

# Reo Rua Pukapuka

## Pikitia:

### Whānau drawing on their community cultural wealth to create strategies for developing Te Reo Rangatira

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#### Abstract

*The use of Te Reo Māori in Early Childhood Education in Aotearoa New Zealand is mandated in the ECE curriculum. Research shows that picturebooks are powerful tools in language learning, but there is a lack of research concerning the use of bilingual picturebooks by whānau to support Māori language learning in a New Zealand kindergarten. This research presents findings from a 4-week programme in which five whānau members were introduced to several types of dual language picturebooks (Reo Rua Pukapuka Pikitia, RRPP) in a Puna Pukapuka Pikitia (PPP). Whānau explored RRPP and suggested how they could bring Reo Rangatira from RRPP into their homes to support language learning. Their suggestions aligned with Ellis's principles of effective language teaching (Ellis, 2010) including the development of formulaic phrases, following the ways in which tamariki naturally learn language, encouraging opportunities for tamariki to speak and listen, as well as having interactions linked to RRPP.*

#### Introduction

The use of Te Reo Māori in Early Childhood Education in Aotearoa New Zealand is mandated in the ECE curriculum, Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 2017) which states that ECE has a crucial role to play in ensuring that Te Reo Māori not only survives but thrives (Ministry of Education, 2017). One of the challenges faced by ECE kaiako (teachers) is to engage whānau (family) in initiatives to grow Te Reo Rangatira (Māori language) with their tamariki (children). A lack of access to resources contributes to the challenges faced. A powerful resource with potential to address this challenge is Reo Rua Pukapuka Pikitia (RRPP), the dual language picturebook. Previous work has indicated that introducing whānau to RRPP in a Puna Pukapuka Pikitia (Picturebook club, PPP) over four 90-minute sessions led to early indications of increased use of Te Reo Rangatira by tamariki in the home (removed for blind review). The kaupapa (shared purpose) of this rangahau (research) was to work alongside 5 whānau members in an early learning service across four weekly sessions to explore RRPP and create knowledge

about the specific ways in which RRPP could be used to support and grow additional language acquisition of Te Reo Rangatira in their kāinga (homes). (1)

## Literature review

The combination of illustrations and text in picturebooks creates much space for emergent literacy and has particular power for emergent bilinguals (Mourão, 2016). Several authors have researched the potential of RRPP in educational spaces. Kersten and Ludwig (2018) identify the potential of multilingual children's literature to develop plurilingual literacies and support language learning. Hadaway and Young (2017) have analysed bilingual picturebooks from Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, suggesting they are ideal for supporting the revitalisation of Indigenous languages. Lopez Robertson (2017) examined Spanish and Spanish/English children's books together with Latina Mamas (mothers) in the Southern United States using a frame called community cultural wealth, defined by Yosso (2016) as "an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and used by communities of colour to survive and resist macro- and micro-forms of oppression" (p. 77). Lopez-Robertson (2017) noted how the Mamas made cultural and linguistic connections with the books, drawing on their funds of knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005).

Bland has explored how children's literature can be used to support language learning (2013), and some studies have explored how RRPP can be used to support language learning in ECE settings. Mourão (2016), for example, showed how picturebooks were used in a Portuguese kindergarten setting to support children learning English. Closer to home, Seals and her colleagues are leading the way in terms of growing our understanding of pedagogical translanguaging (2) in ECE settings. They made recordings of the ways in which languages were woven together in Pacific ECE settings, and then created picturebooks using these translanguaging practices (Seals et al., 2020). This strategy honours and makes space for

tamariki to draw on their full linguistic repertoires to make meaning. Further studies in an A'oga Amata (Sāmoan ECE settings) showed that using picturebooks featuring translanguaging increased the use of translanguaging between children (Amosa Burgess & Fiti, 2019).

After surveying research concerning effective additional language instruction, Ellis (2010) created ten principles of effective instructed language learning, including several principles which we believe have particular relevance in an ECE Setting. These include Principle 1 which states the importance of formulaic expressions, or commonly-used phrases; Principle 2 which indicates that instruction needs to focus predominantly on learners making meaning; Principle 5 indicates that instruction needs to take into account the learner's individual built-in syllabus, or the natural progression in a language learning sequence; Principle 6 discusses the need for extensive target language input (listening, reading); Principle 7 suggests there is also a need for opportunities for output (speaking, writing); and Principle 8 refers to the importance of interaction in the target language. In our research developing ways of using picturebooks to support Te Reo Rangatira alongside ECE whānau, we were interested to see how these principles sat alongside ideas formulated by PPP whānau.

