

Literature Survey on Second Language Learning and Teaching as
it Relates to Te Reo Māori as a Subject in Schools

Prepared for Learning Media Ltd

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Lift Education Ltd

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1. OVERVIEW AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Over the last forty years, research into how people learn second languages has grown and accelerated. Research has been done into language learning all around the world, but not very much of it is specifically New Zealand research. There is a small body of research into learning te reo Māori, but most of it relates to learning in immersion or bilingual situations. This survey applies the general body of second language learning research to the context of learning te reo Māori as a subject in English-medium schools.

The evidence from research now paints quite a complex picture with many factors, from both the wider context and the particular learning situation, combining to affect learning. Early research focussed on the possibility that one particular method or focus would prove to be the best overall. This has not proved to be the case. Research now identifies some general characteristics of successful language learning and teaching that are largely accepted throughout the profession. These are:

- **appropriateness** – the language must suit the situation it is used in,
- **message focus** – learners need to focus on real meanings,
- **psycholinguistic processing** – learners should be aware of and use various thinking and planning processes to help their language learning,
- **risk taking** – learners need to make guesses, try things out, and learn from their errors,
- **free practice** – from the beginning, sub skills and language items should be integrated while learners use the language they are learning.

(Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p.173).

Research also shows that (contrary to what some influential theories suggested earlier¹) the following are important:

- **output** - learners need to use language productively in both speaking and writing, and they need to be pushed to develop their use of new and more advanced language forms (Swain, 1995; Lightbown, 2000) and
- **focus on form** – teachers need to ensure that learners’ attention is explicitly engaged with language forms in the course of their learning (Norris & Ortega, 2001).

These characteristics can be incorporated into any method. The first five are particularly associated with a communicative approach to language learning². However, as the evidence has built up about the importance of **output** and **focus on form** these are now being integrated into most programmes, if they were not previously included.

¹ e.g. The Input Hypothesis, Krashen & Terrell (1983)

² Usually called Communicative Language Teaching - CLT, or CLL – Communicative Language Learning

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In New Zealand schools, a communicative approach to learning languages is recommended³, and all the above characteristics are suggested in various ways in curriculum material relating to learning languages. This approach fits in well with the various aspects of the New Zealand Curriculum Framework, and with specific initiatives in schools, such as those relating to Literacy and Numeracy, Technology, quality teaching for diverse students, and a focus on sustained student achievement for all students.

2. THE CONTEXT FOR TE REO MAORI LEARNING AS A SUBJECT IN NEW ZEALAND SCHOOLS

While the above pedagogical characteristics apply to all language teaching contexts, learning te reo Māori as a second language in Aotearoa / New Zealand is a unique context in which to apply these characteristics effectively. Various factors in societies relate to an increase or decrease in language knowledge and use, and teachers and schools have to take these into account in their teaching programmes.

Te reo Māori is a taonga under the Tiriti o Waitangi, and an official language of New Zealand which can be used in Parliament and the Law Courts, under the 1987 Maori Language Act. There is education at all levels with Maori as a sole or bilingual medium of instruction. After English, Māori is the language with the largest number of speakers, and Māori is in a special category as the country's first language. *The Health of the Maori Language in 2001* shows that "For the first time in decades the speaking population has stabilised – not declined...".⁴ *Te Reo Māori i te Hāpori Māori Language in the Community* reports approximately 130,000 speakers of Māori, which is around 25 percent of the Māori population⁵.

This means that the context for people learning te reo Māori in New Zealand, including students in schools, is a second language context rather than a foreign language context. There is plenty of real-life opportunity for them to use the language.

Conditions in Society

Some of the main factors influencing learning at the level of society are (Spolsky, 1989)

- the status of the language (national, official, international etc)
- the attitudes to the language (valuable, useless, prestigious, trade etc)
- the support for the language (government policies, TV and other media, schools etc).

The Australian experience (Clyne, 1991) shows that all these factors can be altered and manipulated by government policies and programmes. The government may actively institute or promote certain developments which have the effect of enhancing the status, attitudes or support;

³ see Ministry of Education, *Curriculum Update 52*, September 2002, p.4; and *Learning Languages* (2002, p.31)

⁴ Te Puni Kōkiri, 2002, retrieved from the www.tpk.govt.nz website, October 16, 2002

⁵ Te Puni Kōkiri, 2004, p. 26, retrieved from the www.tpk.govt.nz website, August 4, 2004

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or central and local government may adopt a more neutral attitude to languages which removes previous barriers to the spread of languages other than English.

Te Reo Māori has a high official status in New Zealand and is used considerably. However, in general, the attitude to using languages other than English in New Zealand is not very positive. New Zealanders of European background make up 80 percent of the population and 90 percent of them can speak only one language⁶. In addition, (as Don Brash's Orewa speech of January 2004 has shown) there is a vein of negativity towards things Māori which can be readily activated, and the community is divided in its attitudes to te reo Māori.

...a Massey University study issued this week found that more than half of the 1000 New Zealanders surveyed thought Māori language was worth saving and added value to the national identity, but just under half also said attempts to increase its usage would further divide communities.

About three-quarters of respondents did not think that Māori should be a core subject at secondary school on a par with English, mathematics or science or that there should be more Māori-language television programmes or more bilingual signs and notices. (Dominion Post 28/7/04 p.A10)

Recent government support for language learning in general and Māori learning and achievement are likely to help schools increase the learning of te Reo. The situation of the Welsh language in Wales is quite similar to Māori in New Zealand. Welsh is now a compulsory subject in Wales so that all school students from 5 to 16 study Welsh either as a first or second language, and the use and knowledge of the language are increasing (Williams, 2001).

In Wales in 2000, 75 per cent were of the opinion that Welsh has a future as a living language for the foreseeable future, and that bilingual skills are an advantage in the job market. 84 percent of young people between 16 and 24 express strong feelings of Welsh identity, and most have a healthy attitude towards the language⁷. The expansion of bilingual activity in Wales as a result of government policies has led to further learning and use, and a perception of the language as useful.

