Transitioning from Māori-medium to English-medium education: The experiences and perspectives of three students

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on significant academic, social and cultural challenges faced by Māori students who transition to mainstream education. The data represent the perspectives and experiences of three students who transitioned from Māori immersion programmes into mainstream schools. The methodological approach taken is Kaupapa Māori, which necessarily requires a framework related to whānaungatanga (kinship), collaborative storytelling and self-determination (Smith, 2003). The resulting narratives highlight disparities in the philosophical approaches to education of Māori and mainstream institutions. These differences conspire to further disadvantage learners, who are often asked to 'shed' their indigenous 'skin', as it were, and assume an alternative identity which is more in line with the aspirations of mainstream, dominant culture. The data suggest that transitioning students are required to move from one end of a linguistic continuum to the other as well as to negotiate difficult socio-cultural terrain. They are expected to speak only Māori at their immersion schools and then only English once they transition to mainstream education. Rather than being fluid and circular, the journey along the language continuum appears to be rigid and unidirectional, with detrimental results on the academic success of transitioning

students. This paper considers the findings in view of educational policy and practice and makes recommendations for how these can more firmly support the revitalization of Māori language and culture and at the same time equip students for their academic and working life.

INTRODUCTION

The assimilationist approach taken by the colonisers of Aotearoa (the Māori name for New Zealand) meant that the Māori language was at one time dangerously close to being entirely supplanted by English. However, due to the implementation of immersion programmes and other bold initiatives, the effort to revitalise Māori language and culture is well underway. This study examines the ways in which students who have attended Māori-medium immersion programmes at primary level experience the process of assimilation into English-only instruction upon entry into mainstream educational institutions as secondary school students. The focus of this paper is on the core concepts of bilingualism and bilingual/immersion education, language and identity, language shift and language maintenance which will provide a basis for our understanding of the experiences and perspectives of students who must somehow negotiate the cultural, academic and linguistic divide which often separates Māori-medium and English-medium educational contexts.

The study reported in this paper is grounded in Kaupapa Māori theory, and it is the intention for this study to be somewhat reflective in nature. The data set is made up of the reflections - in the form of co-constructed narratives - of the participants. One of the central arguments of this paper is for a kind of linguistic equilibrium to be achieved and maintained throughout Māori immersion children's schooling (i.e., from kohanga reo (pre-school) to the completion of mainstream secondary school) with the ultimate goal of producing academically and conversationally bilingual students, while simultaneously continuing efforts at revitalising Māori language and culture.

BACKGROUND

Language Death, Revitalisation and Maintenance

As a consequence of the process of colonisation, the tangata whenua (literally, people of the land) of Aotearoa/New Zealand underwent a process of rapid urbanisation which led to a dramatic shift in language use away from Māori in favour of English (May, 2001). Indeed, McCarty (2003) claims that minority groups are continuously denied the right to their heritage language in political, legal, economic and educational domains and as a consequence find themselves (and their languages) increasingly at the margins of society. In order for these groups to achieve cultural and linguistic revitalisation, a process of directional and future oriented social change is required (Fishman, 1990). Fortunately, within the context of Aotearoa/New Zealand, such change did occur and in the 1970s Māori communities at a grassroots level rallied to reverse the effects of language shift by establishing a small number of bilingual education programmes in predominantly rural Māori communities (May, 2005). By the early 1980s, so called *whole-school* programmes had been established and these have now come to be known as kohanga reo (pre-school), kura kaupapa (primary and intermediate), wharekura (secondary schools) and wānanga (Māori-medium tertiary institutions).

This diversification in the education system of Aotearoa/New Zealand has gone a long way to destabilising the monolith of mainstream identity, thereby challenging the social and political structures established by European hegemony. Indeed, there is compelling evidence that the most significant contribution towards the revitalisation of Māori has come from Māori bilingual/immersion education initiatives.

Bilingual/immersion Education in Aotearoa/New Zealand

In her review of international research on bilingual education, Freeman (2007) notes that well implemented bilingual programmes which promote biliteracy through instruction in two languages provide increased opportunities for academic achievement. Similarly, May *et al.* (2004) suggest that the most effective approach toward achieving full bilingualism (i.e., both academic and conversational) is through

additive bilingual programmes which exploit the interdependent nature of both the L1 and L2 and the resulting benefits to cognitive development (Baker, 2006; Cummins & Swain, 1986). However, there are extant cultural and political difficulties relating to the application of these models in the real world and, as a result, such methods are not always implemented in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

While the hitherto success of bilingual/immersion programmes and the subsequent reversal of language shift in Aotearoa/New Zealand is to be highly commended, one common concern amongst whānau (extended family) is that their children eventually reach a point where they are receiving too much Māori and that this is encroaching on their English (Ministry of Education Report, 2006). As a result, many parents feel compelled to withdraw their children from bilingual/immersion programmes in favour of English-medium institutions.

The call for continued language maintenance on the one hand and the need for sustained academic success on the other are inherent components of the complex nature of bilingual/immersion education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The social, political and economic realities of living in Aotearoa/New Zealand cannot be ignored and it is vitally important that speakers of Māori receive the educational tools they need to be able to achieve consistently high levels of academic success in both Māori and English.

