Understanding the use of Māori and English in dual language picturebooks.

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Children’s picturebooks are often underestimated, but some bilingual picturebooks disrupt the status quo and promote an alternative language hierarchy.
Ngā Reo (language) in Aotearoa

• Three official languages
• English (de facto)
• Te Reo Māori (1987)
• New Zealand Sign Language (2006)
The Linguistic Landscapes of Picturebooks

• Linguistic landscape is a term used to describe the (usually visual) presence of different languages in public spaces (Landry & Bourhis, 1997).

• In my work with picturebooks I use this term to describe the space occupied by languages within a book.
Ethnolinguistic vitality

• Landry and Bourhis (1997) argue that the presence of a language within a linguistic landscape has a positive effect on the social identity and ethnolinguistic vitality of a language community.
Dual Language picturebooks

• Ethnolinguistic vitality
  • Informative and symbolic functions

• The way in which languages are presented in bilingual children’s books may encourage readers to value a language, or perhaps use this language more frequently, thus positively affecting its vitality.
Method

• which language is presented first,
• which language uses a bigger font, and
• which language presents more information.

• Assumptions
  • Left dominant
  • Top dominant
  • Larger dominant
Tangaroa’s Gift

• English and Māori titles are both given on the front cover
  • English first
  • Māori larger
• The author and translator are also both given in the same sized font.
• In the body of the book, Māori is presented on the verso (left hand) and English on the recto (or right hand) page.

Kei te pēhea koe?

• On the cover Māori title is first and bigger font
• In the body Māori text is first and same sized font
• Pronunciation guide indicates pedagogic intent

Kākāhu. Getting Dressed

- The title (Kākahu) is much larger than the English (Getting Dressed).
- In the body of the book, Māori is privileged in several ways.
  - Māori is given first on the page, with English underneath;
  - Māori is presented in a much larger font size than English; and
  - Māori is given in a bold typeface, whereas English is given in normal typeface.

Te Wairua o Waitangi

• A brightly coloured title in Te Reo Māori only.

• In the body of the book, only Te Reo Māori is used.

• At the back of the book, the lyrics for the song are given in Māori only with guitar chords.

• The picturebook includes a CD recording of the song, which also features a title in Māori and not English.

Hush. A Kiwi Lullaby

- On the cover there is a large English title, but no Māori title is given.
- The name of the translator on the front cover using a Māori phrase ‘Nā Ngāire Roberts ngā kupu i whakamāori’.
- The first 23 pages give the English text surrounded by the richly coloured illustrations.
- The Māori translation is given separately in the last 7 pages use pale monochromatic versions of the early illustrations.

Changing attitudes

• Children and adults reading and listening to these books will see, albeit subconsciously, which language is being given higher status.

• In this way, new language attitudes are being formed and this may result in the adjustment of existing language hierarchies.
Children’s picturebooks are powerful little things, eh.
References
