

Vagahau Niue

—

Orthography Guidelines



Ministry for
Pacific Peoples

Acknowledgements

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We apologise for any errors or omissions that may remain despite our best efforts and urge readers to bring any issues to our attention by contacting us at languages@mpp.govt.nz.

Suggested Citation

When citing the vagahau Niue orthography guidelines, you may wish to use the following convention:

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Introduction

Due to a range of historical and contemporary factors including migration, population growth, and climate change, there are now more tagata Niue living in the diaspora, predominantly New Zealand, than Niue.

The future of vagahau Niue in New Zealand, and indeed other languages of the Pacific, is uncertain, and it is for this reason that the Ministry for Pacific Peoples, in collaboration with Pacific communities across the motu and abroad, published the Pacific Languages Strategy 2022-2032 in September 2022. The Strategy, in line with current research on language policy and planning, highlighted *corpus*¹ as a key element of successful language revitalisation, and it is in this context that these orthography guidelines have been developed.

These guidelines outline what the Ministry for Pacific Peoples, in consultation with language experts, consider to be best practice for writing in vagahau Niue in New Zealand. They are intended as an accessible and easy-to-reference guide, that we hope will be useful to beginners and experts alike. They are part of a series, which also includes guidelines on Tokelauan, Cook Islands Māori, Samoan, and Tongan.

These guidelines were developed using widely accepted conventions and literature on the orthography of vagahau Niue to promote accessibility, consistency, and clarity of meaning and pronunciation, especially for speakers in New Zealand. Given this, there may be instances where the advice in this publication contradicts that of other authoritative texts. For example, there are mixed opinions around marking vowel length in vagahau Niue – while some authorities do not promote it, this document does. In cases such as this, it is recommended that these guidelines supersede those in other (especially older) literature.

The Ministry for Pacific Peoples recommends the www.dictionaryniue.com website as the primary reference for checking how words should be spelled. This online dictionary is a digitisation of *Tohi Vagahau Niue*, the dictionary originally compiled by lexicographer Wolfgang B. Sperlich on behalf of, and in collaboration with, the Government of Niue between 1993 and 1997. Many of the examples used in these guidelines are sourced from this dictionary.

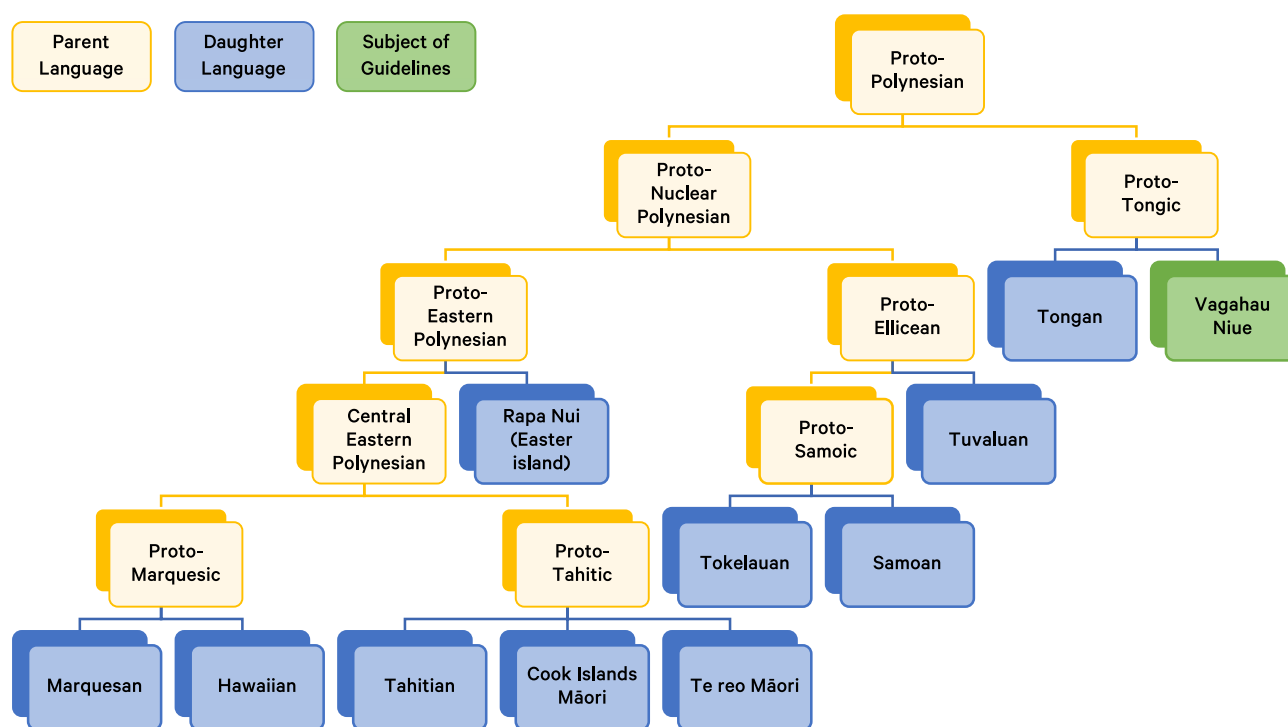
¹ *Corpus* refers to the creation and maintenance of a language's oral and written resources e.g., dictionaries, grammars, orthography guidelines, and pronunciation guides.