Through conversations with parents, students and educators, it has become evident that students who make the transition from Māori-medium to English-medium schooling often fall short of their academic potential due to the nature of the transition process itself. Given this situation, this researcher was prompted to consider the efficacy of this process and how certain challenges associated with it might be mitigated in the interests of student achievement. The intention of this study was to provide students who had been through the transition process the opportunity to describe their experiences by constructing their own narratives through what Bishop (1996) calls a *spiral discourse* in which the participants collaborate to form a narrative that is unique to their experience of the transition process. In so doing, it is the participants themselves who ultimately shape the resulting data set as opposed to the researcher 'leading' the session with a predetermined set of structured questions. The participants'

discursive engagement with the project, which exists within a Kaupapa Māori framework, as discussed in detail below, necessarily invites both the researched and the researcher to explore ways of knowing which embody an ethos of collectivity and interconnectedness. By constructing a joint narrative with the participants (as opposed to a conventional 'Q & A' style interview), it is hoped that a richer, and therefore more meaningful, data set will result.

Furthermore, a co-constructed narrative allows the participants to have some control over the research process. It legitimises their concerns, beliefs and experiences by providing them with a sense of ownership over the resulting data. The data set is a collection of the participants' experiences of the transition process. While the researcher certainly asked questions of the participants, these were in response to narrative elements that unfolded during these discursive sessions.

IMMERSION EDUCATION IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

The notion of community-driven immersion programmes as vehicles for re-establishing cultural links is a common theme in the literature (see McCarty, 2003; Ó Baoill, 2007; Spolsky, 1996; Swain & Johnson, 1997). Awakuni-Swetland (2003), for example, examines the ways in which indigenous cultural knowledge and language succumb to social, political, economic and colonial pressures on the family and the community. Slaughter (1997) highlights similar issues in her evaluation of indigenous language immersion in Hawaii, and concludes that attitudes towards society, culture, education and personal identity are stronger amongst immersion students than non-immersion students, implying that one effect of immersion education is a heightened sense of cultural identity. In a study of literacy development in a so-called two-way immersion programme, Bae (2007) found that immersion students' development of their home language can be equal to or even superior to non-immersion students of the same grade level, concluding that the L1 language development of immersion students should not be of concern.

In contrast, Spada and Lightbown (2002) studied primary and secondary level Inuit students in Northern Quebec in order to assess their ability to complete the transition from L1 immersion to

mainstream L2 French education. Their findings suggest that a majority of the "students' ability to use French in an academic environment is far from the level that would be required if they were to go to post-secondary education" (p.228). Similarly, an investigation into the biliterate and bilingual development of Samoan and Tongan children attending bilingual/immersion programmes in Aotearoa/New Zealand highlights the need for caution when introducing a second language to the school curriculum (Tagoilelagi-Leota *et al.,* 2005). Their results show positive development in English literacy, but at a cost to the children's L1, and highlight a potential vulnerability in many well intentioned bilingual/immersion programmes where the heritage language can be quickly subsumed by a dominant language.

In response to the needs of one school and its Māori community, Berryman and Glynn (2003) discuss a transition programme which sought to provide students with increased skills in reading and writing in English, without compromising their proficiency in te reo Māori (the Māori language), in preparation for transition to mainstream schooling. The programme reported major gains in reading difficulty levels, and increases in oral comprehension, reading proficiency and writing rate and accuracy. Importantly, the researchers state that the "contribution made by the whānau and kura participants had been critical to the highly successful student outcomes" (p.45). The methodological approach of the Berryman and Glynn project involved some key participants, as well as the researchers, in the construction of a collaborative story which explored reasons for initiating, participating in and continuing the programme. In the context of research into Māori-immersion programmes in Aotearoa/New Zealand, this approach is crucial as it involves the participation of the immediate stakeholders (students, teachers, parents, school administrators and the wider community) and is imbued with an ideology and a philosophy unique to Māori and the Māori world view.

The aim of this study is to document the experiences of three students who have made the transition from Māori medium to English medium schooling. The study employs a Kaupapa Māori methodology, which aims to engage the students in a process of storytelling that is consistent with the Māori tradition of oral transmission of history, to gain insights into their experiences of assimilating from one distinct

pedagogical philosophy (kura kaupapa) into another (mainstream English-medium schooling). In doing so, the project seeks firstly to form a closer understanding of the experiences and perspectives of students who transition from Māori-medium to English-medium education institutions and secondly to examine the linguistic effects reported by students as a result of this transition.

Integrally linked with these two focus areas are a number of issues that relate to the participants' attitudes towards education, society, culture and their own personal identity as well as their identity as Māori. It is through the stories of the participants that we may further understand the cultural, linguistic, psychological and pedagogical needs of future students who transition from Māori-medium to mainstream English-medium schooling.

In order to better understand some of the choices made regarding the methodological approach taken here, the following section will briefly discuss Kaupapa Māori theory and its relevance to this research.