In addition to government policies, Clyne (1991) identifies a very large number of factors that affect the learning and use of various community languages in Australia. These include: gender, age, marriage patterns, whether the language has a major place in the particular community's cultural value system, the cultural similarity to the dominant group, geographic distribution of the members of the cultural group, parents' literacy level, their interest in the quality of their children's language, political motivations, opportunities and need to use the language, the visibility of the community, the community institutions such as churches, schools, media, a more pluralist approach in the whole community and dominant group, whether the language is supported (at least attitudinally) by the schools, and so on.

Within language classes, and the school curriculum as a whole, attitudes to languages and cultures can be directly addressed by explicitly exploring attitudinal issues. In te reo Māori learning this can be facilitated if the full range of contemporary Māori life, including contentious issues, is addressed in the curriculum and supporting material. The preponderance of young, urban Māori and their activities can be reflected and explored. The perceived usefulness and social interest of languages is an important factor in learning them, and the more learning relates to current contexts

⁶ Data from Census 2001, see www.statistics.govt.nz

⁷ Welsh Language Board, 21 July 2000; www.bwrdd-yr-iaith.org.uk

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of actual use that students are likely to have some interest in, the more they are likely to be motivated to learn the language (e.g. Brown 1991).

With such a range of social factors affecting the learning and use of languages, it is not possible for the Te Reo Māori curriculum, and the learners and teachers who use it, to operate in a social vacuum. It is therefore very important for the whole curriculum, and the whole school, to contribute to making these factors operate positively for learning te reo Māori. Specifically, there should be

- effective links so that parents support what teachers and students are trying to achieve in their learning, and
- good alignment of curriculum goals, resources, and pedagogical practices so that the totality of what goes on in the school supports the learning of te reo Māori (see Alton-Lee, 2003, pp.vii & ix; and Franken & McComish, 2003, p152-3).

This is a particular challenge in secondary schools where the curriculum is relatively fragmented rather than integrated, and where the structure of timetabling and subject choice tends to limit students' desires to study or continue with languages. One study found that although parental attitudes to *foreign* language study were quite positive, the low level of foreign language study in New Zealand schools (see Table 1) results "not so much from negative attitudes but rather from barriers within the education system as a whole and individual school cultures" (Shearn, 2003, p.i).

Table 1: Numbers of learners of languages at year levels in NZ schools

Subject	Primary	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11	Yr12	Yr13	Total Secondary	Schools
English	?	62035	59358	55783	41725	18088	236989	472
Te Reo	?	11504	5786	3325	1573	680	22868	373
French	?	13739	5603	2714	1374	823	24253	306
Japanese	?	11227	4886	2850	1460	1028	21449	290

(Source: www.minedu.govt.nz Students as at 1/7/2003; retrieved 27/7/2004)

3. RESEARCH INTO EFFECTIVE SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

3.1 PEDAGOGICAL FACTORS

The second level of research that relates to language learning is research into the pedagogical factors that affect language learning in classrooms.

Research increasingly shows the importance of teachers working to engage individual learners in attitudes and activities that are known to promote learning. In the case of language learning this means engaging with their level of knowledge and attitudes to language/s and society, to learning, to particular language items and skills, to links with other learning across the curriculum and outside of school.

All these aspects need to be addressed directly in the curriculum and associated guidelines and material. Objectives in all relevant areas are needed, and teachers are likely to need guidance on how to move students towards these objectives. If the available curriculum material focuses largely on grammatical items and provides teachers with no explicit direction and support in relation to other objectives (such as discourse, or socio-cultural learning, for example) these are unlikely to be well addressed by teachers.

The general characteristics of successful language learning and teaching discussed above - appropriateness, message focus, psycholinguistic processing, risk taking, free practice, output, explicit focus on form – are worked out in more detail in the specific principles for language teachers listed below.

Research-based principles for effective second language learning and teaching:

What are we teaching? – the content

- A language forms part of a sociocultural context and learning will be more effective when knowledge and understanding about the culture and the community is learned together with the language.
- Sociolinguistic competence should form part of language learning at all levels so that when language forms are learned, learners also know when and how to use them.
- Learners are given explicit and focussed instruction on all aspects of language.
- Vocabulary learning is systematically targetted.

Who are we teaching? – taking account of the learners

- Learners' present knowledge, beliefs, motivations, interests, and ability in relation to language learning and the particular language are taken into account.
- Learners' goals and needs are taken into account so that learning is purposeful to them.

- The first language can be a helpful support, especially in the initial stages of second language learning.

How do we teach them? –interacting, using language, comprehending

- Learners are given many opportunities to use language meaningfully in a range of contexts, as well as to comprehend language.
- Learners have many opportunities to interact about meaningful material with peers, other users of the language, and especially with the teacher.
- Tasks and activities are designed to allow for repetition of aspects of language, and to facilitate new learning in appropriate language contexts. The approach to language learning is not a linear one.

Progressing Students' Learning

Language scaffolding in all areas allows for a 'balanced development towards the three goals of restructuring, accuracy and fluency'. (Richards, 2002, p.49)

- Learners are assisted to develop the ability to direct and expand their own learning through metacognitive strategies.
- Second language assessment is meaningful to the learners, systematic, comprehensive and regular.

The following sections explore these principles in more detail.

3.2 WHAT ARE WE TEACHING? – THE CONTENT

Communicative approaches to language learning generally try to ensure that the content reflects the needs or purposes of the students. The principles of *appropriateness* and *message focus* refer partly to this connection with real life needs.

Ideally, a needs analysis of actual or typical learners would be undertaken, and the content tailored specifically to those needs (e.g. Council of Europe, 2001, p.xii). In developing content for learning te reo Māori in New Zealand, an analysis of student needs is likely to identify rather different needs and content from those identified for other foreign languages taught here.

A language forms part of a sociocultural context and learning will be more effective when knowledge and understanding about the culture and the community is learned together with the language.

In the New Zealand context, all the languages curricula sit within the NZ Curriculum Framework which states (p.10) that learning another language enriches students “intellectually, socially, and culturally, offers an understanding of the ways in which other people think and behave....”

