

Maori

Pedagogies, the Role of the Individual and Language Development

ABSTRACT

Recent theorising about classroom language has stressed sociocultural and pedagogical principles. Te Kohanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Maori are indigenous educational initiatives for the revitalization of Maori language and culture. This paper examines language development within Te Kohanga Reo settings. Of concern will be the roles of the individual and group learning needs within cultural frameworks that stress group identification.

INTRODUCTION

Considerable emphasis has been placed on the importance of dyadic interactions in the language development literature as an ideal context for language acquisition (Ochs & Schieffelin 1984). It is argued that this provides opportunities for a child and adult to engage in a shared activity, maximizing the chances that they will attend to the same objects and events and interpret the situation in similar ways. There is evidence that this is the case for classroom learning. It appears that in classrooms dyadic interactions increase the probability that teachers will correctly interpret what another says and be able to build up a shared representation (Wells 1986). Despite this studies in preschool educational settings (e.g. Meade 1984; Tizard and Hughes 1984) show that sustained interactions and one to one interactions between adults and children are not a regularly occurring feature in these contexts.

Recent theorising about the functions of classroom discourse in learning has stressed the role of culture in pedagogical processes. From extensive reviews Cazden (1988a) and Tharp (1989) argue that the degree to which discourse patterns are compatible with the culture of groups of children influences educational achievement. This raises an question. How universally preferred and effective in terms of language acquisition are dyadic exchanges?

Studies of language socialization across cultures indicate that in different cultures children acquire linguistic and social knowledge in either, or both, dyadic or multiparty communicative interactions. The participation structures that children predominantly are exposed to reflect and construct cultural values, beliefs and attitudes and affect the way children come to understand social relationships. For example Schieffelin and Ochs (1986) argued that multiparty exchanges in Samoa construct knowledge of status and age appropriate behaviour.

Te Kohanga Reo are indigenous immersion language nurseries in Aotearoa/New Zealand concerned with language and culture revitalization. They aim to provide a learning and teaching context which foster cultural values and kaupapa or philosophies. Te Kohanga Reo are committed through whanau links to making classroom discourses compatible with beliefs and practices in the

children's homes.

The 1988 New Zealand Government Report on Te Kohanga Reo accepted that Tikanga Maori, Maori preferred values, beliefs and practices, included grouping learners, both children and adults, together who have some relationship to each other. A number of researchers have claimed group learning as a preferred mode of learning for Maori (Hunkin 1985; Metge 1983). Based on historical and anthropological records Metge (1983) described a Maori approach as the learners and teachers cooperating in a unified way in an educational enterprise. More recently Ka'ai (1990) has argued that it would be expected that discourse taking place in contexts operating from Maori pedagogies such as kohanga reo would be different from typical western educational discourse patterns. She identified potential areas of difference would be found in who initiated, who controlled, who took part and the usual number of participants. Both Ka'ai (1990) and Smith (1987) support these claims with observations showing that

in Kohanga Reo emphasis is given to whole group involvement in learning and teaching contexts.

Values which give coherence and meaning to this preferred pedagogy can be identified. Whaanau, the concept of the extended family, is embedded in a fundamental, organizing principle of the observable behaviours within Te Kohanga Reo, defined by Smith (1987) as "inclusive behaviour". This is emphasised through the many group oriented activities used to support Akonga, teaching and learning. Through these, children are both learning about whaanau responsibilities and practising these as an essential organizing component of Te Kohanga Reo. Te Kohanga Reo teaches looking after one another, sharing and working together. It emphasizes the individual as having responsibilities to the family (Halkyard 1983). Such whaanau or inclusive behaviours are evident in many aspects of Te Kohanga Reo life. Smith (1987) described instances including older children being encouraged to clean, feed and get younger children ready for sleep etc. Other instances included older children having tasks to perform such as packing up blocks and equipment and participating as leaders in group learning. He also described children interacting amongst themselves and with more than one adult.