KAUPAPA MĀORI THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

The term Kaupapa Māori applies to a research process which embodies a paradigmatic shift in the means by which indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing are understood and expressed. In research on Māori, the Kaupapa Māori approach has begun to challenge the dominance of the Pākehā (non-Māori) perspective and has emerged as part of the wider movement of Māori cultural revitalisation (Bishop, 1996). According to Bishop, Kaupapa Māori research is collectivistic and is "oriented toward benefiting all the research participants and their agendas" (1996, p.146) rather than just benefiting the researchers.

Walker (1996) argues that Kaupapa Māori theory is to be viewed as an alternative approach to Eurocentric ways of theorizing and that there can be no separation between theory and practice within a Kaupapa Māori context; the two are inextricably linked and indeed form a blueprint for Māori cultural, linguistic, economic and political survival. Graham Smith (2003, pp.6-8) suggests six main elements which contribute to a framework of Kaupapa Māori theory and praxis. These elements are described in Appendix B. As both a theory and

praxis, Kaupapa Māori sets out to simultaneously create a space of differentiation between itself and Western ways of knowing and viewing the world, while not entirely being synonymous with separateness and unopposed to sameness (1996). It is at once unique to Māori, and therefore distinct from Eurocentric paradigms, but is also intrinsically engaged with the transformative and emancipatory ethos of Critical Theory as a Western construction (Tooley, 2000) (see also Appendix C). Pihama (2001) suggests that Kaupapa Māori theory is based around the idea that Māori need to develop a framework that is distinctively Māori. As Graham Smith explains, Kaupapa Māori theory "builds on the Kaupapa Māori foundations of taking for granted the validity and legitimacy of Māori language, knowledge and culture" (1997, p.97). Furthermore, Kaupapa Māori discourse is imbued with a Freirian metalanguage which conjures notions of revolution and radicalism (Smith, 1999). It reconstitutes, and critiques, Eurocentric notions such as resistance and transformation by further developing a framework that is more aligned with traditional Māori ways of understanding the world. Kaupapa Māori theory is a theory of change which challenges the status quo of Pākehā dominance and sets out to re-establish *Māori* ways of knowing.

The primary concerns of this paper relate to Māori cultural and linguistic validity and legitimacy as well as to notions of tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) and what this implies in terms of Māori educational values and philosophies. It was therefore felt that the most appropriate methodological approach was a Kaupapa Māori one. Within traditional Western research paradigms, the objectivity of the researcher sometimes serves as an alienating, rather than engaging, force and necessarily positions the researcher outside of and separate to the world of the researched (Heshusius, 1994). However, one of the key elements of applying Kaupapa Māori as a methodology is that the researcher is not merely doing research on his or her participants, but rather with them (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). This approach invokes the notion of 'kinship' or the idea of attachment between the knower and the known where "there is a common understanding and a common basis for such an understanding, where the concerns, interests, and agendas of the researcher become the concerns, interests, and agendas of the researched and vice versa" (Bishop, 2005, p.118). Thus, in this

methodology there is a deliberate attempt on the part of the researcher to connect with the participants, in order to minimise the distance that often exists as a result of the power dynamics at play within the research process.

Participants

The participants were three 14-15 year old female students enrolled at the same single-sex, mainstream secondary school. The participants all attended kohanga reo and two of them went on to Level 1[i] Māori language immersion primary schools. The third participant attended an English-medium primary school which had a bilingual unit attached. The participants were chosen opportunistically through contacts of the researcher. There was no deliberate attempt to form a single-gender group. All of the participants speak English as their home language.

Data Collection and Analysis

The first meeting with the participants was an informal discussion arranged by their teacher. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce myself to them and ascertain not only their suitability but also their interest in being participants for this study. This initial meeting was crucial in establishing rapport with the participants and is perhaps one reason why subsequent interviews yielded such rich data. As a result of this meeting, the participants seemed to accept me as a kind of honorary insider to their group and were therefore very relaxed and forthcoming in the subsequent construction of their narratives. This initial and unofficial session took place during school hours on school grounds under the supervision of a substitute teacher who was filling in for their regular Māori language teacher. In addition, lengthy discussions were conducted with parents of two of the participants as well as with the principal of their mainstream school. These conversations do not form part of the data set, but were nevertheless deemed crucial steps as it was important that these peripheral actors had the opportunity to provide insight and practical input into the research process itself.

Two 45-minute informal group narrative sessions were then conducted. The narrative sessions were conducted at the participants' secondary school – a place that is both familiar and

comfortable. Due to the school holiday period, eight weeks elapsed between the first and second group sessions. The narrative sessions were recorded using a digital mp3 audio recorder with the permission of the participants. The relative unobtrusiveness of such a device allowed for less distraction and participants were able to 'forget' that it was there. This also contributed to a deconstruction of the formal interview process and produced a relatively uninhibited and naturalistic narrative style.

The first narrative session was used to elicit general information while the purpose of the follow-up narrative session was to give the participants the opportunity to respond to and interpret their own sense of meaning from the data, thus positioning them in dual participant/researcher roles and minimising my own assumptions, potential biases and interpretations.

