

Introduction

Bilingual/Immersion Education in Aotearoa/New Zealand: Setting the Context

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This special issue of IJBEB focuses on recent developments in bilingual/immersion¹ education in Aotearoa/New Zealand,² particularly, but not solely, Māori-medium education. It also explores these developments in relation to wider issues of language and language education policy and planning, since any developments in bilingual education are *inevitably* situated within these wider discourses (see May, 2001), and need to be directly addressed as such.

In order to focus meaningfully on developments in bilingual/immersion education in Aotearoa/New Zealand then, we must first situate these developments critically within the wider historical, social and political background from which they emerged. This is important because the development of Māori-medium language education, for example, is both a product and an illustration of a wider repositioning of identity and minority rights issues within this once 'British settler society' – particularly, between the indigenous Māori and their European colonisers (see Fleras & Spoonley, 1999; Pearson, 2000; Spoonley *et al.*, 2004). Thus a critical historical account is vital to understanding the wider social, cultural and political processes at work here.

Historical Context

Aotearoa/New Zealand was colonised by European – predominantly British – settlers in the late 18th century, following the voyages of Captain James Cook, although the indigenous Māori people had preceded Pākehā (European)³ settlers by at least 500, perhaps as much as 1000, years (King, 2004; Walker, 1990). Colonial relations between Māori and Pākehā were subsequently formalised by the British Crown in the 19th century, most notably via the foundational colonial document, the Treaty of Waitangi – signed on 6 February 1840 between the British Crown and Māori chiefs. A surprisingly progressive document for its time, the Treaty specifically attempted to establish the rights and responsibilities of both parties as a mutual framework by which colonisation could proceed. Captain Hobson, the Crown's representative, was instructed to obtain the surrender of Aotearoa/New Zealand as a sovereign state to the British crown, but only by 'free and intelligent consent' of the 'natives'. In return, Māori were to be guaranteed

possession of 'their lands, their homes and all their treasured possessions (taonga)'.

Despite this promising beginning, the subsequent colonial history of Aotearoa/New Zealand was to read little differently from other colonial contexts, as highlighted in numerous recent revisionist histories of the country (see Belich, 1996, 2001; King, 2004; Sinclair, 1993; Walker, 1990). It is beyond the scope of this introduction to detail this history in any depth, except to say that it soon became clear that the Treaty of Waitangi, for all its potential symbolic significance, was quickly and ruthlessly trivialised and marginalised by Pākehā settlers in their quest for land; a quest that had resulted in almost all Māori-owned land being in Pākehā hands by the end of the 19th century, mostly via illegitimate means. Not surprisingly perhaps, what resulted for Māori were the usual deleterious effects of colonisation upon an indigenous people – political disenfranchisement, misappropriation of land, population and health decline, educational disadvantage and socioeconomic marginalisation (Stannard, 1989; Walker, 1990).

The cumulative weight of this historical process has resulted in ongoing comparative disadvantage for Māori, up to and including the present day. The comparative disadvantages that still face Māori today can be illustrated by, among many other social indices (see May, 2002), their current educational status. Though increasing numbers of Māori have been completing school and pursuing tertiary education, particularly in the last decade (Chapple *et al.*, 1997), 60% of Māori aged more than 15 years still held no formal educational qualifications in 1991. This compared with 40% for non-Māori. At the same time, Māori were nearly half as likely as the total population to hold a tertiary qualification. This low level of educational attainment is also a key factor in the current disproportionate location of Māori in the lowest levels of the labour market (Davies & Nicholl, 1993).

Social and Political Context

The recognition of the deleterious effects of colonialism on Māori as a central explanatory variable in their current and ongoing comparative disadvantage in contemporary Aotearoa/New Zealand remains an uncomfortable and contested one for many (Pearson, 2000; Spoonley *et al.*, 2004). Nonetheless, it has resulted in a significant realignment of Māori–Pākehā relations in recent times, not least through the activism of Māori themselves. This has centred on developments in the 1980s which resulted in the reinvestment of the long-ignored Treaty of Waitangi with both moral and political force, principally via the introduction of the notion of biculturalism into formal public discourse, decision-making and law (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Durie, 1998; Fleras & Spoonley, 1999; Wilson & Yeatman, 1995). One clear example of this change in direction can be seen in the area of Māori language policy.

