

Project summary

Title: English in the Kingdom: Analysis of the emergent variety of English in the Kingdom of Tonga

In the current study, I am investigating the previously undescribed dialect of English spoken in the Kingdom of Tonga, an island nation in the South Pacific. Tonga presents an exceptionally interesting context in which to study a variety of World English as the only Pacific nation to have resisted colonial pressure and retained self-governance, despite a period as a British protectorate state. The central objectives of the current study are to (1) gather an ethnographically sensitive corpus of data in order to describe Tongan English (hereafter TE) and its most salient features, (2) analyse the developmental phase at which TE sits using Schneider's Dynamic Model (2007) and (3) outline the relationship between TE and New Zealand English (hereafter NZE) by applying the Epicentre Model (Leitner 1992). Achieving these objectives will enable comparative analyses to be undertaken regarding the plausibility of the concept of a pan-Pacific variety and reveal how Schneider's Model can be adjusted to cope with varieties which have developed under the influence of colonialism without being colonies. The data used to in the current project include a total of 92 recorded informal conversations with local Tongans representing various ages, genders, community status and mobility status, alongside ethnographic field notes collected on a fieldwork trip to the island in March 2019. The data are currently being analysed using linguistic software and tools such as Praat and ELAN. This study will open doors for future research on the variety and broaden our understanding of World Englishes.