The initial group session sought to establish:

1. Participants' thoughts and opinions about their current schooling situation compared with their previous experiences at their Māori-medium school;

2. If their language use habits have changed since transitioning to English-medium education;

3. Their experiences of the transition process;

4. The influences of their language background on their courses;

5. Their experiences of adjusting to a multicultural school environment after spending a majority of their academic life in a relatively monocultural environment;

6. Their opinions associated with Māori linguistic and cultural revitalisation in general and the part that Māori-medium instruction plays.

After the first narrative session, themes that had emerged as the main concerns of the participants were identified by the researcher. The follow-up session was used to give the participants the opportunity to reflect upon and clarify these themes. The main themes were: transition to mainstream education; differences in pedagogy; language loss; English at immersion schools; and language choice and threats to identity.

Although in the first session there were some initial guiding questions, the direction of the sessions was largely determined by the participants. Particularly during the second session, the participants' discursive styles and techniques shaped almost the entire narrative. The second session was very much 'owned' by the participants, with them leading and guiding much of the discussion, so that as the session progressed their stories unfolded. In this way, the participants gradually moulded their own distinct narratives. Any questioning on the part of the researcher was responsive rather than leading, which resulted in the final data set that is a co-construction of stories and experiences.

A fundamental element of the Kaupapa Māori approach is that it is a discursive practice for the researchers themselves; I kept a record of my own thoughts and reflections relating to this project and, in particular, my role as researcher. While the diary entries themselves are not included here, I feel it is nonetheless important to mention their existence, as the positioning of the self as a participant in the research process allowed for an element of self-critique as well as personal, cultural and spiritual exploration. Throughout the research process, I questioned not only the validity of this project and whether or not it could be considered to be congruent with Kaupapa Māori research, but also aspects of my own ethnicity and cultural links. These reflections provided a unique space for me *inside* the research project itself.

The narratives were transcribed, and contained in total over 14,000 words. The excerpts from the data reported in the results section below were selected as being most representative of participants' experiences in relation to the main themes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Immersion Students' Transition to Mainstream Education

A key concern for bilingual education stakeholders is how to successfully manage the acquisition of a second language while simultaneously ensuring the mother tongue does not face neglect. Students who attend Level 1 immersion programmes for a sustained period of time (research shows at least six years is required to have sufficient academic proficiency (May *et al.,* 2004; Ministry of

Education, 2006)) acquire enough of the L2 to be able to cope academically but at the same time risk linguistic deficit in the academic proficiency of their L1. The participants of this study discussed their own perceived lack of academic language proficiency in an English-medium educational setting in the extract below (refer to the key in Appendix A).

Excerpt 1 (session 1)

79. *S1:*   when I first came it was <u>dramatic</u> like it was just so

    different

80. *S2:* it was hard

81. *Researcher:*   in what way?

82. *S2:* (2.0) learning English

83. *S1:* yeah

84.   [   ]

85. *Researcher:* yip like um... all the other subjects?

86. *S1:* yeah

87.   [   ]

88. *S2:* yeah

89. *Researcher:* cos you did all your other subjects in Māori

    before right?

90.   [   ]

91. *S1:*   well... well... we didn't even

92.   have those subjects

93.　　　　[　]

94. *S2:*　　　*we didn't have science*

95.　　　　　[　]

96. *S1:*　　　　*we didn't have any science, social*

97.　*studies, art, music we had none of that*

These comments draw attention to the difficulties that the students faced when they made the transition from Māori to English-medium education. In line 79, **S1** speaks of the "dramatic" difference she experienced when she entered mainstream schooling. Both students go on to mention that they "didn't have science" (line 94) at kura kaupapa.

The Ministry of Education is responsible, and therefore ultimately accountable, for the continued development of immersion education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. One of the intended goals of immersion education, then, requires that an immersion school's curriculum consists of the same kinds of subjects that students would encounter in mainstream schooling (Ministry of Education, 2006). The impression of **S1**, though, is that her (Level 1) immersion school did not reflect the curriculum of her mainstream school as she mentions that: "We didn't have any science, social studies, art, music. We had none of that" (lines 96-97). Here, **S1** highlights the incongruence between the goals of the immersion programme compared to the sociocultural realities that are going to be an integral part of her life experience. Subjects such as maths, science and social studies are staples of the Western education model. The linguistic, social, cultural, political, economic and educational reality of living in Aotearoa/New Zealand would suggest that sufficient grounding in these subjects would be an educational imperative.

Differences in Pedagogy

Whereas the Māori philosophy of education stresses the importance of collaborative "whānau" based learning and positions the teacher in the dual role of learner and teacher (thus equalising the power

relations within the classroom and similar to the relationship between the researcher and the researched) (Smith, 1995), Western models tend to place more emphasis upon individualistic notions of success and achievement, while positioning the teacher in an authoritative role outside of and separate from the students.

In the following extract, the participants describe the different conditions they experienced in their Māori-medium classrooms and compare this to life in their English-medium classrooms.