As a result of a resolutely assimilationist approach to the education of Māori in the 19th and 20th centuries,⁴ *te reo Māori* (the Māori language) has faced subsequent and significant decline over the latter part of the 20th century. The rapid urbanisation of Māori since the Second World War has also been a key

contributory factor to this language decline.⁵ While the Māori language had long been excluded from the realms of the school, it had still been nurtured in largely rural Māori communities. Urbanisation was to change all that. Thus, in 1930, a survey of children attending Native schools estimated that 96.6% spoke only Māori at home. By 1960, only 26% spoke Māori. By 1979 the Māori language had retreated to the point where language death was predicted (Benton, 1979, 1983, 1989). It is this rapid language loss context that framed the subsequent advocacy, establishment and development of Māori-medium education, particularly from the early 1980s onwards.

Despite the significant advances achieved by Māori-medium education, of which more in a moment, recent statistics suggest that the Māori language is still endangered. In 1995, a general language survey found that nine out of ten of Aotearoa/New Zealand's then 3.8 million inhabitants were first language speakers of English – a figure that made it one of the most linguistically homogeneous countries in the world at that time (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, 1995).⁶ That said, in the most recent Census (2001), 160,000 did identify as Māori speakers, although this figure is likely to encompass the full range of language proficiency. To reinforce this point, the *National Māori Language Survey*, also undertaken in 2001 (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2001), found that among Māori adults, there were as few as 22,000 *highly fluent* Māori speakers, many of whom (73%) are 45 years of age or older, with a further 22,000 with medium fluency levels. More worryingly, 58% of Māori adults could not speak Māori beyond a 'few words or phrases'.

In response to these particular concerns, and the wider political movement for indigenous rights and recognition initiated by Māori since the 1970s (see below), two key developments with respect to language policy have occurred during the last 20 years. In 1985/1986, a legal decision concerning the recognition and role of Māori as a language of the state concluded that the Māori language could be regarded as a 'taonga' (treasured possession) and therefore had a *guaranteed* right to protection under the terms of the Treaty of Waitangi (Waitangi Tribunal, 1986). In the ruling, the term 'guarantee' was defined as 'more than merely leaving Māori people unhindered in their enjoyment of the language and culture'; it also required 'active steps' to be taken by the guarantor to ensure that Māori have and retain 'the full exclusive and undisturbed possession of their language and culture' (Waitangi Tribunal, 1986: 29). As a result, in 1987, the Māori Language Act was passed, recognising for the first time Māori as an official language of Aotearoa/New Zealand.⁷ More significantly still, the 1980s saw the rapid (and highly successful) emergence of Māori-medium education.

Educational Context

The first development in Māori-medium education occurred in the late 1970s with the establishment of bilingual education programmes in a few schools that still served predominantly rural Māori communities. Other schools were to follow – providing, primarily, a 'transition' approach to bilingualism. However, it was the establishment in the 1980s of *whole-school* Māori language programmes, which were also predominantly *full-immersion*

(81–100% in the New Zealand context), that has been the most significant development in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and the one that has gained most international attention. This began with the establishment in 1982 of Te Kōhanga Reo – full immersion Māori language preschool programmes, initially run independently by parents. It has since developed to *all* levels of education and has subsequently been incorporated into the state education system, thus spearheading the beginnings of what Christina Paulston has described as ‘language reversal’; a process by which ‘one of the languages of a state begins to move back into more prominent use’ (Paulston, 1993: 281; see May, 2004a for an extended discussion).

To gauge the significance and impact of these developments, one only has to look at the growth of this Māori language education movement. In 1982, the first Kōhanga Reo was established – by 1996, at its high point, there were 767 kōhanga catering for over 14,000 Māori children (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1998). Although there has been some decline in numbers since then, there were still 9500 Māori students (approx. 30% of all Māori preschool enrolments) enrolled in 560 Kōhanga in 2001.