Linguistic classification of vagahau Niue

Vagahau Niue is a Polynesian language that belongs to the Tongic subgroup alongside Tongan. Though more distantly related to the rest of the Polynesian language family, vagahau Niue is notably influenced by Samoan and, to a lesser extent, other Eastern Polynesian languages due to the economic and religious connections between the islands prior to and during the 19th and 20th centuries. This influence can be seen morphologically (as in *toga* ‘fine mat’ from Samoan *‘ie tōga*), orthographically (as in the /ŋ/ phoneme being represented with /g/, rather than /ng/ as in other Polynesian languages), and grammatically.

A visual representation of the Polynesian language family tree is included for reference with an accompanying legend below. Note the diagram is not exhaustive, and that many other languages not included are also part of the Polynesian language family.

Figure 1 – Polynesian Language Family Tree



Timeline of key texts on vagahau Niue

There are several texts of historical and linguistic significance written on and in vagahau Niue that these guidelines draw on directly – many descriptions from Sperlich’s *Tohi Vagahau Niue: Niue Language Dictionary*, for example, are referenced throughout. Conversely, other texts merely contextualise the journey of the written language since the publication of the first Niue

Bible in 1846. All mark important inflection points in the history and study of written vagahau Niue. These key texts are detailed in Appendix 1, noting the timeline is not exhaustive. For a more detailed account of the history of linguistic texts in particular, we recommend *Gahua he tohi vagahau Niue: Niue dictionary project: orthography and vowel quality*.²

² Sperlich 2000: 382-384

Section 1 – Dialects and registers

Dialects

There are two dialects of vagahau Niue. These correspond to the geography of the island, with the older *Motu* ('people of the island') dialect being spoken in the North, and the *Tafiti* ('strangers' or 'people from a distance') dialect being spoken in the South. The main differences between the dialects are in vocabulary and "spelling variations due to the often only slight differences in pronunciation".³

(1) Differences between *Motu* and *Tafiti* dialects in vagahau Niue⁴

DIFFERENCE	MOTU DIALECT	TAFITI DIALECT	MEANING
Pronunciation / spelling	maona	malona	'to be broken'
Pronunciation / spelling	nei	nai	'this, these, here'
Vocabulary	matā	volu	'to scrape, scraper'
Vocabulary	kautoga	lala	'guava plant'

While these differences in pronunciation and spelling are not technically 'mistakes', should vagahau Niue become standardised in the future⁵, they may be viewed as such.

Registers

Vagahau Niue also has distinct formal and informal registers. The formal register *tūtala fakalilifu* 'respectful speech', is spoken in such settings as *fono* (official meetings), church sermons, ceremonial gatherings (e.g., funerals), and cultural gatherings (e.g., performing-arts festivals).⁶ Conversely, *tūtala noa* 'non-sacred speech' is used for casual conversation "within families or amongst peers where familiarity and comfort take priority".⁷

The *Motu* and *Tafiti* dialects both make use of *tūtala fakalilifu* and *tūtala noa* – neither dialect is inherently formal or informal.

³ Sperlich 1997: 25

⁴ Tukimata 2017: 16

⁵ Note this is neither the purpose of these guidelines nor the Ministry's prerogative.

⁶ Ministry of Education 2012: 13

⁷ Tukimata 2017: 16

Section 2 – Vowels and consonants

Alphabet

There are two alphabets in vagahau Niue – each is comprised of the same letters, but ordered in a different way. The traditional vagahau Niue alphabet was penned in 1907⁸, but has since been superseded by the contemporary alphabet developed nearly a century later for *Tohi Vagahau Niue: Niue Language Dictionary*. Note all future references to ‘the alphabet’ relate to (2).