Excerpt 2 (session 1)

170. *S1: yeah yeah they they wouldn't let anyone work until we*

     all

171. *understood what we were doing (1.0) they took us (.) step*

     by step by step (.) and

172. *then as soon we got it they would let us work and they*

     would all come

173. *individually to see you like they were just really easy and*

     (3.0) but here it's just

174. *stressful*

175. *Researcher: how... how big were the classes?*

176. *S2:   like my classroom was a bit bigger than this room*

177. *Researcher: and how many people?*

178. *S2:   about fifteen... thirteen or fifteen*

179. *Researcher: and how many people in classes here?*

180. *S1:   <u>thirty</u>*

> 181. *S2:*   *thirty something*

In lines 170-174, **S1** speaks of how teachers at her immersion school would proceed only when all students understood the material that was being worked on at the time. She explicitly mentions the "step by step" (line 171) approach taken by teachers at her immersion school and then the follow-up individual attention. She goes on to say that they (the teachers) were "easy" (line 173), implying a relaxed and low anxiety learning environment compared with the atmosphere in her mainstream classroom which she describes as "stressful" (line 174).

Implicit in **S1's** discourse is the concept of whānau and its relationship to pedagogy in Māori immersion schools. In the kura kaupapa environment, whānau-derived values and practices are used to assist both teaching and learning (Smith, 1995). The emphasis is on teaching and learning as the collective responsibility of all those involved with the kura, not merely the children's teachers. This is in contrast to the accepted practice of many mainstream English-medium schools where arguably the classroom teacher is expected to make the greatest single contribution to students' academic development. It must be noted, though, that with the substantially smaller class sizes of the kura ("about fifteen... thirteen or fifteen", line 177), teachers are much more easily able to provide students with the individual attention they need. When compared to the class size of the participants' mainstream school (**S1**: "Thirty!" line 179 and **S2**: "Thirty something", line 180) it is not surprising that these students experienced a significantly reduced level of individual attention at their mainstream school. This further highlights the chasm which separates Māori and Western pedagogies and is something that needs to be addressed if the transition process is to be made easier for students.

When asked about the differences between Māori and Pākehā ways of teaching and learning and what might make the transition process less difficult, **S1** suggests that "extra help" (lines 203 – 204) is required.

Excerpt 3 (session 1)

202. *S1:*   *I think they should have (.) kind of (.) <u>some</u> special classes (1.0) well I would*

203.   *say like... I'm not saying like you know special (.) I'm saying some extra*

204.   *help (1.0) umm (1.0) make sure the teachers understand um where we are (2.0)*

205.   *and (2.0) all NCEA[ii] students like students that come from full immersion could be*

206.   *in a special Māori class (2.0) because if (.) like the class we were in we're with*

207.   *all the other Year 10s and so because we're NCEA we sit on a different table but*

208.   *we can still hear all the English so we speak English (.) if all the full immersion*

209.   *students are together then they'll all speak Māori to each other like make them all*

210.   *not to speak English in the class*

211. *S2:*   *and it'll be fun*

212. *S1:*   *yeah*

S1 makes the logical suggestion that students who previously attended immersion schools be put together in one class according to their Māori language proficiency (lines 208-210). For **S1,** such a policy may result in increased opportunities for former immersion students to use Māori in the classroom. In line 211, **S2** adds that "it'll be fun" suggesting that such an environment would more closely mirror the participants' immersion school experience.

Language Loss

Perhaps the greatest concern that was expressed during the narrative process was the perception that some degree of Māori language loss had occurred as a direct result of the transition from Māori- medium to English-medium education institutions. The point is raised early in the first interview session when **S1** is asked how she feels about school.

Excerpt 4 (session 1)

4. *S1:um I think um compared to my old school and other subjects*

   it's good

5. *but in the Māori area it's... it's... it's... it's not as good (.)*

   we've actually found that we're

6. *losing our reo [Māori language] (.) like we can't speak it like*

   we used to

S1 points to a noticeable reduction in her te reo proficiency since attending her mainstream secondary school (lines 5-6). The point is reiterated in the follow up interview.

Excerpt 5 (session 2)

747. *we've lost all our... like most of our Māori in two years*

748.   *[   ]*

749. *S1: we've lost ten years*

750. **Researcher:**   *do you think it's in there somewhere?*

751. *S3:   oh I know it's in there (.) it's just not coming out*

752. *S1:   and it's like* <u>*waay*</u> *at the back*

753. *S3:   yip it's like* <u>*waay*</u> *over there that*

754.   *[   ]*

755. *S1:   right beside (inaudible) dark*

756. *S3:   it's so dark that they can't even see where they're*

        going to get to my

757.   *brain (.) so yeah*

By her own reckoning, **S1** estimates that she has "lost ten years" worth of language acquisition over a period of just two years. That the participants' reo is "just not coming out" (line 751) when they need or want it to suggests that - in the experience of these students - efforts at achieving bilingualism have fallen short of the mark. Both **S1** and **S3** speak of "dark" areas (lines 755-756) in the brain where their reo now dwells; areas that are inaccessible during the course of normal conversation and everyday language use. The imagery serves as a sobering reminder of the ease and speed with which majority languages are able to (re)assert their dominance over minority ones.