This expansion has also had a ‘domino effect’ throughout the education system, as kōhanga graduates have worked their way through the school system over the course of the last 20 years. This is particularly evident at the primary (elementary) level with the emergence of the first (privately funded) Kura Kaupapa Māori (literally, Māori philosophy school) in 1985 – based on the same principles of full-immersion. In 1990, six Kura Kaupapa Māori were approved for state funding and by 1999, 59 Kura Kaupapa Māori had been established, serving approximately 4000 students (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1998). These developments are also now beginning to extend to higher educational levels with the establishment in 1993/1994 of the first Wharekura (Māori-medium secondary schools) and Whare Wānanga (tertiary institutions). By 1997 there were four such Wharekura and three Wānanga.

In addition to these developments in whole-school, full-immersion Māori-medium education, and perhaps also as a direct result of their influence, there has been a related expansion of targeted, partial-immersion models of Māori-medium education within ‘mainstream’ (English-medium) New Zealand schools. As a result, in 2001, there were 25,580 Māori students enrolled in some form of Māori-medium education, comprising 17% of the total Māori student population. Of these, the vast majority (22,349; 87%) were enrolled in primary (elementary) programmes (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2001).⁸

While these developments continue the expansion of Māori-medium education, they also present challenges of their own, particularly in relation to their accommodation within the wider English-medium school contexts in which they are situated (see May & Hill, this issue). The rationales for these bilingual programmes, and the degree to which they incorporate Māori as the medium of instruction, also continue to vary widely (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1998; Spolsky, 1987). This degree of variability, and a continuing lack of both teaching and material resources for Māori-medium education remain an ongoing cause for concern (May *et al.*, 2004, see also May & Hill, this issue).

Other Language Minority Groups

Much of the development of Māori-medium education has been based upon, and articulated within, a wider discourse of indigenous rights that Māori have been prominent in advancing, both nationally and internationally (see May, 2002). In this respect, Māori have argued that their language education rights (and wider social and political rights) are predicated on their status as an indigenous people, in turn, a national minority within international law (see Kymlicka, 1995; May, 2001: Chapter 8). From this, Māori have argued consistently for the right to self-determination – for, in effect, separate recognition by the state of Māori political culture and social organisation, and for the recognition of the cultural and linguistic *distinctiveness* of Māori. These arguments have been expressed via the political notion of biculturalism, and via an associated rejection of multiculturalism – with its intrinsic ‘levelling’ of the claims of all ethnic minority groups. Rather, Māori argue that multiculturalism, in practice, would simply work in favour of the numerically dominant Pākehā group. Minority groups would be encouraged to fragment and to compete with one another for limited resources, thus maintaining current Pākehā dominance in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Spoonley, 1993). Specifically, relegating Māori to the status of a single group among many (albeit a large and influential one) disadvantages Māori in two ways:

it denies Māori people their equality as members of one among two (sets of) peoples, and it also tends to deny the divisions of Maoridom their separate status while exaggerating the status of other immigrant groups. In the end, Māori interests become peripheral, combined with other special problem areas. (Benton, 1988: 77)

There are thus strong political arguments in favour of biculturalism, given the status of Māori as an indigenous people, whose only territory has been the subject of conquest and colonisation, and who are thus fundamentally distinguished (and distinguishable) from other (migrant) minority groups. This difference in entitlement does not preclude, in principle at least, the extension of language rights, or the provision of first language education, to other minority groups (see May, 2001, 2004b for further discussion). However, in *practice*, an unfortunate consequence of this focus on biculturalism has been a convenient lack of interest by the New Zealand state in *substantively* addressing the social and political aspirations of other minority groups, particularly with respect to institutional/educational support for their languages and cultures. This is most evident in relation to the long-settled Pasifika⁹ population in Aotearoa/New Zealand, although it also applies to more recent Asian migrants to New Zealand, many of whom are Chinese speakers.