(2) Contemporary vagahau Niue alphabet⁹

a, ā, e, ē, f, g, h, i, ī, k, l, m, n, o, ō, p, s, t, u, ū, v

Vowels

Like most other Polynesian languages, vagahau Niue has five basic vowels.

(3) Vowels in vagahau Niue¹⁰

	FRONT	CENTRAL	BACK
High	i		u
Mid	e		o
Low		a	

There are three distinct types of vowels – **short**, **long**, and **rearticulated** – and these can be combined to create diphthongs.

- Short vowels are unmarked – a, e, i, o, u
- Long vowels are marked with a macron – ā, ē, ī, ō, ū
- Rearticulated vowels, which are pronounced distinctly as two syllables, are:
 - unmarked sequences where the same vowel is repeated – aa, ee, ii, oo, uu
 - unmarked sequences where the vowels are different – ae, ai, ao, au, etc., Diphthongs, which combine two vowels and are pronounced as one syllable, are:
 - unmarked sequences – ae, ai, ao, au, etc.,
 - *Note that a sequence of different short vowels can either be rearticulated or a diphthong depending on the word – current orthographic convention around this is ambiguous.*

To avoid confusion around meaning, the above conventions for marking vowel quality should always be used unless there is a compelling reason not to “there is a [...] misconception that it is only necessary to mark a long vowel in a word to distinguish it from some other word which differs only by having a short vowel. Nothing could be further from the truth”¹¹

⁸ Tregear and Smith 1907: 1

⁹ Sperlich 1997: 2

¹⁰ Sperlich 1997: 8

¹¹ Sperlich 2000: 386, originally from Biggs 1990: 7 (Māori – English / English – Māori Dictionary)

(4) Contrastive word set¹²

VOWEL TYPE	WORD/SPELLING	MEANING
Short	<i>moli</i>	‘soap’
Long	<i>mōli</i>	‘lamp’
Rearticulated	<i>mooli</i>	‘vow, oath’.

A compelling reason not to mark vowels would be *if strongly established practice dictates otherwise*. For example, the final /e/ in Niue is often not marked with a macron despite being a long vowel, because older spelling systems did not distinguish vowel quality as the current one does.¹³

Rearticulation, also known as *vowel hiatus* or *diaeresis*, is the “break in pronunciation between two adjacent vowels, either within a word (forming two distinct syllables, as in *doing*, rather than a diphthong as in *joint*) or between the end of one word and the beginning of the next (e.g. *the expense* rather than the elision of *th’expense*)”.¹⁴

(5) Rearticulation examples

WORD/SPELLING	PRONUNCIATION	MEANING
<i>mooli</i>	moh-oh-li (not moo-li)	‘vow, oath’
<i>aafu</i>	ah-ah-fu (not aah-fu)	‘to be hot and humid’
<i>feānaki</i>	feh-ah-nah-ki (not fey-ah-nah-ki)	‘to set against each other’
<i>tāoga</i>	tah-oh-nga (not tao-nga)	‘treasure’

While rearticulation is easy to identify when one vowel is short and one is long (e.g., *feānaki* and *tāonga*), or when both are short and identical (e.g., *mooli*), when both are short but different it isn’t always clear whether they should be rearticulated or pronounced as one diphthong. Consider the following examples:

(6) Rearticulation vs. diphthong ambiguity examples

WORD/SPELLING	POSSIBLE PRONUNCIATIONS	MEANING
<i>paega</i>	1) pah-eng-ah 2) pay-ngah	‘to be tired’
<i>mauku</i>	1) mah-u-ku 2) mau-ku	‘funeral’

There is currently no convention that clearly indicates whether a sequence of different short vowels should be pronounced separately (i.e., rearticulated) or together (i.e., as a diphthong) – each must be considered on a case by case basis.

The general rules that cover most cases, however, are:

- long + long = rearticulated
- long + short = rearticulated
- short + short = (if different vowels) diphthong or rearticulated, **or** (if same) rearticulated
- short + long = rearticulated

¹² Sperlich 1997: 229, 231

¹³ Texts in vagahau Niue written prior to the 21st century are unlikely to mark vowel length consistently, if at all, as the formalisation of the convention was part of the work of lexicographer Wolfgang B. Sperlich and the Niue Dictionary Panel’s work that ultimately culminated in the 1997 *Tohi Vagahau Niue: Niue Language Dictionary*.