English at Immersion Schools

As Cummins and Swain remind us, when "*optimal* development of minority language children's academic and cognitive potential is the goal, then the school programme must aim to promote an additive form of bilingualism" (1986, p.18). During the transition to mainstream schooling, as we have just seen, there appears to be a degree of linguistic decay in the students' L2 (Māori) at the hands of L1 (English). Just as worrying are comments by **S1** who says that she

was not allowed to speak English at her Māori immersion school as it was considered taboo.

Excerpt 6 (session 2)

> 41. **S1:** *they... the teachers used to hide in the bushes ...the*
>
> *trees ...um at morning tea and*
>
> 42. *lunch with their notebook and see if anyone was*
>
> *speaking English (.) and then*
>
> 43. *they'd make you stand up in assembly and make you*
>
> *tell everyone that you spoke*
>
> 44. *English*
>
> 45. **Researcher:** *so like name and shame you?*
>
> 46. **S1:** *yeah (.) it was like a really bad sin*
>
> 47. **Researcher:** *yeah (1.0)*
>
> 48. **S1:** *yip*
>
> 49. **Researcher:** *do you think it worked?*
>
> 50. **S1:** *yeah it did (.) we were terrified*
>
> 51. *[ ]*
>
> 52. **Researcher:** *yip*
>
> 53. **S1:** *and we just spoke Māori*

Using words like "shame" (line 45), "sin" (line 46) and "terrified" (line 50) in reference to language use betrays the attitude towards English at **S1**'s immersion school. Of course, there are also

sociocultural and sociopolitical forces at work here which cannot be ignored. Just 30 years ago, te reo Māori sat precariously on the precipice of language death. Māori medium education initiatives have made an invaluable contribution to the revitalisation and maintenance of te reo Māori (May, 2001) but, in this case at least, seem not to have heeded findings in bilingual research which encourage an additive approach (Baker, 2006; Cummins and Swain, 1986). In the following extract, S1 describes her views on the absence of English instruction at her kura kaupapa.

Excerpt 7 (session 1)

286. *Int:*   *did you do any science at your kura kaupapa?*

287. *S1:*   *nah (.) none at all (.) we don't get to science I think*

    until high school we don't

288.   *get to learn a bit of English till high school*

In line 288, S1 tells of how students "don't get to learn a bit of English till [Māori immersion] high school". This could be one contributing factor to the feelings of anxiety that all three of the participants experienced upon arrival to their mainstream school, where they were expected to seamlessly assimilate – culturally, academically and linguistically - to lessons delivered through the medium of English. In this instance, there appears to be scope for the kind of literacy programme described by Berryman and Glynn (2003) which endeavours to provide immersion students with the English literacy skills necessary to cope with mainstream schooling without compromising their te reo.

Language Choice and Threats to Identity

It became clear through the participants' discourse that they were experiencing conflict regarding their language choice. Their choice to use English instead of Māori as the language with which they communicate with each other is at odds with their assertion that Māori is their native language.

Excerpt 8 (session 2)

603. **S1:**   *yeah you know to be honest I consider Māori to be*

        the first language of

604.   *New Zealand (.) I don't care who speaks English... what*

        percentage

605.   *speaks English (.) I don't care*

606. **S3:**   *like if you're in New Zealand then Māori's your first*

        language

607. **S1:**   *it makes me* <u>*sooo*</u> *angry when I talk about that (.) nah*

        honestly it just

608.   *makes me really angry*

In lines 603-604, **S1** states that she considers "Māori to be the first language of New Zealand". Her view is supported by **S3** when she affirms, "if you're in New Zealand then Māori's your first language" (line 606). Here both participants allude to the inherent link that exists between language and identity. Their claims that Māori is the "first language" of Aotearoa/New Zealand are an articulation of the cultural links to past, present and future generations which are transmitted through language. Furthermore, the inferences embedded in this narrative point to the negative aspects inherent in their mainstream education. In particular, the ways in which the participants' reo (language) and tikanga (culture) have become undermined as a result of the heavy linguistic burden of performing academically in a mainstream educational setting where the dominant language is English. These girls, it seems, are prevented from occupying a dual space whereby they can maintain strong cultural links - through language and other cultural customs - while at the same time being given the opportunity to achieve academically

within mainstream education. Instead, they find themselves at the crossroads, having to make a choice to follow one path or another.

Later the participants told me that this conflict of identity could be mitigated by te reo Māori having a more visible presence in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Excerpt 9 (session 2)

603. *Researcher:*   *so what would you like to see?*

604. *S1:*   *um Māori (inaudible) everywhere*

605. *S3:*   *like we'd actually like to see those Māori signs up (.)*

     but that hasn't

606.   *happened*

607. *S1:*   *we would actually like to have (1.0) Mainstream (1.0)*

608.   *[   ]*

609. *S3:*   *more Māori kohangas more Māori schools*

610. *S1:*   *it doesn't have to be mainstream (.) kura kaupapa*

     real science but in Māori

S3 calls for more Māori signage (line 611) while S1 argues that adding to the number of Māori schools is the answer. She would like to see "real science but in Māori" at kura kaupapa, for example.