With respect to Pasifika peoples, the 2001 Census indicates that there are now over 100,000 speakers of Pasifika languages in Aotearoa/New Zealand, the vast majority of whom are Samoan speakers (81,033).¹⁰ This means that Samoan is officially the third largest language group in New Zealand behind English (3,425,301) and Māori (160,527), although given the previous discussion of the wide variance in levels of fluency among Māori speakers, it is likely

that the number of high and medium fluency Samoan speakers will outnumber comparable Māori speakers. In addition, 23,046 identified in the Census as being Tongan speakers, 9375 as Cook Islands Māori speakers, and 5478 as Niuean speakers.¹¹

These figures indicate that over 60% of the New Zealand Samoan and Tongan communities can still hold an everyday conversation in their respective Pasifika languages. Given that this is within the context of 60 years of migration to New Zealand – where English dominates all public domains, and the majority of New Zealanders are monolingual English speakers (see above) – this is a significant percentage. It also suggests the likely ongoing use of these Pasifika languages, alongside English, within these particular communities.

Despite this ongoing presence of Pasifika languages in Aotearoa/New Zealand, there has been very little accommodation with respect to developing bilingual/immersion education in these languages, despite an earlier assurance by the New Zealand Ministry of Education (1993: 10) that ‘students whose mother tongue is a Pacific Islands language or a community language will have the opportunity to develop and use their own language as an integral part of their schooling’. This is reflected in the still paltry provision of Pasifika language programmes across Aotearoa/New Zealand. In 2001, just over 2500 early childhood students were in Pasifika language nests, modelled on Kōhanga Reo, although this figure was also the lowest for 10 years, and well down on a mid-1990s peak of nearly 4000 (Peddie, 2003). As for the school population, Pasifika students comprise 6% of all New Zealand school students, about half of whom are Samoan. However, as Peddie (2003: 22) observes:

In 2001, and in [only] 20 [primary and secondary] schools, just over 1600 students were in Pacific-medium education, with almost three-quarters of these students learning at least some of the time in Samoan. However, this total represents only 2.8% of all Pasifika students. Furthermore, fewer than 5% of Pasifika students in schools were learning a Pasifika language. While the figures are a little better for Samoans, the numbers are still well under 10%, with fewer than 1000 students learning Samoan in secondary schools.

Moreover, the provision of such bilingual/immersion education is almost always the result of discrete local initiatives at the school and community level. Some of these schools have been extensively researched – most notably, Richmond Road Primary School (see, for example, May, 1991, 1992, 1994, 1995) and Finlayson Park Primary School (McCaffery & Tuafuti, 1998, 2003; Tuafuti & McCaffery, this issue), both in Auckland, New Zealand’s largest city and where the majority of the Pasifika population live. The consensus of this research, in close alignment with international observations on the effectiveness of bilingual/immersion education, is that the bilingual programmes and wider educational approach adopted by these schools are highly effective. And yet despite ongoing concerns about the (relative lack of) educational achievement of Pasifika students within English-only contexts in New Zealand

schools,¹² no coordinated, or proactive national policy in support of Pasifika bilingual/immersion education has yet emerged.

This ongoing inaction with respect to Pasifika bilingual/immersion education is, of course, more a matter of political will (or lack thereof), a product in turn of the marginalised status of Pasifika peoples within Aotearoa/New Zealand, and a comparable deficit/low-status construction of their languages, cultures and associated bilingualism. These views are further bolstered by still widely held subtractive views of bilingualism among the monolingual English-speaking population (see May *et al.*, 2004). There is also the usual corollary in English-dominant contexts that the requirement to learn English is a zero sum game – that one must do so at the specific *expense* of one's first language. The irony is that such views, by enforcing a disjuncture between L1 and L2, continue to militate against not only Pasifika language maintenance, but also the educational success of Pasifika students, despite their stated intentions to the contrary (see Tagoilelagi-Leota *et al.*, this issue).

Conclusion

In light of this necessarily brief overview of the historical and contemporary language policy and language education contexts in Aotearoa/New Zealand, this special issue charts the latest developments in Māori-medium education, as well as nascent developments in Pasifika bilingual/immersion education. Stephen May and Richard Hill discuss the findings of their major recent report (May *et al.*, 2004), which situates current practices in bilingual/immersion education in Aotearoa/New Zealand within wider debates in the associated research literature. The aim of the discussion is to extrapolate key indicators of good practice for the further development of bilingual/immersion education, with a particular, but not exclusive, focus on Māori-medium education.