Specific research in conventional classrooms provides a contrasting picture. Early research by Thomas (1978) indicated that urban Maori children were less likely to use verbal and direct help-seeking behaviours with teachers. One reason posited for this was that such behaviour was inconsistent with Maori childrearing and socialization processes. Townsend, Manley and Tuck (1991) compared Maori children's preferences for seeking help from peers with seeking help from the teacher on the argument that preferences for co-operative peer assistance would reflect Maori whanau based processes. They found no differences in help-seeking preferences between Maori children and others in the context of conventional schooling. However the authors rightly note that

organisation, teaching methods and curriculum of conventional schooling may discourage such cooperative whanau based processes and peers serving as learning resources for each other. In addition, the preferences asked for might not tap the significant cultural dimensions. Maori researchers have argued that the significant dimension is not group learning versus individualised interactions per se, but rather the role of interactions with individuals within a group as creating and constructing the roles and responsibilities of each to the other (Ka'ai 1990).

Though it may be that learning in a group is a preferred learning mode for Maori, this does not preclude more individualized styles of interaction from occurring. Ka'ai (1990) noted that in three Te Kohanga Reo in which she observed, group and peer contexts for instruction were the mode. However, she recorded significant instances of exchanges occurred involving the child as an individual. She concluded that instructional episodes were both positive and personalized, and often included the child as a conversational partner.

These issues suggest that there is a need to describe and understand preferred pedagogy from sites where preferred pedagogy is deliberately fostered and/or automatically practised.

This paper reports data from a larger MA thesis research study focussed on Kohanga Reo as a context for language learning (Hohepa 1990). Other data from this research is reported in Hohepa, Smith, Smith and McNaughton (1993). This paper examines the types and social makeup of interactions in which the children participated.

METHODOLOGY

This study took place in a Te Kohanga Reo which is part of an urban marae (traditionally a gathering place) that houses a kura kaupapa Maori, Maori total immersion school, kaumatua (elders) flats, training and work schemes. At the time of the study there were two kuia or women elders (N) one full-time staff member, six childcare trainees (Wh) and thirty-three children

aged between one and four and a half years.

The study proceeded in two phases. Initially, discussions were held with Te Kohanga Reo staff, marae personnel and interested whaanau. These discussions clarified the direction of the research, acceptable data gathering methods, subject selection and any related concerns and advice. Descriptive data were gathered through participation observation over a fortnight on the structure and the types of activities of a typical day and week. This enabled decisions to be made on who and when to observe, and the appropriate observational methods and techniques to employ. In the second phase observational data for three children were then collected over five weeks. Three children, two girls aged 2:8 years (K); and 3:5 years (R); and one boy aged 3:7 years (T) were selected using criteria which included age, health, emergence of spoken language, consistent attendance and length

of time in Te Kohanga Reo. Aural and written recordings were made of each child's expressive language experiences and non verbal behaviour for three full mornings which were randomly assigned across five weeks.

All transcripts, totalling 750 minutes, were examined to identify activities, routines and interactions which showed evidence of Te Kohanga Reo philosophy and culturally based concepts. An initial analysis of the transcripts revealed that all the activities in which the children were observed occurred in group settings. These comprised of at least one adult and at least two children who were engaged in the ongoing activity. An activity was defined as being composed of a sequence of actions associated with a particular motive (Cazden 1988b). The actions making up an activity could be distinguished by specific goals. They could also be verbal or non-verbal. Three generic sorts of activities were observed occurring in the kohanga reo. There were developmental activities such as drawing, painting, using playdough, reading, cutting and pasting and play. There were activities explicitly reflecting Te Kohanga Reo kaupapa and tikanga Maori including mihimihi, formal greetings iinoi, prayers waiata, singing/chanting and hiimene, hymns. Finally there were caregiving activities with children, such as washing and toileting, changing clothing, readying for meals, feeding, preparing for sleep.

The types and social makeup of interactions in which the children participated were examined. An interaction was defined as a direct verbal communication involving two or more participants which had an ongoing topic, theme, communicative function or general focus. As noted earlier all interactions observed as part of this study occurred during developmental activities and caregiving activities during the morning and lunchtime.

An interaction started when one of the participants initiated a language exchange around one of the above. It ended when the participants physically moved away from each other, when the focus or topic of the conversation changed, when another person successfully initiated an interaction with participant/s, or when conversation ceased for a period of more than five seconds. An utterance was defined as a turn in an interaction or a verbal expression bound by a pause of a few (less than five) seconds.

