Samoan grammar

Comparing sentences 1 and 2 suggests that they could be the first two members of the set of sentences to be learned:

\[
\text{[sentences]}
\]
\[
\{ \text{o le va’a o Ioane i le vai} = \text{the boat of Ioane is in the water}, \\
\text{o le fale o Malia i le nu’u} = \text{the house of Malia is in the village} \}
\]

The English translations have been altered to give them what appears to be the structure of the Samoan. They can always be changed later if necessary. Similarities between the sentences also suggest sets of individual items:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{[1]} & \quad \{ \text{Ioane} = \text{Ioane}, \quad \text{Malia} = \text{Malia} \} \\
\text{[2]} & \quad \{ \text{va’a} = \text{boat}, \quad \text{vai} = \text{water}, \quad \text{fale} = \text{house}, \quad \text{nu’u} = \text{village} \}
\end{align*}
\]

That means that as well as the two sentences in the set, we have another 22 sentences, if repetition of nouns is avoided.

Sentence 3 has a new feature “i totonu o le fale”, which must be “inside the house”. Comparing that phrase with “i le nu’u” and “i le vai” in 2 and 1, however, might make us wonder why it isn’t “i le totonu”. We can get round that problem by adding 3 to the set of sentences. But looking ahead to 4 and 5 it seems that it would be useful to form a new set [3] containing “tononu”, “tua” and “luma”:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{[3]} & \quad \{ \text{tononu} = \text{inside}, \quad \text{tua} = \text{behind}, \quad \text{luma} = \text{front} \}
\end{align*}
\]

The English translations are a bit odd there, but the Samoan sentence 3 shows how the words should be used.

Looking again at 2 and 3 suggests that “le teine” in “le potu o le teine” has a similar function to “Malia” in “le fale o Malia”. No sentences in the list illustrate that analogy clearly, but of course we can easily create one ourselves by adding a plausible sentence “o le fale o le teine i le nu’u” to [sentences].

Sentence 4 and 5 show one of the strangest features of the 18 Samoan sentences. 5 contains the expected “le tama” for “the boy”, while 4 has “tama”, apparently corresponding to “the boys”. A definite singular is expressed by “le”, but definite plural by nothing at all!

Anyway, it seems that 4 and 5 need to be added to [sentences]. But since “tua” and “luma” already have places in [3], the sentences could be simplified a bit:

o maile o tama i le fale = the boys’ dogs are in the house
o lo’o tu le tama i le fale = the boy is standing in the house
“o lo’o tu” for “is standing” makes us speculate that “o” at the beginning of sentences stands for “is”, and “lo’o” might be connected to “ing” forms in English, but that can only be speculation.

As well as “o lo’o” there are forms “ua”, “sa” and “e”, so we might expect to find something significant about verbs. Unfortunately we find 5 and 13, where “tu” goes with “le tama”, but “tutū” with “teine”, suggesting a difference between singular and plural verb forms. Similarly “moe” and “momoe” in 9 and 10, and “galue” and “galule” and “galulue” in 11 and 12. This is a feature called “reduplication”, which occurs often in language, but in our Samoan data there is nothing to show what has to be duplicated in each case. There is “tu” and “tutū”, where there is only one syllable to be reduplicated, “moe” and “momoe”, where it is the first syllable “mo”, and “galue” and “galulue”, where it is the second, “lu”. There seems to be nothing for it but to add all the sentences to [sentences], with a few simplifications. The result is

\[
\begin{align*}
o \text{ lo’o} & \text{ tu le tama i le fale} = \text{ the boy is standing in front of the house} \\
o \text{ lo’o} & \text{ sau se teine} = \text{ a girl is coming} \\
\text{ua alu Malia i le lotu} & = \text{ Malia has gone to the church} \\
\text{sa alu le maile i le potu} & = \text{ the dog went inside the room} \\
\text{sa moe le tama i le va’a} & = \text{ the boy slept in the boat} \\
\text{sa momoe tama i le va’a} & = \text{ the boys slept in the boat} \\
\text{e galue Ioane i Apia} & = \text{ Ioane works in Apia} \\
\text{e galulue Malia ma Ite i le nu’u} & = \text{ Malia and Ite work in the village} \\
\text{sa tutū teine i le vai} & = \text{ the girls stood in the water} \\
\text{ua nofo se maile i le nofoa} & = \text{ a dog has sat on the chair}
\end{align*}
\]

The second sentence in that list is necessary because it introduces “se teine” for “a girl”. The phrase “Malia ma Ite” for “Malia and Ite” is interesting because of the various items which can take the place of the two names.

Now we come to the last four sentences, 15 to 18. They are the only transitive sentences in the list, and they are strangely different from the others, in word order and the fact that there is no reduplication. The only thing to do is to add them all to [sentences].

So to sum everything up. The final version of all the sets is as follows:

[sentences]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{o le va’a o Ioane i le vai} & = \text{ the boat of Ioane is in the water} \\
o \text{ le fale o Malia i le nu’u} & = \text{ the house of Malia is in the village} \\
\text{o le fale o le teine i le nu’u} & = \text{ the house of the girl is in the village} \\
\text{o maile o tama i le fale} & = \text{ the dogs of the boys are in the house} \\
\text{o lo’o tu le tama i le fale} & = \text{ the boy is standing in the house} \\
\text{o lo’o sau se teine} & = \text{ a girl is coming} \\
\text{ua alu Malia i le lotu} & = \text{ Malia has gone to the church} \\
\text{sa alu le maile i le potu} & = \text{ the dog went inside the room} \\
\text{sa moe le tama i le va’a} & = \text{ the boy slept in the boat} \\
\text{sa momoe tama i le va’a} & = \text{ the boys slept in the boat} \\
\text{e galue Ioane i Apia} & = \text{ Ioane works in Apia} \\
\text{e galulue Malia ma Ite i le nu’u} & = \text{ Malia and Ite work in the village}
\end{align*}
\]
Samoan grammar

sa tutū teine i le vai = the girls stood in the water,
ua nofo se maile i le nofoa = a dog has sat on the chair,
ua va’aia se maile e le teine = the girl has seen a dog,
e alofagia le teine e le tama = the boy loves the girl,
e alofagia teine e tama = the boys love the girls,
sa va’aia le timu i le po e Ioane = Ioane saw the rain in the night }

[1]
{ Ioane = Ioane, Malia = Malia, Ite = Ite }

[2]
{ va’a = boat, vai = water, fale = house, nu’u = village, potu = room, teine = girl,
  maile = dog, tama = boy, lotu = church, nofoa = chair, timu = rain, po = night }

[3]
{ totonu = inside, tua = behind, luma = front }

Set [2] has expanded because of extra items being named, and maybe surprisingly, the set
[sentences] has 18 members, just like the original set for analysis! But the number of pairs of
different nouns is 12 x 11 = 132, meaning that a great many more sentences can be
constructed.