

Futunan (Fakafutuna)

Futunan is a Polynesian language with about 3,000 speakers in the kingdoms of Sigave and Alo on the islands of Futuna and Alofi, which are part of the French Overseas Territory of the Wallis and Futuna Islands in the South-West Pacific Ocean. There are also many Futunan migrants in New Caledonia and elsewhere in the Francophone Pacific.

The language is often called East Futunan in order to distinguish it from the related West Futunan, spoken on the Polynesian outlier of Futuna in Vanuatu. It is also known as Futunian, and Futunan speakers call it *Fakafutuna*. Futunan is also related to but not mutually intelligible with the East Uvean language in the kingdom of Uvea on Wallis Island, the indigenous name of which is Uvea as well. In addition, there is also a related West Uvean language, spoken on the Polynesian outlier of Uvea in the Loyalty Islands, New Caledonia.

Linguistic lineage

The linguistic lineage for Futunan is: Polynesian, Nuclear Polynesian, Samoic-Outlier, Futunic. However, its exact place within Nuclear Polynesian remains unclear.

Vowel inventory

The vowel inventory of Futunan consists of five segments as listed below and is similar to most other Polynesian languages in that respect. These vowels have approximately Spanish values and also occur geminated (i.e. as sequences of two identical vowels).

Consonant inventory

The consonant inventory consists of eleven segments as listed below and is one of the larger ones in Polynesia. By comparison, Hawaiian features eight consonants, Tongan twelve.

Syllable structure

The Futunan syllable structure may be summarised as follows: (C)V₁(V₁), i.e.: (an optional consonant, followed by an) obligatory vowel (or geminated vowel).

Full and partial reduplication, as well as prefixes and suffixes, are used extensively for word formation and the expression of various grammatical and semantic categories. The causative prefix is *faka-*.

Futunan alphabet and pronunciation

A a	Ā ā	E e	Ē ē	F f	G g	I i
[a]	[aː]	[ɛ]	[ɛː]	[f]	[ŋ]	[i]
Ī ī	K k	L l	M m	N n	O o	Ō ō
[iː]	[k]	[l]	[m]	[n]	[ɔ]	[ɔː]
P p	S s	T t	U u	Ū ū	V v	ʻ
[p]	[s]	[t]	[u]	[uː]	[v]	[ʔ]

Samples phrases in Futunan

- Mālō - Hello.
- Ko loku igoa ko Tominiko - My name is Dominique.
- E iai sou ipu vai? - Do you have a glass of water?
- Ko le loi. - That's a lie.
- Fakalogo ki ou matu'a! - Obey your parents!
- E tonu a koe. - You are right.