The call to further align mainstream modes of education with Māori ones, and vice versa, has been a common theme throughout this analysis. The participants have repeatedly pointed to shortcomings, at both their Māori and mainstream schools, which they argue have acted as barriers to their overall development – socially, culturally and academically. From their claims of insufficient exposure to academic English at their immersion schools to the

differences in pedagogical practices at their mainstream school, these students have consistently alluded to the need for a more holistic and inclusive approach to bilingual education in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings presented in this study point to the challenges that Māori immersion students face when they transition from Māori to mainstream schooling. These challenges include differences in the approaches to pedagogy, the encouragement of monolingualism at Māori immersion schools, Māori language loss in mainstream schools, and perceived threats to ethnic identity and how these contribute to Māori students' language choices in mainstream schools. The daunting nature of these challenges might suggest that the Māori language revitalisation effort and the continued academic success of Māori students is under threat. Currently, there is no clear and implementable policy outlining best practice for transition students.

In recognition of the importance of cultural and linguistic maintenance, parents are increasingly choosing to put their children through some form of immersion education. As we have seen, this necessarily positions immersion students at one extreme of a linguistic continuum where all teaching and learning is conducted in Māori. Upon entry into mainstream education, these children often find themselves at the opposite extreme where English is the language of instruction and approaches to pedagogy differ immensely from the immersion model.

The goal should be for immersion students to attain a level of linguistic proficiency in both languages in order to succeed academically. To accomplish this, students need to be given the opportunity to exploit their existing language base (L1) and take advantage of the interdependent roles that both the L1 and L2 will have in their development. It is therefore necessary that both immersion and mainstream institutions implement complementary strategies with the expressed goal being the child's bilingual/biliterate development. The initiative taken by the parents in the Berryman and Glynn (2003) study (described earlier) needs to become the rule rather than the exception. If the intervention of the parents, teachers

and administrators described in that study were to be mirrored by mainstream institutions, then the transition process would be much less challenging for students. In other words, the responsibility of producing bilingual and biliterate students should not be solely that of the immersion school, but must also be partly assumed by mainstream schools.

Mainstream schools also need to be made more aware of the cultural and pedagogical needs of students who transition from Māori medium education. If mainstream institutions were given a cultural and political mandate to implement transition programmes which seek not merely to *assimilate* immersion students but rather to capitalise on their linguistic backgrounds, then students like the ones interviewed here would stand a better chance of achieving full bilingualism (i.e., academic and conversational). Such awareness must extend beyond the Māori language classroom and into all facets of the child's education. Schools must accept that part of the responsibility for Māori cultural and linguistic maintenance rests upon their shoulders too. One way of achieving this would be to establish the kinds of peer mentoring (or *cooperative learning*) programmes (see Richards and Renandya, 2002) which acknowledge the reciprocal and collective processes of whānau (i.e., collaborative) based education practices. Mainstream schools could adopt transition programmes and policies that reflect, or are sensitive to, the basic tenets of Kaupapa Māori theory and praxis.

These efforts, though, will require significant amounts of on-going policy planning and implementation. The challenge for both Māori-medium immersion/bilingual programmes and mainstream schools is to ensure that intergenerational transmission can take place. This means that today's Māori-medium students must be given the opportunity to allow their reo to flourish as they enter adulthood and themselves become parents and teachers, thus facilitating transmission to future generations.

Continuing research in the area of Māori immersion schooling has an important part to play in the maintenance of Māori language and culture. However, this may require a paradigmatic shift in approach and reconstitution of accepted norms in values and more integrated research methodologies (Roberts, 2003). Linda Smith (1999) writes of the need for indigenous peoples to 'research back' in a similar vein

to which post-colonial literature facilitates a process of 'writing' or 'talking back'. Researching back involves the implementation of Māori initiated research practices that utilize principles relating to tino rangitiratanga (self-determination) with the intention of reclaiming traditional Māori ways of knowing. This approach involves a certain amount of 'knowingness' of the coloniser, a recovery of the idea of the indigenous self and a struggle for self-determination. It also requires the "unmasking and deconstruction of imperialism in its old and new formations alongside a search for sovereignty: for reclamation of language, knowledge and culture; and for the social transformation of the colonial relations between the native and the settler" (Smith, 2005, p.88).

Perhaps most strikingly, it also offers a challenge to indigenous and non-indigenous researchers alike to discard Eurocentric, dominant and subjugating methodologies in favour of processes which are inclusive, holistic and sensitive to the traditions, histories, practices, and experiences of indigenous peoples. It could also serve as a call for alternative approaches to be accepted by the mainstream academic community. After all, change is one of the cornerstones of Kaupapa Māori theory and praxis, and change is important not only for future research into the language rights of indigenous peoples, but also for addressing issues of power in the relationship between the researcher and the researched. It is vital that further research in the area of Māori immersion schooling (and Māori education in general) attempts as much as possible to reflect the transformative ideals of Kaupapa Māori theory and to provide a space for Māori to 'research back' and re-establish old cultural patterns as well as creating new ones.