A set of 100 utterances were randomly selected for each child, (excluding recitations). In order for a judgement to be made that a person was involved in an interaction several criteria were set. They needed to take a turn by producing an utterance which related to the ongoing topic or focus of the interaction and/or in the case of a dyadic interaction use language indicating exclusiveness and in the case of a multiparty interaction language indicating inclusiveness. Inclusiveness in multiparty interactions was indicated linguistically by the use of such pronouns as koutou (you : more than two), taatou (we : first person inclusive, more than two). Several varieties of multiparty interactions occurred. They could involve peers only, adults only or peers and adults. Multiparty

interactions could follow turntaking configurations such as A-B-C; A-B-A-C; A-B-C-D; or variations of these.

One to one interactions were identified as such if two individuals were engaged in A-B-A-B type turn-taking, around a distinct topic or subject, and/or if language used by either participant indicated exclusiveness. For example pronouns were used such as koe (you : singular), taaua (we : first person inclusive, one other, you and I). They included interactions involving the target child and one peer (1to1 peer) where dyadic turntaking A-B-A-B is present and interactions involving child and one adult (1to1adult) with dyadic turntaking.

A frequency count for each type of interaction was made for each child on the 100 utterances (excluding recitations). Each of the utterances was examined to see what sort of interaction it was a part of.

RESULTS

Early results showed that all interactions in which the target children were engaged occurred in group settings. Though it may be that learning in a group is a preferred learning mode for Maori, this did not preclude more individualized styles of interaction from occurring with these children. Indeed, it was found in this study that group settings and activities provided favourable conditions for one to one interactions.

Table 1. Frequency of utterances made by target children during various types of interactions over 100 utterances (excluding recitation).

adult	Child	and/or adults			
		Multipeers	Multipeers	1to1 peer	1to1
	T	6	38	7	49
	R	0	40	4	56
	K	5	31	3	61

Table 1 shows that a relatively high frequency, approximately one half of utterances made by children in a randomly selected sample of 100 utterances occurred during one-to-one interactions with adults (49 to 61 utterances). These interactions occurred in group settings containing a number of other potential participants rather than in physically isolated settings. A high number of these utterances were also made in interactions involving more than one peer and adult, or more than one adult, (between 30 to 40

utterances).

Within the group activities observed the target children appeared to be least likely to produce utterances in multiparty interactions with peers or dyadic interactions with peers. This may not be the case for free unstructured play activity, which were not the focus of this study. A typical example of dyadic adult-child interaction occurring in a group situation is shown in Exchange 1.

Exchange 1. A Whaea (woman, aunt or mother; Wh) and 8 children approximately two to three years old were seated on the floor around a low table using playdough. Wh discusses what the children are making. K has made a container of milk so Wh makes her a cup to drink it out of. K offers the cup, which is now a cup of tea to Wh, who pretends to drink it. K then asks Wh if she wants a biscuit with her tea.

Wh. (drinks 'tea') Kua pau. It's all gone.

K. Ae. Anoo? Yes. Again?

Wh. Ae. Me whakakii anoo. (pretends to drink again) Ooo, he reka! Yes. Fill it up again. Oh, it's sweet!

K. (offering playdough 'biscuit') Pihikete. Piiurangi koe he pihikete mo taau kapu tii? Biscuit. Do you want a biscuit for your cup of tea?

This dyadic interaction which continued for 12 turns took place during a group activity which was preceded and followed by group interactions. It was identified as a dyadic interaction because of its A-B-A-B configuration, its focussed play topic and the use of pronouns such as 'koe' and 'taau' (you and your : singular). Exchange 2 was even longer. This took place outside by the sandpit where a group of children supervised by two adults were building with sand.

Exchange 2. During a long (66 turns) dyadic interaction outside, a whaea (Wh) and R both take on the role of questioner.

R. He....a...He aha teenei? (pulling out some grass) What is this?

Wh. He karaehe. Grass.

R. Teenei? (pulling out some more grass) This?

Wh. Ae. He karaehe. Yes. Its grass.

R. He aha teenei? (holding out a leaf) What is this?

Wh. He rau. He aha teenei? (holding out a buttercup) A leaf. What is this?