Cath Rau explores one of the major challenges currently facing Māori-medium educators, which is how to develop effective assessment practices, particularly literacy-related ones, that are congruent with the principles and practices adopted within Māori-medium contexts. This paper also presents and compares the results of testing from 1995 and 2002–2003 using a reconstructed standardised assessment in literacy for Year 2 students in 81–100% immersion in Māori as a measure of literacy and Māori language acquisition.

Ted Glynn, Mere Berryman, Kura Loader and Tom Cavanagh examine how a small rural Māori-medium school in Aotearoa/New Zealand developed a targeted approach to the instruction of academic English in Years 6–8, in order to address a concern that their students, who were highly literate in Māori, were experiencing difficulties in reading and writing in English on entry to secondary school at Year 9 (where English was the medium of instruction). As a result of this intervention, data demonstrate that students from all three year groups (Years 6–8) made marked gains in both reading and writing in English, and that these gains were not made at the expense of reading and writing in Māori. After 10 weeks in the programme, students were able to read English at age-appropriate levels. The programme also engaged the school and commu-

nity in ways that affirmed Māori cultural values and practices, and has since been incorporated into the school's regular pedagogical practice.

Fa'asaulala Tagoilelagi-Leota, Stuart McNaughton, Shelley MacDonald and Sasha Farry explore the bilingual and biliteracy development of a group of children from Samoan and Tongan families over the transition to mainstream English-medium schools in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The children attended Pasifika Early Childhood Education Centres which provided full immersion programmes in their L1 (either Samoan or Tongan). Development in a home language (L1) and in English (L2) was plotted over the six months prior to going to school and over the first year at an English-medium school in a programme with known features for effective teaching of early reading and writing in English. Before going to school (at 5.0 years), the children were developing as incipient bilinguals. An incipient biliteracy paralleled their bilingual development, although there were large variations in profiles on entry to school. After one month at school, there were indicators of faster progress in English and a slowing down of progress in L1, which was dramatically confirmed by the results at the end of the first year. The rapid growth of literacy and comprehension knowledge in English from 5.0 to 6.0 years reflected the effectiveness of the school programme. However, the resultant patterns suggested children were now 'at risk bilinguals'. The relationships between literacy in two languages weakened over the first year, suggesting that the possible transfer effects from one set of literacy skills to another appeared to happen very quickly on entry to school.

Patisepa Tuafuti and John McCaffery discuss an empowerment-based Samoan bilingual/immersion education programme, developed over the course of 10 years at Finlayson Park Primary School in Auckland. The project was developed by the authors, in partnership with local Samoan families, the wider community and the school, using theoretical research-based models of empowerment. The arguments underlying the paper are that while the development of bilingual/immersion education models are crucially important for the academic success of Pasifika students, they are not, in themselves, enough. A critical educational approach and perspective is also required in order to address the wider issues, and power relations, that inevitably frame, and delimit, the development of first language models of education for minority students, in Aotearoa/New Zealand, as elsewhere. This accords well with James Tollefson's more general observation, made well over a decade now, that:

the struggle to adopt minority languages within dominant institutions such as education...as well as the struggle over language rights, constitute efforts to legitimise the minority group itself and to alter its relationship to the state. Thus while language [education] planning reflects relationships of power, it can also be used to transform them. (Tollefson, 1991: 202; see also 1995)

Tollefson's comment should remind us again, if we need reminding, that debates over language education are never simply about language, or even education, but are *always* situated within a wider context of power relationships, and an ongoing contest for recognition, rights and resources. This is

certainly the case in Aotearoa/New Zealand, as the subsequent papers in this special issue will clearly show. These papers should also make clear that while an enormous amount *has* been accomplished, particularly with respect to Māori-medium education over the last 20 years, nothing should be taken for granted and, in that light, much more still needs to be done if the successes of bilingual/immersion education in Aotearoa/New Zealand are to be secured, consolidated and extended.