It is important to note here that a large number of students learning te Reo Māori are Māori. It is not ‘other people’s’ language and culture they are learning, and most of them will be able to bring a considerable degree of cultural expertise to the classroom which teachers would be expected to build on. One of the Principles (p.7) of the Curriculum Framework states that ‘programmes will build on students’ previous learning experiences’. There is also a particular Principle in the Framework which recognises the significance of the Treaty of Waitangi and refers to valuing and learning about Māori language, culture, tradition, history, and values.

This curriculum context is important for te reo Māori learning because when real language use is the goal of learning, learners need an understanding of the culture relating to that language. The cultural understanding they need includes knowledge, attitudes, values and non-verbal behaviour in that community. It has been noted that learners who have no understanding of this dimension lack the ability to perform communicatively in the language in an acceptable way.

This applies to comprehension as well as to production of language. A learner may not understand the literal meaning of a sentence without a certain amount of cultural knowledge (Simpson, 1997); or the implications and effect of that sentence may not be properly understood without a knowledge of the social and cultural context.

There are particular ways of behaving on certain occasions, towards certain people, and in particular areas of discourse in every culture, and for a user of the language these are just as important in the effectiveness of their language use as the language itself. Without this dimension, linguistic competence and performance may be excellent, but communicative competence is inadequate (Hymes, 1974; Lyons, 1996). For example, to misjudge when it is appropriate to speak is likely to be regarded more negatively by native speakers than speaking at an appropriate time with many errors.

Conversely, if right from the beginning, learners are equipped with an understanding of some aspect of the culture, and the ability to use some basic language in that context, they have an achievement which is useful and meaningful to them. An example might be teaching students when and how to do a simple *mihi*, and how to behave in that context. This achievement can feed back into motivation and prevent learners becoming discouraged by the slow progress they generally experience in second language learning when it is just one subject in their school timetable.

There has been a lot of interest recently in the importance of the cultural dimensions of language teaching and learning but also in the many pitfalls involved in directly instructing students about how to behave in another culture.

Kohonen provides a very thorough and interesting exploration of this aspect of learning which could be useful in language teaching in New Zealand schools (Kohonen et al, 2001). Kohonen’s approach, which has been explored in a number of programmes, is to engage students fully in a personal ethnographic exploration which leads them to explore and identify both their own values and cultural positioning, and aspects of the target culture. This helps students to understand the

relative nature of cultural values and practices, and moves them away from an ‘us and them’ or ‘interesting specimen’ approach to the target language and culture.

In this approach, students work bilingually, using and developing the new language together with their research and explorations which, at beginning levels, have to make considerable use of the first language. Skilful use of such an approach could be helpful in educating the understanding of the large numbers of students who study te Reo Māori in Years 9 and 10 only.

Sociolinguistic competence should form part of language learning at all levels so that when language forms are learned learners also know when and how to use them.

In some languages it is possible to use imperatives such as “Give me \$10” or “Sit there” as a polite request (Reiter, 1997; Rose, 1999), whereas in English it is usually necessary to say something like “Would you mind lending me \$10?”. In English you can just say “Hello” or “Hi” to a person, but in many other languages you need to add something more, such as a name or title, or another sentence.

Learners often do not notice these differences unless their attention is drawn to them by a teacher. However, they usually find sociolinguistic differences interesting to learn, and there are such differences at all levels of language. For example, it has been found that even quite advanced Dutch learners of English do not use words like *would* and *could* in English business letters as often as native speakers use them to reduce any possibly negative impact of what they are saying (Braecke et al, 1997).

Some Spanish-speaking children in US schools were considered to lack logical text structure in their English writing. However, this reflected differences in Spanish discourse patterns, and the children’s Spanish writing was considered well structured (Escamilla and Coady, 2001). When Chinese writers write an introductory background in essays or reports they may begin hundreds of years further in the past than English writers do, and they carry this over to writing in English to the surprise of English readers who find the writing is badly organised. Similar differences exist between languages in spoken discourse, and it is part of the teacher’s job to make these explicit to learners.

Of course, teachers have to be sensitive to the possibility that learners may need the option of departing from the norms, or being rude (Rose, 1999), or may want to interact in a different way than the polite and relatively formal language use the teacher probably has in mind (e.g. their focus may be with youth sub-cultures, Putz, 1997, p173).

Sociolinguistic learning is about knowing what the choices and possibilities are, what effect they will have on listeners or readers, and about developing the ability to make skilled use of those possibilities in the language.

Learners are given explicit and focused instruction on all aspects of language

In language teaching the fashion has swung between teaching nothing but grammar and linguistic forms, and not teaching them at all. However, in the last 20 years enough firm evidence has

gradually built up to show that while learning must focus on communication of meaning, there must also be some explicit focus on developing grammar and linguistic forms. Students who have no grammatical focus or instruction at all, do not progress so quickly, and often do not reach the same ultimate levels of achievement (Swain, 1995; Lightbown, 2000). There has also been an increasing focus towards more understanding of how the whole grammatical system develops in a particular area (such as time, or pronoun reference, for example), and how meanings (such as sequences, or comparisons) are expressed through grammar.

A recent important meta-analysis of 49 studies of second learning indicated that “focused L2 instruction results in large ... gains, and that explicit types of instruction are more effective than implicit types...” (Norris & Ortega 2000, p.417).

We can now say that second language classes should definitely include explicit teaching of language forms. Explicit teaching means that the teacher makes sure that the learners’ attention is engaged with the language and how the forms of the language are constructed. This can be done either in the course of working with language on a meaning focussed activity, or as a separate written or spoken activity focussing on the language forms themselves. It does not necessarily mean that the teacher gives oral explanations about grammar.

However there are strong, though not entirely fixed, developmental sequences for the acquisition of grammar, and it is now accepted in second language learning research that it is not possible for learners to learn to *use* certain grammatical features until they already have control of certain developmentally earlier ones (Pienemann, 1999; Ellis, 2002). This means that although teachers should choose particular grammatical features to target, only some of the learners may be ready to develop full control of using this feature. Attention to the same feature will have to be recycled more than once, and grammatical accuracy in language *use* of particular features at particular points in time for everyone in the class is not a realistic goal. They may all be able to show that they know about a form (such as a particular type of negative sentence) in form focussed exercises, but when some learners come to use language in writing and speaking, that declarative knowledge is not available to them.