R. He putiputi! A flower!

Exchange 3. It was lunch time. A group of six children who had finished their meal were pretending to be taniwha (monsters), at the side of the room while other children and adults were still eating their lunch, roaring and making lots of noise. They were told to go outside by a Whaea. K elected to take a tuakana (senior), role with Whaea. This began a dyadic conversation that lasted 42 turns.

(children roaring, others still eating)

Wh. Haere koutou taniwha ki waho, taakaro ai. You monsters go outside to play.

Haere ki waho. Go outside.

K. Haere mai, Whaea. Come here, Whaea.

The target child commanded the whaea to join them outside. At this point Whaea accepted the shifting of roles and responded accordingly in the following one to one interaction.

Wh. Kei te haere mai au. I'm coming.

(K holding her hand, leads Wh to the boat outside)

K. Me koorero Maori i teenei waka. (roars) (You) must speak Maori in this boat.

Wh. He taniwha koe, K_____. You are a monster, K.

K. He, me koe. And you.

At this point Whaea appeared to assert her role in the game.

Wh. Ehara au i te taniwha. Ko koe te taniwha. I am not the monster. You are the monster.

B later on, K once more shifted to a more controlling role.

K. Haere mai, Whaea. Come here Whaea.

Wh. Ki hea? To where?

K. Haere mai koe ki te waka, Whaea. You come to the boat.

Wh. Moo nga tamariki te waka. The boat is for the children.

K. Haere mai! Come here!

Wh. Ko au te ika kei waho nei. I am the fish out here.

K. Kaore koe he ika! You are not a fish!

Wh. Ae, ko au he ika. Yes. I am a fish.

In order to retain the tuakana role, K accepted Whaea's wish to stay outside the boat and be a fish, but decided how Whaea would act as a fish.

K. Peenei! (makes swimming motions with arms). Like this.

Wh. Ae. Kei te tere ahau ki roto i te wai. Yes I am swimming like a fish in the water.

K. Ae, tere i te wai Yes, swim in the water.

Wh. Ae, tere i te wai. Yes, swim in the water.

Within the group activities observed the target children appeared least likely to produce utterances in dyadic interactions with peers or in multiparty interactions with peers. Where they were observed occurring in group activities they often involved a child taking tuakana or senior, often instructing, role with another child as reflected in the following

two exchanges. In Exchange 4 the tuakana role shifts between the two children.

Exchange 4. T and another child were questioning each other about their pictures while drawing. T answered maara (garden). C asked for an explanation of maara from T but didn't receive it.

- T. He aha teenei? What is this?
C. He kurii! He aha teenei? A dog! What is this?
T. Te maara, te maara. The garden, the garden.
C. He aha maara? What is a maara?
T. He aha teenei? What is this?

Exchange 5. A twenty month old child (M) was observed attempting to initiate this routine to ask for another slice of watermelon by using the request form "Puirangi anoo" (want again), with a little help from K. After several unsuccessful attempts at catching a Whaea's attention, pronouncing piirangi as "pikaka", M resorted to the form modelled for her by K (Merengi maaku) and was successful.

- M. Pikaka he merengi. (attempting to catch Whaea's attention)
K. He merengi maaku. (to M) A melon for me.
M. Pikaka merengi ana.
K. He merengi, he merengi. (to M) A melon, a melon.
M. Pikaka merengi.
K. Puirangi anoo, okay? (to M) (I) want again, okay?
M. Koo, koo, aa, merengi. Merengi kua.....Merengi maaku aa. Koo, koo, aa, melon. Melon (past tense marker)... Melon for me.
Wh. (at other side of table, turns to face M)
Ka pai. (gives a slice to M) Good.

It would be predicted from the "conventional" research view that learning in groups as the preferred pedagogy would occur most frequently. The systematic observations revealed that multiparty exchanges did indeed occur frequently. For each child they accounted for just under half of the 100 utterances counted, and were a regular feature in this kohanga reo.

Exchange 6. Children were instructed to mihi Nana (N).

- Wh. Mihi atu ki a Nana _____. Greet Nana.
Ch. Ata marie, Nana _____. Good morning Nana.
N. Ata marie, tamariki maa. Good morning children.
Ch. Kei te peehea koe, Nana ____? How are you Nana?
N. Kei te pai rawa atu au i teenei ata. Kei te peehea katoa koutou? I am very well this morning. How are all of you?
Ch. Kei te pai maatou. We are well.
N. Kia ora rawa atu. Hello, be well.