To sum up, research evidence demonstrates the potential of RRPP to support language learning and develop identities involving multiple languages among young learners. Research also suggests effective strategies for teaching additional languages. In this article, we explore specific strategies created by whānau drawing from their community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2016) to bring the language in RRPP to life in their kāinga, and thus to support the revitalisation of Te Reo Rangatira (Te Reo Māori). Specifically, we ask the question:

What strategies do whānau create to use RRPP to support development of Te Reo Rangatira in their kāinga?

## Method

The method used to develop the Puna Pukapuka Pikitia (PPP) has been reported elsewhere (Brouwer & Daly, 2022). It consisted of a four-week programme with whānau of tamariki at a kindergarten in the Central North Island. Our aim across the four weeks was to introduce whānau to RRPP available in libraries and bookshops featuring Te Reo Rangatira. Throughout the four weeks, we were guided by Kaupapa Māori principles (Bishop & Glynn, 1999), aiming to ensure whanaungatanga and ako were central to the research process, and that whānau voice received the mana it deserved.

Our four sessions were run in the kindergarten at a time nominated by parents as being most convenient- when parents came to pick their tamariki up. During the PPP, tamariki were supervised by kindergarten kaiako but were able to join their parents at any time during the approximately 90 minutes session. We began with kai and a cup of tea. During this time books were available for the whānau to browse. We began each session with a karakia, and then the focus of each week was on a different form of RRPP. We began with a general introduction to RRPP in Week 1 and then moved from pukapuka featuring single words in Week 2, to pukapuka featuring single phrases in Week 3; to pukapuka featuring waiata (songs) in Week 4 (Brouwer & Daly, 2022).

Our participants were whānau of children at the kindergarten who responded to an invitation to join PPP. They varied from those who were new speakers of Te Reo, to those who were fluent in Te Reo. In our early whakawhanaungatanga it was clear that many had a deep personal connection with the loss of Reo Rangatira. From the start of PPP, we emphasised that all were welcome and that participation in the research was optional. Five parents volunteered to be participants; all were female, with four being Māmā (3) and one being the Pou Reo (Additional Language Support Person) for the centre. During weeks 2, 3 and 4 the group had the opportunity to work

in pairs, reading an RRPP together and brainstorming ways in which they could bring the language from their RRPP into their homes. While whānau did take books home from each session to share with their tamariki, the ideas from discussions were based on their own readings of the books prior to taking them home. These ideas were shared in a whole group discussion and written on sticky notes which were then displayed on the wall. These notes recorded the ideas from whānau (facilitators were not part of these discussions) and were then examined for themes.

## Findings and discussion

As we reviewed the strategies suggested by the whānau participants during our weekly sessions, we could see themes linked to Ellis's principles emerging, particularly, principles 1, 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8. The thematic analysis came first, followed by an alignment with the language learning themes.

### *Use of formulaic phrases*

Principle 1 states that for effective instructed language acquisition, learners need a rich set of formulaic phrases (Ellis, 2010). These are phrases that can be used without necessarily understanding every single word in each phrase. The use of formulaic phrases was evident in several of the suggestions made by the whānau across our 4 weeks together. In Week 2 when we were exploring single word RRPP and papa kupu (dictionaries) they reported that the question and answer structures such as 'He aha tēnei?'; 'He \_\_\_\_ tēnei.' (What is this? This is a \_\_\_\_ ) which we suggested could be useful when exploring such pukapuka with their tamariki would also be useful in their kāinga. When we looked at one RRPP in particular, *Mihi* by Gavin Bishop (2020), the parents noted that the structure and order of the single words in this boardbook (maunga, awa, iwi, whānau, Ko au) would provide the structure to work on a pepeha with their own children.

When we were looking at RRPP featuring simple sentence structures in Week 3, the

whānau used the question and reply forms we had used in Week 2 with single word RRPP: 'Kei hea \_\_\_\_?'; 'Kei konei' (Where is \_\_? It's here). They suggested that these structures would be useful to communicate with their children about the illustrations in the RRPP as a prompt for additional language learning. In Week 4, when we read and listened to the Te Reo Singalong RRPP, whānau members noted the repetitive simple structures such as 'He pai ki ahau' (I like that) which featured in the RRPP could be used with their children at home. This aligns with the affordances of RRPP in language learning identified by Kaminski (2013) whose work explored the use of picturebooks with 8- and 9-year-old German children learning English.