Ellis makes some specific proposals about how to teach grammar. An important idea is that the main goal is not performance or correct use, but awareness. Learners need to notice language forms, and develop an understanding of how they operate in the language. Then they are in a position to gradually bring them into use after further experience with the language.

- We aim to teach grammar as awareness, focusing on helping learners to develop explicit knowledge.
- We include a grammar component in the language curriculum, to be used alongside a communicative task-based component
- We teach grammar only to learners who have already developed a substantial lexical base and are able to engage in message-focussed tasks, albeit with language that is grammatically inaccurate
- We focus on areas of grammar known to cause problems to learners
- We can teach grammar separately, it is not necessary to integrate it with the task-based component

(Ellis, 2002, p. 31)

The other main aspects of language which need to be addressed are pronunciation, the organisation of discourse, and vocabulary.

Vocabulary learning is systematically targeted.

The Importance of Vocabulary Learning

Vocabulary (or lexical) learning is probably more important for good progress than anything else in language learning, as has been more widely recognised recently. Even Chomsky, the father of contemporary studies in grammar, has recently adopted a “lexicon-is-prime” position (Richards and Rodgers 2001 p. 132). Theorists are now more inclined to think of language as primarily lexis (vocabulary) stuck together with grammar, rather than as primarily grammar with words slotted in⁸.

Ellis (2002, p.31) in his discussion of the place of grammar instruction in second language learning maintains that the early stages of language acquisition are lexical rather than grammatical. His view is that early learning should be focused on vocabulary, and that grammatical instruction comes after learners are able to engage in message-focussed tasks using whatever language they have regardless of grammatical correctness. It makes sense for learners to focus on words because lexical errors cause more communication difficulties than grammatical errors, and they are more harshly judged by native speaking listeners (Ellis, 1994).

Although vocabulary is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language, it is often dealt with only incidentally in the preparation of language teachers (Richards, 2000, p.xi). Since Communicative Language Teaching is a meaning focussed approach, we might expect it would pay a great deal of attention to vocabulary, but it is usually given a secondary status and there is little guidance about how to handle vocabulary except as a support for functional teaching of items such as “seeking permission”, “expressing preference” (Schmitt, 2000, p.14).

Even with high language use learners, such as NESB learners of English in New Zealand schools or Māori learners in immersion or bilingual classes, the vocabulary learning is often not adequately addressed and their vocabulary frequently lags behind what they need to express themselves well.

A list was made of the content words used by the students along with the number of times each was used....A glance at that list indicates that one of the most useful activities that teachers can engage in is vocabulary building. (Houia , 2002, p.68)

Winifred Bauer also found that bilingual learners she tested had vocabularies which were inadequate for a simple speaking task in Māori, which they could perform well in English (personal communication, 2004).

⁸ “language consists of grammaticalized lexis, not lexicalized grammar” (Moudraia, 2001, p.1).

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The basic dimension of lexical competence is size. All other things being equal, learners with big vocabularies are more proficient in a wide range of language skills than learners with smaller vocabularies, and there is some evidence to support the view that vocabulary skills make a significant contribution to almost all aspects of L2 proficiency (Meara, 1996, p.37).

For native speakers of a language the number of words known is positively correlated with reading comprehension, and with content knowledge, which in turn is correlated with writing performance. There is evidence that the same holds true for second language learners. The growth of vocabulary is perhaps the single most important aspect of second language learning. Nation (2001) makes the following observations about the place of vocabulary in second language learning.

- in reading, learners primarily need vocabulary, then subject matter knowledge, then syntactic structure (p. 145)
- students with the biggest vocabulary are the best readers (p.145)
- reading outside class is the most significant predictor of oral communicative ability (p.154)
- reading for pleasure is strongly related to second language proficiency in general (p.154)
- the holistic quality of learners' writing generally correlates with good vocabulary use in the writing (p.177)
- learners need to know almost all the words (98%) in a text to have adequate comprehension and read for pleasure (p.146)
- learners need to know at least 3000 word families to read unsimplified English texts (p.146)

If teachers can manage vocabulary learning well, and provide learners with suitable texts and motivation for independent reading, that will be the best way to improve oral language as well as reading, writing, and general language proficiency.

This is a very simple point, but unfortunately there is usually a lot of work for teachers to do to develop a good vocabulary programme and to locate and organise suitable reading materials. These are rarely the things supplied in sufficient quantity or quality as curriculum support materials.

Teaching Vocabulary

Students will pick up a certain number of words through incidental learning as they meet them in their class activities, but an explicit focus on word learning is also necessary to achieve the amounts of word learning required. Some words are learned the first or second time they are met but most words need many encounters before they become permanently learned, and some of those will disappear if they are not used again for a long time.

There are many aspects to learning a word – the meaning, the spelling and pronunciation, the grammar of the word, and the other words it is used with, and so on. In addition, a person's vocabulary is a network of words that operate as an interconnected net rather than as individual items (Meara, 2004, p.154). Learners have to gradually build up their richness and interconnectedness of word knowledge, and its relationship with cultural meanings.

Recent research suggests that the degree of mental processing or involvement with the word during the language learning tasks is the most important factor in whether a word is learned. Laufer and Hulstijn (2001) re-analysed a number of studies of vocabulary acquisition through incidental learning and concluded that what made an effective task from the point of view of vocabulary learning was the involvement load of the student with the word in the course of the task.

If successful completion of the task required the understanding or use of the word (*need*), and if students had to search out the meaning of the word (rather than have it provided for them) (*search*), and if they had to consider and evaluate whether or how the meaning they had found was appropriate (*evaluate*), then they were more likely to retain the meaning of the word. The results suggested that *need* and *evaluation* may be more important factors in word learning than *search*.