¹⁴ Oxford Reference 2024

Consonants

There are twelve consonant sounds in vagahau Niue (though /ɹ/ only occurs in English loanwords).

(7) Consonants in vagahau Niue¹⁵

	BILABIAL	LABIO-DENTAL	ALVEOLAR/ DENTAL	VELAR	GLOTTAL
STOP/PLOSIVE	p		t	k	
FRICATIVE		f v	s		h
NASAL	m		n	ŋ	
LATERAL			l		
APPROXIMANT			[ɹ]		

All consonants in vagahau Niue are represented in spelling as they are in the above table, with the following exceptions:

- /ŋ/ is represented as /g/, and is pronounced as in English **sing**, **sang**, and **running**
- /ɹ/ is represented as /r/, as in English **rank**, **rest**, and **scoring**

Also note that /r/ (as a representation of the /ɹ/ sound) is excluded from the alphabet as it only occurs in loanwords. Further, there are no words in vagahau Niue that begin with /r/, as an /r/ at the beginning of a word is always realised as /l/ (in both spelling and pronunciation) through the transliteration process.

While /r/ is excluded from the alphabet because it is only found in loanwords, the /s/ phoneme is included despite also only being found in loanwords. The key difference, however, is that /s/ is always realised as /s/, regardless of its position.

Note that /t/ undergoes allophonic variation in vagahau Niue, where it is pronounced as /s/ when followed by an /i/ or /e/.¹⁸

(8) Transliteration of phrase initial /r/ in vagahau Niue¹⁶

ENGLISH		VAGAHAU NIUE
'rugby'	▶▶▶	<i>lakapī</i>
'rice'	▶▶▶	<i>laisi</i>
'ribbon'	▶▶▶	<i>lipine</i>

(9) Realisation of /s/ in vagahau Niue¹⁷

ENGLISH		VAGAHAU NIUE
'commission'	▶▶▶	<i>komisina</i>
'sugar'	▶▶▶	<i>suka</i>
'Pacific'	▶▶▶	<i>Pasifika</i>

(10) Allophonic variation of /t/¹⁹

SPELLING	PRONUNCIATION	MEANING
<i>futi</i>	fuh-see	'banana, plantain'
<i>mati</i>	mah-see	'fig tree'
<i>vate</i>	vah-seh	'to draw, to mark'

¹⁵ Sperlich 1997: 8-9

¹⁶ Sperlich 1997: 173, 185

¹⁷ Sperlich 1997: 162, 283, 395

¹⁸ Sperlich 1997: 8

¹⁹ Sperlich 1997: 91, 218, 351

Section 3 – Word Division

Affixes

Vagahau Niue has three types of affixes: prefixes, suffixes, and circumfixes. Reduplication is not considered a type of affix by these guidelines. Affixes are *directly attached to the root words they modify*. The exception to this is when an affix would be attached to a proper noun, in which case a hyphen is used e.g., *faka-Niue*, ‘of Niue, in the manner of Niue’.²⁰

The functions of affixes in vagahau Niue “are varied and not easy to reduce to hard and fast rules”. As such, the ways in which they affect root words are complex and unpredictable.²¹

Prefixes

Vagahau Niue utilises a range of prefixes. Some examples are described in the table below:

(11) Prefixes²²

PREFIX	FUNCTION	EXAMPLE
<i>a/kau-</i>	Denotes a handle, shaft, or similar part of some implement or weapon.	<i>akau</i> + <i>afo</i> ‘line, string’ = <i>kauafo</i> ‘fishing rod’
<i>faka-</i>	Many functions, including denoting ‘to cause, or to make happen’.	<i>faka</i> + <i>ako</i> ‘to learn’ = <i>fakaako</i> ‘to teach’
<i>ma-</i>	Denotes actions that occur spontaneously or by accident.	<i>ma</i> + <i>paki</i> ‘break’ = <i>mapaki</i> ‘to become broken’

Suffixes

Vagahau Niue has many suffixes also, some of which are listed in the table below:

(12) Suffixes²³

SUFFIX	FUNCTION	EXAMPLE
<i>-a</i>	Combines with active verbs to form the passive.	<i>hele</i> ‘to snare’ + <i>a</i> = <i>helea</i> ‘to be snared’
<i>-aga</i>	Combines with verbs to form related nouns.	<i>helehele</i> ‘to harvest’ + <i>aga</i> = <i>heleheleaga</i> ‘harvest’
<i>-fua</i>	Denotes continuing, complete, or exaggerated action.	<i>kai</i> ‘to eat’ + <i>fua</i> = <i>kaifua</i> ‘to eat a lot / gluttonous’

²⁰ Sperlich 1997: 28

²¹ Sperlich 1997: 14

²² Sperlich 1997: 46, 62, 193

²³ Sperlich 1997: 41, 43, 85

Circumfixes

Vagahau Niue has one circumfix, *fe-* *-aki* (though the latter component is sometimes realised as *-naki* or *-taki*), which is used to form reciprocal verbs.

(13) Circumfixes²⁴

CIRCUMFIX	FUNCTION	EXAMPLE
<i>fe-</i> <i>-aki</i>	Forms plural, reciprocal verbs	<i>fe</i> + <i>fakafua</i> ‘weigh’ + <i>aki</i> = <i>fefakafuaaki</i> ‘to trade with each other’
<i>fe-</i> <i>-naki</i>		<i>fe</i> + <i>ofa</i> ‘love’ + <i>naki</i> = <i>feofanaki</i> ‘to love one another’
<i>fe-</i> <i>-taki</i>		<i>fe</i> + <i>hiki</i> ‘change’ + <i>taki</i> = <i>fehikitaki</i> ‘to mix up between each other’

Compound words

Compound words, which are comprised of two or more distinct words, are written as single words without spaces or hyphens in vagahau Niue.²⁵

(14) Compound words²⁶

WORD COMPONENTS		COMPOUND WORD
<i>lima</i> ‘hand’ + <i>toto</i> ‘blood’	▶▶▶	<i>limatoto</i> ‘murderous’
<i>vaka</i> ‘canoe’ + <i>lele</i> ‘to fly’	▶▶▶	<i>vakalele</i> ‘aeroplane’
<i>tau</i> ‘hang’ + <i>ti</i> ‘and’ + <i>olo</i> ‘rub’	▶▶▶	<i>tautiolo</i> ‘to climb and cling carefully up a cliff’

Loanwords and word creation

Vagahau Niue has many loanwords, mainly from Samoan and English. As they are closely related linguistically, Samoan loanwords integrate seamlessly into vagahau Niue. Loanwords from English and other languages less related to vagahau Niue, however, integrate variably.

Unlike some other Pacific languages, vagahau Niue does not allow compounds where English loanwords are present. For example, while *punuā* ‘offspring’ can combine directly with loanwords for animals such as *pusi* ‘cat’ and *leona* ‘lion’ to form compounds in Tokelauan, the same constructions in vagahau Niue must be separated by spaces.

(15) Constructions formed with English loanwords

LANGUAGE	CONSTRUCTIONS
Vagahau Niue	<i>punua</i> ‘offspring’ + <i>pusi</i> ‘cat’ = <i>punua pusi</i> ‘kitten’ <i>punua</i> ‘offspring’ + <i>leona</i> ‘lion’ = <i>punua leona</i> ‘lion cub’
<i>as opposed to...</i>	
Tokelauan	<i>punuā</i> ‘offspring’ + <i>puhi</i> ‘cat’ = <i>punuāpuhi</i> ‘kitten’ <i>punuā</i> ‘offspring’ + <i>leona</i> ‘lion’ = <i>punuāleona</i> ‘lion cub’

While many English loanwords have been integrated into vagahau Niue through transliteration (e.g., *pusi* ‘cat’ and *leona* ‘lion’ above), newer terms, especially those relating to science and technology, have to be intentionally incorporated into the language through *word creation*.

²⁴ Sperlich 1997: 86, 246, 118

²⁵ Sperlich 1997: 15–16

²⁶ Sperlich 1997: 15, 29, 301

A number of strategies (including transliteration) can be employed to support word creation. These are outlined below.