### ***Learners making meaning***

Principle 2 states that additional language instruction needs to focus predominantly on learners making meaning (Ellis, 2010). It was clear in the responses from whānau participants, that the medium of RRPP was a bridge to making meaning. For example, in Week 2, a parent suggested the technique of saying a new kupu in Te Reo Rangatira, and then repeating it in Te Reo Pākehā, using one language to bridge meaning in the other. In Week 3 a whānau member noted that there are techniques in reading where "you don't need to translate every time. Leave gaps there." This links to Kleemann's (2021) notion that natural pauses act as functional breathing spaces which support meaning-making.

In week 4 another participant noted how the illustrations supported them in translating words they didn't know, mirroring Kaminski's (2013) findings with 8- and 9- year olds which showed that listening to picturebooks supports acquisition of vocabulary in an additional language by providing context through the accompanying visual images. Whānau also suggested new strategies that would work in their family routines, such as creating a language map through images (e.g., photos on a phone) before a family trip to resource vocabulary building. Another suggestion was to create activities in the home to reinforce new

kupu (words) relating to plants, for example, harakeke (flax) and kawakawa (pepper tree).

### ***Learners' individual built-in syllabus***

According to Principle 5 (Ellis, 2010) for effective language learning to occur, instruction needs to take into account the learner's individual built-in syllabus, or the natural progression in a language learning sequence. While comments to this effect were not as frequent as for some of the other principles, they were discussed in Week 2 when PPP whānau had shared reading an RRPP featuring single words on each page in pairs. Whānau suggested it was important that as parents they didn't take over reading; it was important to let the tamariki navigate the pukapuka in accordance with their own interests and experiences. In the same way, Kleemann (2021) discusses utilising the full repertoire of children's experiences in learning and allowing children to guide the navigation of RRPP according to their interests as a reflection of this approach. Another comment made in Week 2 was that the single-word RRPP took the pressure off language learning, allowing whānau and tamariki to focus on one word at a time, thus building the necessary vocabulary funds for children's interest areas and passions.

### ***The need for extensive target language input***

Principle 6 of Ellis's ten principles of effective instructed language acquisition discusses the need for extensive target language input (Ellis, 2010) which can include opportunities to listen to or read the target language. This came up in many comments made by PPP whānau after their discussions about how they might use RRPP to support Te Reo Rangatira use in the kāinga. In Week 2, parents noted that picturebooks were a form of mobile learning which allowed parents to offer input to their children in many different settings. They could see how the single words they learned from the RRPP could be woven into their English sentences, which we referred to as kupu whiua, due to the nature of replacing one English word with a Māori word.

Another form of target language input that the whānau suggested would be powerful for bringing Te Reo Rangatira into the home was the songs in the Te Reo Singalong pukapuka. One whānau member commented that the recorded songs would support her child's father to share a pukapuka with his child and listen and learn pronunciation at the same time. Indeed, research supports this idea that songs do facilitate language learning (Ludke, Ferreira & Overy, 2014). This suggestion speaks to the complex role that the RRPP potentially have in supporting language learning among adults and tamariki at the same time.

### ***The need for extensive target language output***

Principle 7 suggests that successful instructed language learning requires opportunities for output, such as speaking and writing (Ellis, 2010). The PPP whānau developed creative ways to foster language output without prompting. In one example, the parent felt her confidence in speaking was mitigated by the medium of song. This strategy enabled the opportunity to sing language as opposed to speaking. Waiata in te ao Māori have strong cultural significance including to pass on "history, whakapapa, events and stories of the iwi" (Royal Tangaere, 1997, p. 24). Singing in this kindergarten also offered a variety of opportunities for output including pronunciation and sentence structures, and, importantly, waiata provided a safe space for trying out phrases and pronunciations (Ludke, Ferreira & Overy, 2014).

Another example offered by the parents for encouraging output was the idea of making activities that encouraged their children and whānau members to practise speaking. Papakupu pikitia (picture dictionaries) provided the opportunity to create a deliberate task that required output of learned vocabulary and an extending question to place the vocab into the relevant language form. "What is this?/ that and /that over there" was offered in the target language so that question and answer practice provided valuable opportunities for output.

The PPP whānau also suggested that resource cards could be valuable language prompts to take out to the beach, on walks in the forest, on car trips and so forth to support the playing of popular children's games such as; 'I spy'. These opportunities for learning in natural contexts have the potential to stretch the language learner (Ellis, 2010) to draw from memory, and practice, speaking the target language out loud with the support of their whānau who were often learners alongside them.