The more effective tasks involved selecting a meaning from several options, looking meaning(s) up in dictionaries, doing vocabulary exercises, using words in original sentences and composition writing, negotiating meaning, and input or output, through interaction. In the less effective tasks, the meanings were given, students read without looking up or investigating words, there was no negotiation, or no need for output.

The principles of best practice in vocabulary learning are:

- pay a great deal of attention to word learning, and specify vocabulary objectives clearly
- focus on meaning and use in context – both receptive and productive use
- do this through activities which increase involvement of the students with word meaning and use.
- target particular words – based on frequency and need
- use whatever strategies for learning are effective for the learners, including repetition, memorization of lists, and words shown by pictures, and translation.
- make sure that learners have many opportunities to work with the same words over and over again

Teaching and learning content

It is important for both teachers and learners to have explicit knowledge of what the content of learning is, and for curriculum statements, achievement objectives, and supporting materials to correctly identify all content areas to be covered. Learners also need access to this information so that they are able to develop some independence in their learning.

Communicative approaches have students working with the content in realistic ways, including reading and writing tasks. If they are to make good progress, their learning cannot be confined to the language classes, and this means that students need to have access to a considerable amount of written or recorded material they can work with independently of the teacher. Increasingly as they progress, they need access to reference tools such as dictionaries.

Teachers need plenty of opportunity for networking and Professional Development if they are to be confident in all content areas. They need the ability to use the language, but also to be able to analyse it and work with it in a pedagogical form.

3.3 WHO ARE WE TEACHING? – TAKING ACCOUNT OF THE LEARNERS

Learners' present knowledge, beliefs, motivations, interests, and ability in relation to language learning and the particular language are taken into account.

This principle applies to all school learning. Alton-Lee's (2003) best evidence synthesis also identifies these as important factors in all school learning for diverse students. In relation to language learning in particular, the cluster of factors centering on attitudes and motivation are particularly important - at the level of society, as discussed above, and at the level of the individual.

A number of studies have found a positive relationship between parental encouragement and achievement in classroom second language learning. It is possible the students' motivation is increased by the parents' encouragement. It is also possible that the feelings of anxiety or negativity that many people have about another language are reduced by parental support.

The relationship between social factors and second language achievement is an indirect one filtered through attitudes to the target language, its culture, and its speakers. These attitudes determine the amount of contact with the second language, the nature of interpersonal interactions learners engage in and their motivation. In both Canada and Belgium minority learners of the majority language tend to reach higher proficiency levels than majority learners of the minority language⁹. The motivation and need are likely to be greater to learn a majority language, and the practical and attitudinal support for it in the community is greater.

All these factors will be reflected in individual learners in various ways, and Te Reo Māori teaching needs to take account of who the learners are as individuals. It is possible that some classrooms will contain quite a range of polarised attitudes and beliefs about certain things. One of the tasks of a language teacher is to help learners explore and resolve attitudes, beliefs, motivation, so that they become helpful to language learning (Kohonen, 2001).

Some students move from learning with te reo Māori as the medium of instruction into the mainstream. It is important to maintain an additive context for language development for these students (May et al, 2003, p.97). An additive approach in schools, for example, would ensure that the continued development of their reo is regarded as an important priority, no less important or useful to them than other curriculum areas, as they move towards the completion of their secondary schooling. These more advanced learners of te reo Māori can be involved in planned interactive language tasks with less advanced learners, with benefits to both.

⁹ See Ellis, 1994, pp. 218-239

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Learners' goals and needs are taken into account so that learning is purposeful to them

It takes many years to learn a language and there is often a feeling of frustration that progress is so slow, and that the competence in the second language remains so much less than in the first language. This permanent comparison means that language learning is often experienced more as failure than success. For this reason it is particularly important that learners experience language learning as having purposes which are being met.

At least some parts of the language learning programme can be developed in consultation with the learners. They can be involved in choosing and developing the topics and themes to be studied, and types of activities for learning. Although teachers will want to develop all the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening, learners may have particular goals in relation to one or more of these that they can help formulate into learning objectives.

If it is possible to set up some degree of self-access in the programme, learners are able to select activities and tasks which meet their personal needs. This also helps them to develop responsibility for their own learning.

The first language can be a helpful support, especially in the initial stages of second language learning

There have been some methods proposed for second language learning which mostly exclude the use of the first language (e.g. the Silent Way, and Total Physical Response) but these methods are not widespread in second language teaching. In some cases, the first language is excluded from at least the teacher's repertoire because the teacher does not know the learners' first language.

Perhaps the most common situation where the first language is excluded is where learners are very young and are from migrant families or minority language groups. When these students begin schooling in an education system which uses a language other than their first language, it has often been thought best to "submerge" them in the second language in order to make the quickest possible progress with the language which is the medium of instruction. This was the case for Māori-speaking children in New Zealand schools in the middle period of the twentieth century, and until recently has been the case for most immigrant children in New Zealand and most other English speaking countries.

However, research shows that in a situation where a dominant language such as English is the main medium of instruction, bilingual approaches, continued right through school years if possible, give the best results for language and curriculum learning for students who are trying to learn or maintain a minority language. At least 50 – 90 percent of the time should be spent using the minority language, and the approach should be one of additive bilingualism (May et al, 2003, pp.90 –92; Crandall, 1997). The Kohanga Reo movement took this approach of excluding English as much as possible in order to increase and value the children's use of te reo Māori.

In other contexts where majority language students in schools are learning another language which is not the medium of instruction, the language which is the medium of instruction is usually used to some extent on practical grounds. In New Zealand, this would mean that English would be used where necessary in French, Japanese, Te Reo Māori classes. However, the goal is usually to use

English only when it would be too time consuming and possibly unsuccessful to use the language which the students are learning. In addition, it is usual to try to use English less and less as students take their language studies further.

While the teacher might try to develop better strategies for using the target language as much as possible, it is considered within the teacher's realm of expertise to make the judgement about when it is helpful to take advantage of English in the classroom. Because of the diversity of language learning contexts, there is no precise rule about when to use a language other than the target language. If learners can read, and no support is available from their teacher in their first language, they will usually decide themselves to use bilingual dictionaries and other reference material to help their own learning.

