Community collaboration towards indigenous languages and pedagogies in early childhood and school Māori immersion settings

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The global context in which this work was undertaken

- English language has dominated and been pervasive
- Indigenous communities across the world have had their own languages minoritised
- Long term intergenerational effects of language loss continue to be felt
- Many indigenous initiatives have moved towards the revitalisation of their own languages
- Parents and families want language learning opportunities for their children that they themselves did not have.
The national context

- More than 500 Kōhanga Reo and Ngā Puna Kōhungahunga with over 10,000 students
- 68 Kura Kaupapa Māori (22 Wharekura)
- 83 other Māori language immersion schools
- 11,876 Māori students (7.2% of all Māori students) in level 1 (81 to 100% immersion)
- 9,766 Māori students (6% of all Māori students) were receiving between 31% to 80% immersion
- 3 wānanga

(Education Counts, 2007).
The research whānau context:

- Part of the language revitalisation movement
- Grew out of the Kōhanga Reo
- Strong indigenous and whānau leadership
- Need for Māori language resources and assessments
- Concern that mainstream models should be followed
- Perceived lack of knowledge
Learning ‘in’ the language and culture 
not ‘about’ the language and culture

- Language is embedded in culture
- Learning occurs best when environments and contexts acknowledge communication and meaning as central to learning
- Traditional Māori pedagogies value and build on learners’ experiences
- Ako, teacher as a co-learner
Learning experiences may be...

Traditional/Listening/Questioning

Contemporary/Doing/Talking
Kaweа te Rongo

- The task...
- Translate or not to...
- In as a learner
- Listening to community
- Observing Māori language learners in action
We learned...

Listen to teachers, whānau and students

1. Preschoolers who are communicated with mainly in Māori
2. Preschoolers who are communicated with mainly in English but with some Māori
3. Preschoolers who are communicated with only in English
4. Preschoolers who communicated with mainly poor English or Māori structures and vocabulary

• Teachers/whānau knew what they needed/wanted
• Distracted by the demanding contexts in which they were operating
From Tatari Tautoko Tauawhi...
Assessment, not in isolation but for learning...
When whānau legitimated the design they wanted to push the boundaries

Effect Sizes for Students participating in 2002 TATA study

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<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<td>10.30</td>
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Effect Sizes for Students participating in a single school, TATA study (2007)

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We learned

• Productive activity between tutors and learners occurred when learners were able to both initiate and engage in language interactions
• Whānau were able to support their child
• Learning was fun
• Statistically significant gains were made by students in both studies
Culturally responsive contexts for assessing students in Māori language

- Theories and practices pertaining to first and second language acquisition are located within Māori communities.
- Students/whānau have agency (a degree of control) over what they want to talk about... However,
- Activities/power must be genuinely shared
- Amount and type of feedback must be responsive rather than corrective
- When students/whānau can bring themselves, their cultural identity, language and particular experiences and expertise to the tasks
- Reciprocity, mutual influence (interdependence) can emerge
- Boundaries can be pushed and we can all learn