

In-service provision for teachers of Maori language and teachers who teach through the medium of Maori: A working model reviewed

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Abstract

This paper reports on the design, administration and effectiveness of an in-service programme designed by the University of Waikato in partnership with the New Zealand Ministry of Education. The programme aims to: improve language proficiency; assist with the interpretation and implementation of Maori curriculum statements; address issues involved in teaching Maori and teaching through the medium of Maori; assist with lesson planning and lesson delivery, materials development and testing and assessment.

Background to the development of the programme

The last two decades in New Zealand have seen an important increase in demand for the provision of Maori language education. The number of *kohanga reo* (Maori pre-schools), *kura kaupapa Maori* (Maori-medium schools) and *wananga* (Maori universities) has grown significantly, and in mainstream and community education contexts a stronger emphasis is being placed on the provision of language acquisition courses at a variety of levels to satisfy a diverse range of needs.

While this growth provides a degree of proof that the language revitalisation process is gathering momentum in this country, it also creates its own significant problem: how to ensure an increasing number of well-trained teachers to deliver quality educational programmes in the target language?

Ideally, inter-generational language transfer of the sort discussed by Fischmann (1989, 1991) would happen at the knee of the elders. However, this is happening much less than could be wished: increasing urbanisation continues to separate Maori from traditional marae settings and there are now very few domains in which Maori is the expected and/or dominant language of communication. Thus, much of the teaching and learning of *te reo Maori* takes place in classrooms. Although some of this teaching and learning takes place in immersion settings, some is confined to regular timetable slots in much the same way as is the teaching of international languages such as French or Japanese.

Although there are fluent speakers of Maori who are also trained language teachers, they are in very short supply. Consequently, it has sometimes proved necessary for schools to call on the assistance of fluent speakers of the language who are not trained

teachers, or to ask teachers who are not specialists in the teaching of language but who have some knowledge of Maori to assume responsibility for Maori language teaching. In such cases, there are potential risks for teachers, students and the language itself, risks that applied linguists, Ministry of Education personnel and teachers themselves have been keen to address. A major part of the response has been to put in place in-service training courses which are designed to focus on course planning, teaching methodology and language proficiency development. This has involved a number of challenges, including the need to ensure that the interim needs of schools and students are accommodated. In an environment where teachers of *te reo Maori* are hard to find, schools are understandably reluctant to release teachers for long periods of time.

This paper reports on the design, administration and effectiveness of one such in-service programme designed by a group of applied linguists at the University of Waikato in partnership with the New Zealand Ministry of Education.

Teacher-training models: an international perspective

Internationally, the move away from the grammar-translation approach to language teaching has been characterised by a greater focus on teaching methodology. There is now a more widespread recognition that teachers need to be trained to carry out the complex range of tasks involved in language teaching and this has led, in the international body of applied linguistics research, to the appearance of a range of models for teacher-training. Examples of this kind of work can be found in Lange (1979; 1990), Britten (1985), Duff (1988), Freeman (1989, 1993), Ellis (1990), Richards and Nunan (1990), Wallace, (1991), Woodward (1991, 1992), Doff (1992), Tanner and Green (1998), and Malderez and Bodoczky (1999). While many of these models relate to the teaching of English, they are nonetheless representative of a generic approach to language teacher-training courses which are divided into what Richard Cullen (1994) in an ELT journal article describes as “a fairly predictable set of component parts” (p.162). He outlines the first three typical standard component parts as a methodological skills component, a linguistics component and a literature component, and goes on to say that “there may or may not be a language improvement component aimed at improving the general language proficiency of the trainees” (p.163)

Many teacher-training courses are developed on the basis that the trainees will either be first-language speakers, or have a high level of language proficiency. Where this is not the case, teacher-training, as Hundelby and Breet (1998) observe, tends to either (a) consist of intensive language training at the expense of methodological considerations, or (b) restrict the language development component largely to the type of vehicular language needed for classroom management.

The New Zealand context: identifying a working model for teacher training

A significant feature of the design of the *Whakapiki Reo* in-service programme that was put in place at the University of Waikato is that it was the result of a partnership between Maori and non-Maori applied linguists and teacher educators. In the

academic environment in which the development team members all worked at that time, a number of different teacher-training models were offered to students destined to become specialist teachers of French, German, Japanese, Chinese and English language. One of these models in particular, the *Cambridge Royal Society of Arts Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults* (the Cambridge RSA CELTA) was identified by the team as having the potential to provide the basis for the sort of course they were attempting to create. This model was chosen for a number of reasons, including the fact that it had been carefully monitored and researched over a number of years and had been shown to work well in the context of short, intensive programmes. Furthermore, within the division where the new in-service courses would be run, there were a number of experienced *Cambridge RSA CELTA* tutors who were keen to lend their support to those Maori linguists who would lead this exciting new initiative, the *Whakapiki Reo* programme. The resources that were already in place to support the delivery of the *Cambridge RSA CELTA*, including library resources and teaching aids, could be shared. Although few of these resources were in Māori, many of them were relevant to language teaching generally and many others could be adapted and developed to suit the particular needs of the *Whakapiki Reo* programme.