Some reasons why it may be helpful to use English to support teaching Māori in schools are:

- Taking account of where the learners are at - at beginning levels especially, some learners, particularly older ones, may feel distressed if the teacher does not use their first language to lead them into their second language learning. Other learners may enjoy the challenge of plunging straight into the new language and puzzling things out.
- The classroom constraints - if the teacher is giving explicit instruction about a grammatical or vocabulary item, or a task to perform, what she wants to say may be too complicated for the level of the students' Māori language skills, or take too long.
- The cognitive advantage - it is now considered that all the languages a person knows "interrelate and interact" and that well focussed connections are helpful to language competence (Council of Europe, 2001, p.4). Bilingual people are able to switch easily from one language to another, and bilingualism begins as soon as any learning occurs in a second language.

3.4 HOW DO WE TEACH THEM? – INTERACTING, USING LANGUAGE, COMPREHENDING

- Learners are given many opportunities to use language meaningfully in a range of contexts, as well as to comprehend language.
- Learners have many opportunities to interact about meaningful material with peers, other users of the language, and especially with the teacher.
- Tasks and activities are designed to allow for repetition of aspects of language, and to facilitate new learning in appropriate language contexts. The approach to language learning is not a linear one.

The three points above could be part of any language teaching, but they are points which are central to the Communicative Approach as it is usually taught through the use of communicative tasks. Tasks involve some communicative problem to be solved, and require a particular task outcome, which enables performance to be assessed (Fotos, 2002, p. 140).

As discussed above (in Section 1) a Communicative Approach to language teaching matches general New Zealand practices and principles in school teaching. In both approaches, students are active in class, they engage in activities which are as real to life as possible, and they use a lot of language in connection with their activities. The main focus is on working with ideas and meanings, mediated through language. Students talk to each other about what they are doing, they learn new words, and new ways of saying things, they read and write about what they are doing. This is quite typical of New Zealand classrooms, especially primary ones, and it is also typical of communicative language learning and teaching.

Unfortunately this type of teaching is less common in secondary schools. The mainstream secondary teachers observed in one study did not use a wide range of teaching techniques. This matched the findings of another small study of 12 mainstream classes in a New Zealand secondary school. The main activities in these 12 Year 12 classes were, in order of frequency – following spoken explanations, answering oral questions, following spoken instructions, completing worksheets, note taking from teacher talk, correcting work by listening. All other types of activities occurred only once each. This does not represent an ideal language learning context (Keum & Lewis, 2000, p.5; Franken & McComish, 2003, p. 127).

However, if te reo Māori teachers at secondary schools are able to operate more with primary school teaching activities in mind, this will be familiar to learners, and a good communicative language learning environment.

It is now clear that language learners need to use language in speaking and writing in order to make the best progress in those areas. Just listening, reading, or studying about the language will enable students to understand language, and there will be some transfer to productive skills. But for the best achievements in the productive skills of speaking and writing, learners must engage in those activities (Swain, 1995; Lightbown, 2000). It is the teachers' job to have command of many techniques which help and encourage learners to do this, right from beginning levels.

The activities learners do and the language they use should be meaningful in a real life way. This means that drills or language exercises that are not linked to any realistic situation or text should be rarely used. It seems that learners learn by making the effort to relate the language to a meaning, and by elaborating and working with and around those meanings and those language items as much as possible. This is why interaction is important to language learning. While learners are working on a topic or task and using associated language with each other, or with some other speaker of the language, they are going over and over the same language items in many different ways. It seems that this process of interconnecting (or networking, Meara, 1996, 2004) is what results in language becoming permanently learned.

Language learning and use is repetitive and cyclical. The same items are used over and over again, and the more you learn, the smaller the proportion of new items to the known ones in the language you are working with. When you learn your first language as a child, you may learn as many as 10 new words a day, but by the time you are an adult, you may only learn one new word every few weeks. All the rest of the time is spent recycling what you already know, and extending the range of use and the richness of interconnections. It is important that second language learning reflects this repetitive pattern and does not focus too much on the introduction of new items.

Support for Teaching

In order to have learners actively using and extending their new language, teachers need a considerable amount of material for students to work with. Communicative tasks are based on *realia* such as recorded interviews or announcements, written labels, captions, notices, letters, articles and so on. Tasks based on these items need to be available, and quite a lot of varied material is needed for each lesson. Material should be designed so that important language items are recycled frequently. Teachers may produce some tasks themselves but they need access to a wide range of ready-to-use material.

Language teachers also need ongoing professional development in the materials available, how to select from them to best meet their students' needs, and how to use particular teaching and classroom techniques to best promote student interaction with the language.

3.5 PROGRESSING STUDENTS' LEARNING

Language scaffolding in all areas allows for a 'balanced development towards the three goals of restructuring, accuracy and fluency'. (Richards, 2002, p.49)

Scaffolding is a familiar process to most teachers. The learners are firmly based on the scaffold of what they know, and the teacher adds another level of new learning to the scaffold, which the learners are able to step up to from their present position, with help and encouragement from the teacher¹⁰.

Exactly the same process should take place in language teaching. The known language is the firm base. In initial stages, the students' first language may be used quite a lot as a base. But very soon there is a basis in the second language to build on. For example, it is soon possible to explain the meaning of some new words, using the language the students have already learned. This helps to consolidate the old learning as well as connecting the new learning with the old.

Teachers are constantly working to help students move towards restructuring what they say or write in more complex ways, as well as helping them to use language which they know more fluently and more correctly. Van Lier (1996, p. 194) sees the scaffolding process as highly interactive, with communication flowing back and forth between the teacher and student/s, and progressively handed over to the students on the basis of careful observation and responsiveness to what they are able to do.

It is important that learners use language and focus on expressing meaning even if their language is incorrect and halting. But they should understand and be confident that the teacher will subsequently be making sure that they move on to the next step of expressing those meanings more correctly and fluently.

¹⁰ See Alton-Lee, 2003, pp.73-78 for a discussion of scaffolding, most of which relates to language development.

