They were scared of getting lost in Auckland Airport. Cilla, who is shy, was worried that she would not make friends and feared people would laugh at her because of the way she spoke, not being completely fluent in English. At home she had spoken mainly in her mother tongue.

On arrival at the school, Josephine was awed. “It was a way bigger school. It was freaky, so many windows.” She felt threatened and shamed by being stared at and wished she had someone she knew. She also got annoyed with the Kiwis. “It bugged me for most of the year, their attitude to teachers.” Cilla also found the place looked different. The building was very confusing and she got lost. She was surprised that the teachers didn’t come to the classroom although she had seen students moving class on the television. Lunchtimes seemed strange as no-one played any sport. They were surprised that there were subjects they could opt for and Religion, which was compulsory in their country, wasn’t offered at all.

In class they found it different too. Josephine said, “I was kinda shamed when they called out our names to answer.” Cilla found it very difficult. “I was too quiet and I didn’t know the teachers. I felt if I asked, I’d be like dumb.” They both preferred their teachers back in Papua New Guinea, feeling that those

teachers got to know their students more while the Kiwi teachers just didn't seem to have the time. Joesephine felt the teachers in Papua New Guinea worked harder as they were more accountable in the small communities. "In New Zealand people do it for the money. In PNG they aren't paid well, so they do it because they love it." She went on, "The teachers in PNG are always up in front of the class and have more authority - because of equal rights and all that, students and teachers are on the same level in New Zealand. They (the PNG teachers) check on the students constantly. You have to do push-ups if you don't work. There's also lots more homework. But if the teachers pushed harder here, the students would rebel." Teacher expectations ensured students worked hard in Papua New Guinea. She described the difference. "Here you can pick it up if you want to, it's floating around the room. There it's placed in front of you and you're forced to eat!" Although both she and Cilla conceded that the education seems better in New Zealand ("Everything here is really flash") and Joesephine thought the qualifications look higher ("but they are not necessarily higher, though"), she felt the New Zealand style of education, would not work in Papua New Guinea. "It's still developing so they need hard-working people. They are doing a good job, whatever they are doing. Here there are too many drop-outs." Both girls were agreed that New Zealand students are lazy. "We cleaned up after ourselves, did the gardening - everything. It's good, it trains you for living alone but we did get tired though."

However, they did not find the work easy here and did badly in their first year. "I was so depressed. I knew I could do some of it but I didn't. I was hesitant in

doing anything, I wasn't sure I was in the right place. I was just scared - scared to be wrong - just wanted to get it right."

The difficulties in the classroom continued all year. Cilla explained, "I found communication so hard. It was language plus I was shy. The classroom atmosphere was too noisy and I didn't know who to listen to." Joesephine didn't like group work. "I don't like to talk, putting in my ideas, telling people what to do, it's stupid." She did admit to feeling more confident however, when there were other Pacific students in the group.

Neither girl passed School Certificate. Joesephine said, "I felt so *bummed!*" She described how she had felt in the exams. "There was too much to do in three hours. It was too quiet. I could feel myself think. I was scared to breath in case people heard. I felt really small. I hate test conditions here. There's too much pressure. It's different here - it's a big change from not strict to really strict. Here they fluctuate from being loose to shut up and do it."

Cilla felt "dumb" but when her brother lectured her, she reproved him saying he ought to support her and help her. This he accepted and together they settled down and thought through her difficulties, devising strategies to overcome them. The next year she implemented them with greater success. "I asked questions and tried to speak up in class. I did not really socialise, limiting my talk and got back to my normal work habits and began setting time for more study."

Josephine struggled less with her studies (thanks perhaps to her greater fluency in English?) but she never regained her previous good work habits. “I’m out of it,” she explained, “I’ve stopped rolling. I’m okay but I could do better, I’m just not in a working mood. If it doesn’t go right the first time....” Both were aware of how much the Pacific girls distract each other but were not keen to go against the group as Ros, their exceptionally hard-working peer did. “I admire her will power, her determination. We got side-tracked along the way with friends, social life, problems, sometimes home. But to have someone come and see you, it’s a privilege. So even when you know you should be working, you still distract each other. I can’t say no.”

Appendix Six

YEAR 11 AND 12 COMMENTS

To widen my frame of reference in a very general way, I got groups of students to brainstorm under various topics. These are the comments I received:

What did you think New Zealand and this school would be like before you came here?

Very modern school, eg. all carpeted classrooms, air conditioning etc. I thought New Zealand would be very big, cold. I thought the school will have a variety of students coming from different countries. Always be surrounded by Europeans
Scared of not being confident.

Scared

A very big country, full of new things. The school is beautiful. It would be stricter than my
old school.

I thought that it would be more different - that is the environment and the schooling system. New Zealand is very green and has a lot of lakes. The school is much better than my old school.

Clean, exciting, posh, strict, expensive, cold, not confident with the people, embarrassed.

Feel free to do whatever you want (nobody knows you).

Homesick. Opportunity to learn a new culture.

Worried (feel left out).

Think that the school rules are similar.

What were your first impressions?