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Notes

1. Aotearoa/New Zealand is one of the only national contexts that consistently differentiates between immersion and bilingual education (with the former being associated with high levels of immersion and the latter with lower levels of immersion). This distinction has its origins in the emergence of Māori-medium education in New Zealand, and is discussed at more length by May and Hill, this issue.
2. Aotearoa (land of the long white cloud) is the indigenous Māori name for the country now known as New Zealand. There is ongoing historical dispute as to when Māori first settled in New Zealand. At the earliest, this may have occurred towards the end of the first major Pacific migrations in approximately the 8th century AD (Walker, 1990). More recent commentary, however, suggests a more likely settlement period between the 12th and 14th centuries (King, 2004). The term New Zealand itself derives from the Dutch origins of the 'first' European explorer to sight the country in the 17th century. The conjoint use of the two names is becoming increasingly common and specifically recognises the bicultural origins of the country.
3. 'Pākehā' is the Māori term for New Zealanders of European origin. Its literal meaning is 'stranger', although it holds no pejorative connotation in modern usage.
4. An overtly assimilationist approach to education was adopted in the 1840s, when funding for the education of Māori was made contingent upon adopting an English-medium approach. This effectively ended an earlier phase, where mission schools, while they taught only the standard subjects of the English school curriculum, had done so through the medium of Māori. As a result, the period in which these schools were most influential – 1816 to the mid-1840s – saw a rapid spread of literacy among Māori in both Māori and English. Subsequent outcomes for Māori within education as a result of an English-only approach were, not surprisingly, far less favourable.
5. Prior to the Second World War less than 10% of Māori had lived in cities or smaller urban centres. Currently, 82% of Māori live in urban areas (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, 1995). Māori have thus undergone what is perhaps the most comprehensive and certainly the most rapid urbanisation process in modern times.
6. Due to changing migration patterns in the 1990s, with an associated marked increase in migration from Asia, more recent projections place the proportion of monolingual English speakers at closer to 80% (Peddie, 2003). However this is, of course, still a considerable percentage.
7. This legal recognition of the language is still somewhat limited. In particular, the right to use or to demand the use of Māori in the public domain does not extend beyond the oral use of the language in courts of law and some quasi-legal tribunals (Benton, 1988). Nonetheless, it still stands as one of the only examples where the

- first language of an indigenous people has been made an official state language (see May, 2001). The Act also provided for the establishment of a Māori Language Commission, Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori. Closely modelled on the Irish Bord na Gaeilge (see Ó Riagáin, 1997), the Commission's role is to monitor and promote the use of the language, although its staff and resources are limited.
8. Provision for Māori-medium education at the secondary and tertiary level remains very limited, due to the very small number of Māori-medium providers here. Most students at secondary level take Māori as a subject (in 2001, 33,203 took Māori as a subject for less than three hours a week; 8075 for more than three hours a week), with the usual limitations that such a subject-based approach entails (lack of interest, lack of communicative fluency etc). In 2001, there were 1693 Māori language EFTS (equivalent full time students) at the tertiary level, 58% located in the three whare wānanga (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2001).
 9. Pasifika is the pan-ethnic term currently used to describe Pacific Island migrants to Aotearoa/New Zealand from the principal islands of Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau and Tuvalu, as well as other Pacific nations. It replaces the term 'Polynesian', which has been regarded as increasingly problematic for its failure to distinguish clearly between the indigenous Māori and other Pacific groups.
 10. There is a caveat here: the Census question asked about languages 'in which you can have a conversation about a lot of everyday things'. As Peddie (2003: 14) observes: 'this is clearly not the same as asking about languages normally spoken on a daily basis, nor is it a measure of genuine fluency'.
 11. The remaining Pasifika groups did not reach the threshold of 4,500 speakers (just over 0.1% of the total New Zealand population) used by the Census in their analysis of this question.
 12. International literacy surveys (IEA; PISA; PIRLS) have consistently identified that Aotearoa/New Zealand has the largest 'home language gap' in literacy achievement – that is, the gap between the literacy achievements of students for whom the language of the school (English in the New Zealand context) is also the language of the home and those for whom it is not (Wilkinson, 1998). Pasifika students, many of whom are Pasifika L1 speakers, are consistently and disproportionately represented in the lowest levels of English literacy proficiency in Aotearoa/New Zealand in these surveys. This pattern also continues, not surprisingly, into adulthood. The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), conducted in 1996–1997, found that adult literacy levels in English are consistently lower overall for Pasifika adults when compared to the New Zealand population as a whole. While adult literacy levels across the population were comparable with other developed countries, 75% of Pasifika adults failed to meet minimum levels in English literacy (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2001).

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