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Learners have different attitudes to errors. Some learners are very anxious about making errors and do not want to say anything until they can say it correctly. Other learners like to communicate and are not concerned if they make errors or if those errors persist. A range of strategies and techniques are needed to be able to achieve this language scaffolding with each individual learner.

Learners are assisted to develop metacognitive strategies and the ability to direct and expand their own learning

Strategies that learners use to understand and direct their own learning are important in all schooling. Alton-Lee (2003, p.79-85) discusses the importance of helping students take conscious control of their own learning. Over many different curriculum areas, sustained higher achievement has been found when teachers use approaches that help students to do this.

This is as important in language learning as in any other area, and it has a dual focus. As discussed above, it is important in teaching grammar and vocabulary that students become aware of how language items are used and their relationship with other items. Having strategies to explore and maximise that kind of language awareness is one kind of metacognitive skill particularly related to language development. The other kind is the use of more general learning strategies, such as having goals, being willing to try things out, reflecting on learning, and planning for learning.

Ellis (1994, p.555) lists what research to that date suggested about second language learning strategies and how they are used by learners.

- Learners use different strategies at different levels of learning – initially they focus on functional uses and chunks of language, then later they pay close attention to forms and single words, and develop metacognitive strategies.
- Successful learners use strategies more often and differently than less successful learners.
- Good learners can focus on both form and meaning.
- Different strategies may contribute to different aspects of L2 proficiency – e.g. formal practice to linguistic competence, functional strategies to communicative competence.
- Learners need to use strategies flexibly – choosing ones suitable for the task, and the goals.
- Because of this, metacognitive strategies involving goal identification and evaluation are important (especially for adults) but learners appear to underutilize these.
- More successful adult learners can talk about their strategies better.
- Learning strategies used by children and adults differ. Social and interactional strategies may be more important for younger learners.

Second language assessment is meaningful to the learners, systematic, comprehensive and regular.

Assessment initiatives in New Zealand schools focus on the above characteristics of good assessment practices. As with all learning areas, good assessment practices for second languages are primarily designed to support and encourage learning.

The amount of development in testing Māori as a medium of instruction is not great, but even less has been done in relation to testing Māori as a second language. Although a great deal of research has been done on testing English as a Second Language, the practices in New Zealand schools are still not highly developed in this area (Franken & McComish, 2003). It is difficult for schools and teachers to gain access to the support and expertise they would need to carry out high quality assessment.

Assessment of second language performance is a highly specialised area. Internationally, there are some very high stakes tests (especially of English as a second language) which allow or deny students access to further education in particular countries or institutions. These tests undergo extensive development, trialling, standardisation, and constant redevelopment. In comparison with this, school based language assessment is often much less sophisticated.

It is important that good tests are developed for student feedback purposes, but the tests used for summative and qualifications purposes should not diverge entirely from tests used as part of teaching and learning. Although communicative approaches to language teaching have been followed for over twenty years now, testing within this approach is not yet highly developed.

Assessment of communicative performance is interested in “assessing the performance of L2 speakers in using language to accomplish the things that people do in everyday life” (Norris et al, 1998, p.32). Although there may be a focus on form in the course of meaning based teaching, in assessment the ability to deal with meaning in particular realistic tasks is the criterion for success. Communicative testing does not focus directly on particular grammatical structures.

Tests of this kind of communicative performance are difficult to construct, administer, and score. They may not be very reliable, and the results may be difficult to interpret, and to generalise to other performances. Research is just beginning into working out systems for grading task based communicative assessments according to difficulty, and developing reliable scoring procedures (Brown et al, 2002).

Obviously, teachers and schools needing to assess task-based communicative performance will need support in the form of assessment materials and professional development.

4. THE SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHER

Second Language Teaching (SLT) is a specialist field drawing on a number of disciplines including linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and education. It is an area where a theoretical and research history and its own specific pedagogy have accrued. Internationally, both of these areas are realised in initial teacher education, and in teacher development programmes at a graduate or postgraduate level.

Richards (1998, p 1-14) identifies six domains of knowledge for teachers involved in second language teaching. These are: theories of teaching, teaching skills, communication skills, subject matter knowledge, contextual knowledge, and pedagogical reasoning and decision making.

Theories provide a basis on which a programme is organised, and instructional practices used within it. “While general teaching theories ... have informed approaches to mainstream teaching since the 1960s, theories specific to the nature of second language teaching have been developed and have often formed the basis for specific methodologies of language teaching, ...such as the communicative approach” (Richards, 1998, p. 2).

The *teaching skills* that are important to second language teaching are: preparation and organisation of activities to encourage communicative interaction, judgement of proper balance between fluency and accuracy, and an awareness of learners’ errors and how to respond to them.

Communication skills are particularly important in language teaching. There needs to be input from teachers that provides a good model for students, that is understandable, and that prompts responses from students. The kind of language typically used by experienced language teachers is well documented and is referred to as “teacher talk” (see Ellis, 1994, pp 581-583, for a detailed description).

Subject matter knowledge refers to what teachers need to know about the subject they teach. For second language teachers this knowledge is diverse and complex, including the following areas: phonetics and phonology, grammar, lexis, and discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, second language acquisition, language curriculum and syllabus design, SLT methods, testing and evaluation (Wong-Fillmore and Snow, 2000).

Contextual knowledge encompasses a number of socio-cultural and individual factors relating to the society, its communities, schools, classrooms and individual students’ personal backgrounds, and how these may affect language learning and teaching.

The area of *pedagogical reasoning skills* and decision making represents the synthesis of teaching skills and content. This is the capacity of the teacher “to transform the content knowledge he or she possesses into forms that are pedagogically powerful and yet adaptive to the variations in ability and background presented by the students” (see Richards 1998, p.10). This is the way in which teacher competencies are integrated and reflected in practice.

These areas are the usual content of specialist language teaching courses, and they represent a very large body of knowledge for teachers. At present, most school language teachers, at least initially, will have only a very small proportion of this knowledge and skill.