Exchange 7. In this interaction involving R, K a Whaea and her baby, and another child (C), the older children wanted to hug the baby, so they took turns. This multiparty interaction lasted 83 turns.

R. (holding baby) Aa. Na, awhiawhi. Aa. There, hug.
Wh. Awhiawhi anoo? (to K) Another hug?
K. Awhi anoo. Another hug.
(Wh rests baby on K's lap)
R. Awhiawhi! (I want to) Hug!
Wh. Taihoa, ka mutu a R____, ka awhi. Wait, when R has finished then you can hug.
(R holding baby)
Wh. Aaaa. Mirimiri i toona tuaraa. Aaa, (you are) rubbing his back.
K. Ae. Yes.
Wh. Kia kuupaa? So that (he) will burp?
R. Ae, kei te, ka tangi. Yes, (he is) crying.
Wh. Kaore i tangi, tino hari, tino, (He) isn't crying, (he's) very happy, very,
C. Kei te pai ia? Is he okay?
R. Ae. Yes.
C. Awhi. I wanna awhi. Hug. I wanna hug.
R. A, kei te awhi. A. (I am) hugging.
Wh. Ka mutu, ka mutu a R____, ka awhi koe. (R tries to pass baby) Ae, ka mutu. Hoatu ki a C____, (puts baby on C's lap) Finished, when R is finished you can hug (him). Yes, (you've) finished. Give (him) to C.....

Multipeer interactions and those that involved Multipeer and adults generally entailed group negotiation of the activity itself (Exchange 8),

or the meanings expressed in the interaction (Exchange 9).

Exchange 8. A group of children and a whaea were building with wooden blocks. T, C and M were negotiating to build something. This multipeer interaction began after Whaea who had been interacting with them moved away and ended when she returned and asked T what had happened.

C. Na. (puts block on pile)
T. Ae. Yes.
M. He aha koe i piirangi? (to T) What do you want?
C. Piirangi he rarangi? Piirangi koe he whare? (to T) Want a line? Do you want a house?
T. Ae. Yes.
C. He whare inaianei. It is a house now.
T. Kei te um, te puru um i eera atu ki um eetahi anoo peeraa. (I am) putting those on some others like that.
C. Kao, taihoa, taihoa, taihoa. No, wait, wait, wait.
T. Kaore i te puru teetahi anoo, e rua. I am not put ting one other, two.
M. Kao, a , ae. Kao. No, ah, yes. No! (the building falls over onto T's leg)
T. Au, titiro. Ko teenei au i mamae. Oh, look. I am this (am) hurt.
C. Ae. Yes.

Exchange 9. A group of children and a whaea were talking about the things

they were making out of playdough.

K. (identifying what other children have made) Aihikirimi, rererangi,
(showing her playdough iceblock to Wh) Aiparok. Icecream, plane, iceblock.

Wh. He ahiparaka? An iceblock?

K. Ae. Ae.

Wh. He reka tauu. Your (iceblock) is sweet.

K. (looking at C's playdough) Tiko! Poo!

Wh. He aha? Ehara, ehara. Aue. (laughs) He tiko teenei? He noke
moomona! Me roa, me whakaroa, ne? What? (It's) not, (it's) not. Oh.

This is a poo? A fat worm! (It) should be ong, should make it long, ay?

C. Saush, he saushage.

Wh. He hotiti? Ae. A sausage? Yes.

C. He saushage.

K. Ae. Yes.

C. (talking about other things he has made out of playdough) I got a
aihikirimi. I got a icecream.

K. (asks Wh what C's sausage-shaped playdough is) He aha? What?

Wh. He hotiti. Piiurangi koe ki te kai i te hotiti? A sausage. Do you
want to eat the sausage?