On a personal level, the Kaupapa Māori framework offered an opportunity for this researcher to make small, initial steps towards a connectedness with my unknown whakapapa (meaning genealogy, but also closely associated with notions of personal identity). The Kaupapa Māori framework also provided me with a space inside the research which might otherwise not have existed. I had the privilege of co-occupying this space with the research participants and learned infinitely more as a result of my interactions with them than is reflected in this write-up.

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APPENDIX A: KEY

Int   Interviewer

S1   Student 1

S2   Student 2

S3   Student 3

(.)   pause

( )   omitted/paraphrased/nonverbal speech

(1.0) second pause

[ ]   speech overlap

____ emphasis/stress

APPENDIX B: SIX KEY PRINCIPLES OF KAUPAPA MORI THEORY (ADAPTED FROM SMITH, 2003)

1. The principle of Tino Rangatiratanga (self-determination) or relative autonomy

   The key point here is that Māori have increased control over their own life and cultural well-being, which is the case in Māori schools. In addition, Māori are able to make decisions and choices which protect *their* cultural, political and economic preferences.

2. *The principle of validating and legitimating cultural aspirations and identity*

   Here the notion of "being Māori" is taken for granted and there is little need to "justify one's own identity" (like in mainstream educational settings).

   Also, Kaupapa Māori educational contexts emphasise the need for Māori language, knowledge, culture and values to be validated and legitimated by themselves. This is a 'given', a 'taken for granted' base in these schools and allows for cultural aspirations to be more secure and assured. In this way Kaupapa Māori schools provide not only linguistic support but also that of cultural maintenance and identity and therefore these educational settings have strong emotional and spiritual elements which have relevance and consequentiality for Māori.

3. *The principle of incorporating culturally preferred pedagogy*

   Kaupapa Māori schools are able to "connect" with the cultural and socioeconomic circumstances of Māori communities and provide culturally preferred learning and teaching practices.

4. *The principle of mediating socio-economic and home difficulties*

   The fourth principle is one which commits Māori people to taking schooling seriously due to strong ngakau (emotional) and wairua (spiritual) elements. Such elements are "powerful

and all embracing" and thus, schooling can be seen as a positive experience despite other social and economic impediments which may exist within the community. In this way schooling is made a priority and transformed into a culturally collective practice which draws on the social capital of participants.

5. *The principle of incorporating social structures which emphasize the 'collective' rather than the 'individual' such as the notion of the extended family*

Here the notion of whānau and extended family structures give ideological support to the circumstances described above. This is done by "providing a collective and shared support structure to alleviate and mediate social and economic difficulties, parenting difficulties, health difficulties and others".

In other words, the whānau takes collective responsibility to assist and intervene, provides support but also requires reciprocity in that individual members are called on to "invest" in the whānau group. This has ultimately meant that the whānau collective has brought parents who were previously hostile toward schooling into the frame. This is a major feature of Kura Kaupapa schools which has committed parents to reinvesting in schooling for their children.

6. *The principle of shared and collective vision*

Te Aho Matua, the formal charter and collective vision of Kura Kaupapa Māori, provides guidelines for excellence in Māori, (i.e., what a good education should consist of) as well as acknowledging Pākehā culture and skills that are needed by Māori to fully participate at every level of contemporary NZ society. This principle also builds upon the kaupapa of kohanga reo in providing parameters unique to Kura Kaupapa Māori schooling which has the "power and ability to connect with Māori aspirations, politically, socially, economically and culturally". Such a powerful vision, then, can provide impetus and direction.

APPENDIX C: COMPARATIVE TABLE OF CRITICAL THEORY AND KAUPAPA MAORI THEORY

Theoretical features that exist within Kaupapa Māori theory which may in turn be positioned within the paradigm of Critical Theory (adapted from Tooley, 2000, pp.23-24).

Critical Theory	Kaupapa Māori Theory
Theory	Theorisation of Kaupapa Māori
Critique of Positivism	Positioned within Anti-Positivism debate
Enlightenment	Conscientisation
Emancipation	Tino Rangatiratanga(Self-Determination)
Marxism	Treaty of Waitangi
Critique of Instrumental Rationality	Critique of Western Ideology
Analysis of Culture	Tikanga Māori (inheritance of Māori value and belief systems)
Analysis of Relationships	Concept of Whānaunatanga (kinship)
Centrality of Aesthetics	Tikanga Māori
Analysis of Psychoanalysis	Taha Wairua (life force or spiritual health), Taha Tinana (physical health), Taha Whānau (family health) and Taha Hinengaru (psychological and emotional health) (Holism)
Explanation	Notions of Whānau (family), Hapū (sub-tribe), Iwi (tribe) and Whakapapa (geneology)
Language	Validation and Legitimation of Te Reo Māori

[i] Māori bilingual programmes are classified at four levels (1-4) based on the proportion of teaching in the Māori language, as follows: Level 1 = 81% -100%; Level 2 = 51% - 80%; Level 3 = 31% - 50%; Level 4 = 12% - 30%.

[ii] National Certificates of Educational Achievement are qualifications awarded to secondary school students in New Zealand.