Very loud and open people.

Very friendly people at first, but can't get to know them better.

Very clean

Social life is very important in New Zealand.

Rude students, no respect.

Teachers are too kind and helpful.

Everyone wants to grow up quickly and live alone and leave home.

School work is very slow if you follow through with your form back home but if someone jumped classes, it'll be very hard.

Not too much homework.

Unnecessary things are done in class eg. making shapes in class, writing a title page takes too long in the 4th form, the whole period is usually doing small parts because of too much interruptions.

Too much interruptions like if messages come through, certificates given, students wearing non-uniform, school certificate up-date on address.

Too big and too cold.

Too many buildings and flash houses.

I thought the school was very clean.

The students were not as friendly and I felt that it was up to me to make friends.

I didn't feel welcome in the classes I was in.

The teachers were very friendly and they only talked to the girls that they know from previous years.

New Zealand students: very loud and noisy with no respect for teachers.

I thought New Zealand is just "da bomb" place to be.

I found that New Zealand is such a beautiful place with a wide variety of diverse cultures.

Friendly

Racist (because some students who come from other countries are dark or black).

The school work was new in some subjects but most of them are like revision.

School Subjects

I find English to be the easiest subject because I can express myself more and I understand better. Economics is my hardest subject because I lack the Economic language understanding.

Maths is not too hard but it's also not too easy. The numbers just confuse me.

French is all right and it's my most interesting subject because I have learnt a lot about another country and I intend using the language in my future profession.

The most easiest subjects I find are English, Home Economics, French and Computer Studies. It is because I have done most of them last year in my old school.

I find computers were the easiest of all the other academic subjects I took up during my two years study here.

The subject which I found most difficult was English. I didn't quite understand why things like film studies were being taught in English. I still can't understand why.

Accounting is easy for me cos it just deals with figures and not too much notes.

Economics is hard because we have to talk about New Zealand market and other things to do with NZ and also lack of Economics language.

The subject I find different at the moment is Maths. I think it is because the numbers confuse me.

Which are easiest subjects and why?

Maths - because we've already done them (4th and 5th)

Science - " " " " " "

Home Economics - same as above (4th)

Social Studies - same as above (4th)

English - follow model answers (5th)

Art - it feels like a free period (5th)

Which difficult?

Economics - have to learn everything eg. formula transactions etc.

Computers - because you have to type and you have to know the keys.

Teaching Styles: what do teachers do that make you learn and enjoy classes?

Quiz, drama, games, group activities, jokes, watching documentary films, unexpected activities

I like it when teachers explain things clearly in a more polite way and also when they get us quizzes and games to work out solutions.

I enjoy teachers who teach in a rather different way by using other types of examples on previous life and other experience.

Active like Mrs Bentley because she uses too much gestures that we are all awake in class.

I enjoy classes where the teacher can happily and easily get along with the students and help them with their school work.

What do teachers do that make you confused, angry or bored?

Too much lecture, use difficult English, using slangs we don't really know, spend too much time on unnecessary things like telling students off.

When teachers talk too much, I get bored or when they pick on certain girls too much I get angry.

When teachers talk too fast, I lose concentration because I can't keep up with the pace and it also annoys me.

I hate the way some teachers explain things cos they go too fast.

Tests/Exams

When studying for exams/tests, I study the week before. Other times when I'm too lazy to do any studying, I study the night before.

I don't do well in Maths tests.

I usually study a week before exams but for small tests, I study a night before.

I do well in English because I like the subject and I understand it better.

I started a week before and I do well in accounting tests cos I always learn my accounting concepts.

I started learning Economics a night before because I just can't be bothered doing it.

When studying for tests or exams, I start the week or day before but usually the day before because if I study a week before, I might not remember what I studied.

A week before

A night before.

I do well in Maths because you have to know the formulas.

Economics is difficult because it is boring to study.

English is hard (language difficulty)

Studying in New Zealand.

Coming to New Zealand has been worthwhile for both studying and growing up independently as a young woman.

The advantages of studying here has widened my knowledge of New Zealand's background and as a whole it has helped me mentally. The disadvantages have been a torment to me. Missing home and fast adapting to New Zealand has been so frustrating eg. food, climate.

It has been worthwhile coming here because have learned too many things. The advantage is we gain more knowledge and the disadvantage is that we get to spend more money to meet our tuition fees.

Coming to New Zealand was worthwhile because I got to learn and study in a more different environment. I also learn to be more independent and meet new friends from different countries.

It has been worthwhile because I feel that I have upgraded my education. I have become more mature and independent. The advantages are: learning in a different counting and upgrading your education, learning with different people who have very different but interesting ideas. The disadvantages are: not being able to study things about your own country, teaching standards are very different eg. sometimes harder and sometimes easier.

Advantages: I learn so much about NZ, more open environment, learning new things eg. *culture*, learn to be independent, learn to live with other people, able to talk out without being embarrassed, learn new technical things eg. computing.

Disadvantages: no support from parents, homesick, language barriers (social and academic), some subjects are not available or offered eg. agriculture, bible knowledge.