Professional Development

Because of this gap between what language teachers need to know and what they learn in initial teacher training, there is a need for focussed and ongoing professional development. Ideally, there would be a properly planned professional development cycle that would ensure that all language teachers are able to develop skills in each of the above domains of teacher knowledge in a coherent fashion.

Just as students are now thought of as active participants in their own learning, so too are teachers (e.g. Woods, 1996). Although teachers' stated beliefs about what they do are not always exactly reflected in their practices (Basturkmen et al, 2004), professional development approaches which encourage teachers to think critically are more likely to be successful.

An investigation of 18 experienced ESOL teachers' ideas about teaching found that the "individual teacher appears to have a personal configuration of pedagogic principles that is realized, in selective ways, through a set of favoured practices" (Breen et al, 2001, p.495).

They argue that this individuality in teachers' professional thinking and behaviour suggests that it is important for in-service professional development to allow for reflective dialogue leading to personal outcomes. Similarly, in pre-service education, if the instructor's particular association between principle and practice is not one that the trainee teacher is able to make sense of, it may be important to allow for similar reflective reorganization of principles and practice.

5. ROLE OF CURRICULUM – DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN FOR SLA

There is usually a difference between a curriculum that is planned, and what learners (and teachers) actually do as the enacted curriculum in their learning and teaching. In this section, it is the planned (and usually written) curriculum we are thinking about.

The language curriculum (or syllabus) for any organisation, or group of learners, commonly specifies *what*, *when* and *how*:

- *what* has been chosen as the items or skills to teach these learners,
- (usually) *when* - some indication about the *sequence* of teaching these items, and
- (often) *how* - some indication about teaching approaches, or methods to be used.

Traditionally, language items are chosen because they are:

- *simpler* (in terms of a particular linguistic analysis of the complexity of the language, or of the order in which learners seem usually to learn them), or
- *more frequent* in the language, or in the learners' perceived area of use, or
- they match *specific needs* the learners are known or thought to have.

They are usually *sequenced* so that items that are simpler, more frequent, or more useful come earlier in the curriculum.

There are a number of different bases for choosing items, none of which is known for certain to be better than the others. Also, there is no completely accepted or easy way of deciding which items are simpler, more frequent or more useful. The *what* and *when* of any particular curriculum still represents a 'best guess' based on experience and some research, rather than something definitively supported by research.

The *how* – the approaches and methods – have varied greatly over the last fifty years, with certain very specific methods proposed at different times as the best one for all students. Richards and Rodgers (2001) provide a very clear and useful description and assessment of all the major approaches and methods in language teaching – including the Silent Way which has been used in the rākau (or Ataarangi) method in teaching te reo Māori (Mataira, 1980).

Richards and Rodgers (p.18) distinguish three levels of organisation which teachers and the curriculum have to pay attention to:

- the theories and philosophies that lie behind a particular method (*Approach*);
- the objectives, selection of items and activity types, and roles of teachers and learners (*Design*); and
- the moment-to-moment techniques, practices and behaviours in the classroom (*Procedure*).

Research now shows that certain principles are important in language learning (see section 1), but the exact way they are put into practice may vary. It also shows that some learners (even quite young ones) exercise a high degree of personal autonomy in their learning and are capable of making good progress under virtually any teaching method.

This does not mean that the curriculum, or teacher, may use any method they like. The fact that some learners can learn very well does not mean that the method is a good one for all students. In order to ensure that all learners can make good progress in language learning, the important principles discussed in section above, should be present in any method or approach.

In the case of language learning in New Zealand schools, the New Zealand Curriculum Framework and Learning Languages: A Guide for New Zealand Schools (Ministry of Education, 2002) constrain what the Te Reo Māori curriculum, or any other language curriculum for New Zealand schools, can be like.

Together, the Framework and the Curriculum Statement are likely to constrain the *Approach* to some extent, specify some of the *Design* component, but leave most of what is covered by *Procedure* up to teachers – either individually or in small groups. In terms of *what*, *when* and *how*, a lot of the *what* and *when*, and nearly all of the *how* are left to teachers to design. Since most school teachers will have received little training in language curriculum design, it is unlikely that many of them will feel confident in the large amount of curriculum design that is left to them to implement.

Johnson (2003) takes one achievement objective from the *Draft for Māori in the New Zealand Curriculum* and works through how a teacher might implement this in the classroom. She points out that the form of the Draft allows for considerable flexibility in how teachers implement the curriculum, allowing them to focus on the needs and interests of their students. The large amount of material she develops as an example for one achievement objective is a good illustration of how much curriculum design is left to the teacher.

There is a big role to be played by materials supporting the curriculum, and ongoing professional development.

6. RESEARCH ON LEARNING AND TEACHING TE REO MAORI IN NZ

There is a small but growing amount of research on te reo Māori itself and language teachers now have more professional resources available to them. There are now corpuses¹¹ of Māori covering material for children, and for adults, and quite a large amount of grammatical research and analysis (e.g. Keegan, 1996; Bauer, 1997; Harlow, 2001; Whaanga, 2001; Houia-Roberts, 2003).

This is still perceived as being relatively inadequate in comparison with what is available about English (Bruce & Whaanga, 2002, p.13). In addition, much of it is not interpreted and available in a pedagogical form which is directly useful for the classroom teacher (Dewes et al, 1998).

There is some classroom-based research on bilingual learners and Kura Kaupapa Maori. There is very little on learning Māori in the mainstream. One study (Hunia, 1995, p. iv) showed that using interactive communicative tasks over a six week period with Māori students in the mainstream who had previously had some years of bilingual or immersion education, resulted in increased accuracy and use of new language items.

7. CONCLUSIONS

While the general principles for successful language learning seem clear now, there is still considerable developmental work required to fully realise communicative and task based approaches in quality teaching in classrooms.

In the case of te reo Māori teaching as a second language in schools, there is no international body of research and materials development to draw on. It will be necessary to put together gradually the resources and expertise needed to help teachers achieve the best results with their learners.

¹¹ A language corpus is a large and systematic collection of texts in the language – spoken or written – which can be used for analysis of how items in the language occur and are used.

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