(16) Word creation strategies

STRATEGY	FUNCTION	EXAMPLE
<i>Borrowing</i>	The most basic strategy – simply use a word from another language as-is, same spelling, same pronunciation.	‘TV’, as in <i>ko e onoono TV a mautolu</i> ‘we are watching TV’.
<i>Transliteration</i>	Changing the spelling (and pronunciation) of a word in another language to conform to the spelling conventions in vagahau Niue.	‘Telephone’ is realised as <i>telefoni</i> ‘Engine’ is realised as <i>enesini</i> ‘Bicycle’ is realised as <i>pasikala</i>
<i>Meaning Extension</i>	Extending the meaning of an existing word in vagahau Niue to encompass the meaning of a new word from another language.	The meaning of <i>tohi</i> ‘to write’ is extended to include ‘to write’ and ‘book’. The meaning of <i>fofoga</i> ‘to look’ is extended to include ‘a person’s face’.
<i>Phrase Formation</i>	Using a group of words in vagahau Niue to capture the meaning of a word from another language.	‘Winter’ is realised as <i>vahā makalili</i> , literally ‘season when it is cold’. ‘Bible’ is realised as <i>Tohi Tapu</i> , literally ‘a sacred book’.
<i>Compounding</i>	Combining existing words in vagahau Niue to form new words.	‘Kettle’ is realised as <i>tītata hila</i> , literally ‘electric teapot’. ‘University’ is realised as <i>aoga pulotu</i> , literally ‘school of wisdom’.

The following factors should be considered (in the order they are presented) when determining which word creation strategy to employ:

- **Precedent** – If there is already an established word or phrase that conveys the meaning you are trying to capture, use it! Don’t create something new if there is no need to.
- **Language Status** – Think about how the word creation strategy might affect people’s view of the language. For example, don’t resort to borrowing or transliteration just because it’s easier, as this can send the message that vagahau Niue is not sophisticated enough to capture meaning in the modern world.
- **Effectiveness** – How well does the new word or phrase capture the meaning of the original word, and how obvious would that meaning be at first glance?
- **Workability** – How efficient is the strategy? For example, while phrase formation might initially seem like the best way to capture meaning, if the phrase in question would be ten or more words long, it’s unlikely to catch on and be used widely and frequently as intended.

Section 4 – Capitalisation

Proper Nouns

Proper nouns – including personal names, religious titles (i.e., Father, God etc.), days of the week, months of the year, place names, country names, demonyms, and language names – are subject to variable capitalisation in vagahau Niue. Guidance around what should and should not be capitalised specifically is provided in the sections below.

Personal Names

All components of personal names – i.e., first names, any middle names, and surnames – are capitalised in vagahau Niue.

(17) Personal names

VAGAHAU NIUE	ENGLISH
<i>Enetama Lipi</i>	Former Politician
<i>Lepau Feau-Fuhiniu</i>	Rugby Player

Religious titles

As in English, religious titles are capitalised when they refer to a specific person and lowercase when used generally – e.g., *Ekepoa Ioane* ‘Father John’ as opposed to *to eke ai he ekepoa e lukutoto maana* ‘the priest will make an atonement for him’.

The above rule also applies to references to the Christian God as opposed to other gods – e.g., *finagalo he Atua* ‘the will of God’ versus *ko Tagaloa ko e atua he vahā i tuai* ‘Tagaloa was the god of the olden times’.

Days of the week

The days of the week are constructed by pairing *Aho* ‘day’ with certain other words. Both components are capitalised e.g., *Aho Gofua* ‘Monday’.

(18) Days of the week

VAGAHAU NIUE	ENGLISH
<i>Aho Gofua</i>	‘Monday’
<i>Aho Ua</i>	‘Tuesday’
<i>Aho Lotu</i>	‘Wednesday’
<i>Aho Tuloto</i>	‘Thursday’
<i>Aho Falaile</i>	‘Friday’
<i>Aho Faiumu</i>	‘Saturday’
<i>Aho Tapu</i>	‘Sunday’

Months of the year

Niue follows the Gregorian calendar with each month's name transliterated into vagahau Niue. All months are capitalised.

(19) Months of the year

VAGAHAU NIUE	ENGLISH
<i>Ianuali</i>	'January'
<i>Fepuali</i>	'February'
<i>Masi/Mati</i>	'March'
<i>Apelila</i>	'April'
<i>Mē</i>	'May'
<i>Iuni</i>	'June'
<i>Iulai</i>	'July'
<i>Aokuso</i>	'August'
<i>Sepetema</i>	'September'
<i>Oketopa</i>	'October'
<i>Novema</i>	'November'
<i>Tesemo</i>	'December'

Demonyms

Demonyms are the words used to denote the inhabitants of a particular country, state, city, region etc. In English, demonyms are formed with a number of suffixes, most notably */-n/* or */-an/* e.g., Samoan, Tokelauan. In vagahau Niue, lowercase *tagata* 'man' or *fifine* 'woman' is combined with the relevant capitalised country name:

(22) Demonyms

VAGAHAU NIUE	ENGLISH
<i>tagata / fifine Niu Silani</i>	'New Zealand man / woman'
<i>tagata / fifine Falani</i>	'French man / woman'
<i>tagata / fifine Amelika</i>	'American man / woman'

Place names

Most place names in Niue are single words. These should always be capitalised. In the rare case of a place name comprised of multiple words, all components should be capitalised except prepositions.