K. Kao! (to C about other pieces of his playdough) He aha eenei? No!
What are these?

C. He aihikirimi. Icecreams.

DISCUSSION

Group learning has been identified as a preferred mode of learning for Maori (Hunkin 1983). Indeed it is claimed that learning in groups is favoured over the individual working on his or her own (Metge 1983). This study observed activities aimed at the learning and development of the children occurring in group settings. However, these group settings were found to set up and provide a context in which dyadic interactions and personalised conversations occurred. These conversations were not limited to the sorts of conversations typically described in studies of childcare settings (e.g. Tizard and Hughes 1984). The types of conversations observed included more than brief exchanges of information, questioning and answering, directing and informing. In many cases time was taken to negotiate meaning, to build up and maintain a shared understanding in conversations involving a large number of turns (e.g. Exchange 1, Exchange 3).

Though it may be that learning in a group is a preferred learning mode for Maori, this does not preclude what is considered more individualized styles of interaction from occurring. Indeed it was found in this study that group settings and activities provided favourable conditions for one to

one interactions.

Ka'ai (1990) also noted that in the three Te Kohanga Reo in which she observed, group and peer contexts for instructions were the mode. However, her observations revealed significant instances of exchanges occurred involving the child as an individual. She concluded that instructional episodes were both positive and personalised, and often included the child as a conversational partner.

A large proportion of the 100 sample utterances were made in interactions with more than one adult or a group of peers and adult/s (31 to 40 of 100 utterances). These utterances were often part of conversations involved in building up a shared representation. However, more than two people were being involved in the negotiation of meaning. Exchange 9 describes a conversation in which two children and one adult participated in the conversation about the "food" they were making with playdough. Here, the group negotiation of meaning expressed in Maori was observed as the "food" one child was making was mistaken as "tiko" by another child and "he noke" or worm by a whaea. Through the give and take of this multiparty conversation it became apparent that the child was actually making "hotiti" (sausages)! The triadic conversation in this exchange consisted of 47 turns, the multiparty conversation in Exchange 7 lasted 83 turns. These can be seen as demonstrating to the children the importance of and the methods for reaching a group consensus, sharing, and for older children nurturing younger. It could be argued that these interactions were reflecting and reinforcing values, beliefs and practices involved in group belonging and responsibilities and roles of an individual to the group.

These children were being exposed to both dyadic and multiparty interactions within this Te Kohanga Reo setting. If Schieffelin's and Ochs's (1986) assumption that conversational turntaking procedures socialize children into understandings of social relationships, then these children were in the position to build up knowledge which includes an understanding of both dyadic communicative units and more complex configurations involving three or more parties.

Schieffelin and Ochs (1986) also posit that the understanding of social relations, particularly with regard to multiparty interactions, is likely to be enhanced when children are involved in different communicative roles in such multiparty conversations. Interactions expressing the Tuakana-teina relationship which involves a change in communicative role was examined by this study. Their presence provides further evidence of how children are able to see that different communicative roles call for differential response in conversational interaction.

Most research descriptions of dyadic conversations in homes and preschool settings are typically described and discussed in the language development literature as taking place in an individualized setting which restricts

access by others (e.g. Tizard & Hughes 1988; Wells 1986). A shift in communicative partner often entails a shift in physical setting. This was seldom observed in this Te Kohanga Reo setting. Rather, dyadic conversations, termed below as 1 to 1 peer, or 1 to 1 adult, usually occurred within the context of group activity. The sheer number of opportunities these children had for such interactions which are seen as highly important for language development is reflected in the data.

These findings also have implications for classroom practice in conventional school settings. It points out that assumptions of the distinctions between, for example, preferences of peer tutoring and cooperation versus teacher on the basis of ethnic group membership alone (e.g. Townsend et al 1991) are simplistic. Issues of context, the social makeup of a learning or teaching activity are raised, for instance peer tutoring taking place in a group activity compared to peer tutoring taking place in a physically and/or socially isolated setting.

Another related issue relates to assumptions of a Maori preferred pedagogy being "equally" present or distributed in all Maori children. The children in this particular study were being exposed to distinct socializing experiences that are valued, and have been actively sought out, by their caregivers and families. It could be assumed that these socialization practices will be reflected to some degree in their homes. In comparison the over-riding constraints of conventional classrooms in forming or channelling attitudes may filter preferences of Maori children in these contexts. Following this line, simply introducing opportunities to display, for example, cooperative behaviour, in isolation of other Maori pedagogical values, beliefs and practices may not be very effective for Maori children's learning.

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