### ***Opportunities to interact in the target language***

The opportunity to interact in the target language is central to developing additional language proficiency (Principle 8, Ellis, 2010). The purpose of conversation is to reciprocally share our thoughts, ideas, and feelings with others. The notion of building a turn-taking opportunity or a serve-and-return type language activity was central to our PPP whānau innovations. As teachers of their children's first language, the whānau knew that fun is always a key ingredient. Rapua (look for/hunt) was identified as an activity using RRPP where the whānau member would say 'Kei hea te .....?' (Where is the...object...?) and the children would love to find the things and point to the picture, replying 'Kei konei'.

Book reading was also understood as a solid medium for interaction by our PPP whānau. The plethora of communication tools within RRPP had parents asking simple questions in the target language in order to generate the relevant response. Thus early learning stages of interaction were taking shape in the desired target language which is supported by Kleman (2021) who noted that in order to learn a language, it is important to have sufficient input and enough arenas to use the language as output.

## **Conclusion**

The findings presented in this article demonstrate that across a 4-week PPP, whānau used their community cultural wealth to create

a wide range of strategies for bringing the language from RRPP into their kāinga. These strategies align with the mandate in the ECE curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017) which states that ECE has a crucial role to play in ensuring that Te Reo Māori not only survives but thrives (Ministry of Education, 2017). These suggestions also clearly align with six of the principles of effective instructed language acquisition developed by Ellis (2010). The whānau found ways to create banks of formulaic phrases, following the inbuilt syllabus of their tamariki. They created opportunities for their tamariki to speak (output), and listen (input), and used the RRPP as opportunities for rich interaction using Te Reo Rangatira.

Having sat alongside PPP whānau through four sessions of exploring RRPP, and creating spaces for whānau to share their ideas about how to bring Te Reo Rangatira from RRPP into their kāinga, two key points are clear to us:

1. RRPPs are powerful tools to support language learning for both whānau and children. When we are working with revitalising an endangered language, it is plausible that parents may need to learn the language at the same time as their tamariki.
2. The knowledge whānau shared with us about supporting Te Reo Rangatira using RRPP clearly aligned with internationally published research in the field of additional language learning (Ellis, 2010).

The key strategies the PPP whānau suggested which could be used by others using RRPP to support language learning are collated in Table 1.

**Table 1. Key strategies suggested by whānau for using RRPP to support language learning.**

Key strategies
Using formulaic phrases such as ‘He aha tēnei?’ / ‘He...tēnei.’ and ‘Kei hea.....?’ / ‘Kei kōnei’ when sharing RRPP, including papakupu pikitia
Using kupu whiua (Māori words woven into English) to normalise new vocabulary
When reading, leaving pauses after new vocabulary to allow for tamariki to draw from their own experiences to make meaning
When reading Te Reo Māori picturebooks, not always needing to translate; trusting that children will make meaning from the context, illustrations, and their own life experiences
Making ‘language maps’, or lists of words from RRPP to take on family trips
Using new vocabulary for games of ‘I spy’ to develop puna kupu (vocab bank)
Using repetition of phrases from RRPP in the home (e.g., He pai ki koe)

These findings support previous work both locally and internationally that picturebooks have a powerful potential in supporting language learning. The novel aspect of this work is the use of picturebooks with whānau to support their tamariki in the acquisition of one of Aotearoa’s official languages. Future work is needed with more whānau across a longer period to explore the use of these strategies and their longitudinal effects.

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## Footnotes

1. A glossary is provided at the end of the article for Māori words woven into this article
2. Translanguaging recognises that in reality, boundaries between languages are social constructs. When speakers

'translanguage' they use all of their linguistic repertoire in order to make meaning (Seals et al, 2019).

- Note that Māmā is the Māori word for mother; Mama is the Spanish word for mother.

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## Glossary

Ako - learn and teach

Awa - river

Harakeke - flax

Iwi - tribe/bones

Kai - food

Kāinga - home

Kaiako - teacher

Karakia - prayer

Kaupapa - shared purpose

Kawakawa - Pepper tree

Ko au - This is me

Kupu - word

Kupu whiua - a replacement word

Maunga - mountain

Papakupu - dictionary

Pepeha - traditional Māori statement of identity

Pikitia - picture

Pukapuka - book

Puna Pukapuka Pikitia - Picturebook club

Rangahau - research

Rapua - search for

Reo Rua Pukapuka Pikitia - bilingual  
picturebook

Tamariki - children

Te Reo Rangatira - Te Reo Māori

Waiata - song

Whānau - family

Whakapapa - genealogy

Whakawhanaungatanga - the act of making  
connections with others

Whanaungatanga - making connections with  
others