(20) Place names

VAGAHAU NIUE
<i>Makefu</i>
<i>Motutapu</i>
<i>Vaifulufulu</i>

Country names

Country names are separated by spaces with all words capitalised.

(21) Country names

VAGAHAU NIUE	ENGLISH
<i>Niu Silani</i>	'New Zealand'
<i>Aferika Toga</i>	'South Africa'
<i>Kuki Aelani</i>	'Cook Islands'

Language names

Language names are always formed with *vagahau* ('language [of]') and the name of the country where the language originates (generally speaking). *Vagahau* is only capitalised if it is at the beginning of a sentence, while the country name is always capitalised.

(23) Language names

VAGAHAU NIUE	ENGLISH
<i>vagahau Niue</i>	Niue language
<i>vagahau Peritānia</i>	English language
<i>vagahau Sepania</i>	Spanish language

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Appendices

Appendix 1 — Timeline of key texts on and in vagahau Niue

YEAR(S)	TEXT	SIGNIFICANCE
1830 – 1861	Various religious tracts, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ko e Tohi Tapi</i> (Niue Bible) • <i>Ko e Tau Lolonga</i> (hymn book) 	Various religious tracts were produced from 1830 to 1861 by Samoan teachers who used the Samoan Bible to translate into vagahau Niue, sending drafts back to Samoa to be edited, revised, and printed. After converting to Christianity in Samoa, Nukai Peniamina returned to Niue as a missionary with <i>Tohi Tapi</i> and <i>Ko e Tau Lolonga</i> . Of all the texts translated into vagahau Niue during this period, these were the most substantive, and remain in print today.
1861	Niue Vocabulary	The translation of various religious tracts between 1830 and 1861 culminated in <i>The Niue Vocabulary</i> by G. Pratt, one of the earliest known linguistic texts on vagahau Niue.
1893 – 1907	Vocabulary and Grammar Notes	Further pieces on vocabulary and grammar were published in the Journal of Polynesian Society around the turn of the 19th century. This culminated in the publication of the first grammar on vagahau Niue, <i>Vocabulary and grammar of the Niue dialect of the Polynesian language</i> by Tregear and Smith, in the Journal's 1907 edition.
1970	Niue Dictionary	The first substantial dictionary on vagahau Niue (which also contained supplementary grammar content) was written by J.M. McEwen and published in 1970 on behalf of New Zealand's then-Department of Māori and Island Affairs. While regarded as an authoritative text on vagahau Niue for some time, the volume infamously endorsed non-standard spelling (e.g., representing /ŋ/ with ng rather than the established g) that was deplored by tagata Niue.
1980	Studies in Niuean Syntax	Published a decade after J.M. McEwen's dictionary, William Seiter's thesis <i>Studies in Niuean Syntax</i> remains the only major piece of linguistic research into vagahau Niue to date. Unfortunately, however, it is now over forty years old, difficult to access online, and includes no standard reference grammar.
1997	<i>Tohi Vagahau Niue</i> – Niuean Language Dictionary	In 1993, the Government of Niue commissioned lexicographer Wolfgang B. Sperlich to develop an archival database and bilingual dictionary for vagahau Niue in collaboration with a Niue Dictionary Panel established for the same purpose. This work was undertaken until 1997, at which time the <i>Tohi Vagahau Niue: Niuean Language Dictionary</i> was published by the University of Hawai'i Press. Sperlich's dictionary remains the most comprehensive text on the language to date.
2017	Digitisation of <i>Tohi Vagahau Niue</i>	In 2016, Nogiata Tukimata began digitalising Sperlich's <i>Tohi Vagahau Niue: Niuean Language Dictionary</i> to complement her research on the Regeneration of Vagahau Niue at the International Centre of Language Revitalisation at Auckland University of Technology. This work was completed in 2017, and the entirety of the dictionary is now available and accessible online.