The advantages and disadvantages of the Cambridge RSA CELTA model

The *Cambridge RSA CELTA* model of teacher-training is a pre-service course designed as an initial training in teaching English as a second language. It is delivered in a variety of formats depending on the context in which it is taught. It is commonly taught over 1 month on a full-time basis but it can also be delivered over 3 months and longer periods of time on a part-time basis. The syllabus on which the course is based contains a broad range of methodological, theoretical and linguistic components, but also takes into account issues of planning and management. Of particular importance in the overall design of the in-service programme was the fact that the *Cambridge RSA CELTA* also contains a rigorous, observed practicum. This means that every aspect of the theoretical knowledge gained during the training is applied and delivered to real students in a real classroom by the trainees as they are training. Through the process of personal and group reflection on the effectiveness of each teaching session, the *Cambridge RSA CELTA* course also provides strategies to assist trainees to become autonomous learners who will continue to develop their skills within their own teaching environment long after the course has been completed.

In spite of the large number of advantages that could be drawn from using the *Cambridge RSA CELTA* model, there were some issues that needed to be addressed. These related to three main areas of concern. First, the *Cambridge RSA CELTA* is designed for first-language speakers. The objective of the language component is not to increase language proficiency. Rather, it is to assist trainees to become aware on a conscious level of how a language in which they are already proficient (generally as first language speakers) works and, thus, to help them to develop effective teaching strategies based on that understanding. Secondly, the *Cambridge RSA CELTA* is designed to teach language; it is not designed to train teachers to teach curriculum areas through the medium of a second language. Thirdly, the *Cambridge RSA CELTA* is designed to teach English and, therefore, is inevitably predicated on a range of

cultural and linguistic presuppositions that would need to be very carefully examined in the light of the primary objectives of the *Whakapiki Reo* programme team. There was clearly much to be said for paying very careful attention to a teacher education programme that had proved to be extremely effective in many areas of the world, a programme that the Māori staff who would lead the new development had themselves selected as being particularly interesting. Even so, it was equally clear that the success of the new *Whakapiki Reo* programme would depend on the extent to which it met the specific needs of its own target group. Thus, the overall aim was not to create a Māori version of an existing English programme, but, rather, to use the insights that could be gained from an existing programme that was known to be effective in the creation of a new programme that would meet the linguistic and cultural needs and expectations of the trainees.

The training process

The *Whakapiki Reo* in-service programme under discussion here is delivered at the University of Waikato in New Zealand under contract to the Ministry of Education. It is available to teachers of Maori language and also to those teaching curriculum areas through the medium of Maori at both primary and secondary school levels. At its core is the belief that the programme should provide a culturally nurturing environment within which (a) the methodological and theoretical skills of the participating teachers can be significantly improved, and (b) language development needs can be addressed. The major objectives are to:

- improve the language proficiency of teachers;
- assist with the interpretation and implementation of Maori curriculum statements;
- address issues involved both in teaching Maori and in teaching through the medium of Maori;
- assist with lesson planning, lesson delivery and testing and assessment.

In the process of establishing these objectives and implementing a programme that was intended to realize them, there was extensive collaboration and consultation, collaboration and consultation that involved not only different groups of applied linguists and teacher trainers, but also New Zealand Ministry of Education officials, representatives of the *Cambridge RSA CELTA* and the Māori language commissioner.

Many in-service teacher-training courses in New Zealand last for days rather than weeks. In these cases, teachers are generally expected to prepare the work to be covered by their replacement. In the case of the *Whakapiki Reo* programme, teachers were to be released for several months and their schools were to be provided with adequate resources to cover the cost of a replacement teacher. Thus, course participants would be released entirely from their normal teaching roles for the duration of the programme. In promoting this innovative approach, the New Zealand Ministry of Education did a very great deal to help to ensure the success of the venture.

Teacher-training is a high-risk activity. Trainers must be vigilant in preserving the delicate balance between encouraging students, providing them with an appropriate level of theoretical and practical input, and offering clear and unbiased critical analysis of teaching performance. Trainees are exposed when they teach and the process of reflecting on and discussing the effectiveness of teaching sessions can have a negative washback effect if not handled with sensitivity. In the case of the *Whakapiki Reo* trainees, there are added factors that make the process even more complex. Because they are already practising teachers, these trainees open their professional lives to criticism each time they teach. In terms of culturally appropriate behaviour, it is difficult for women to offer criticism to men and for young people to be seen to be in opposition to their elders. These are issues that have needed time to be resolved in order for the training process to proceed without unnecessary barriers.

The training process offered by the *Whakapiki Reo* programme is intensive, rigorous and demanding on both trainees and trainers. Course participants are in class from 8.30 each morning and are engaged in the training process until the end of the feedback session on teaching practice at 4.30pm. They are expected to do teaching practice preparation (often involving materials development) and to complete major assignments on a regular basis throughout the course. They are also involved in research into aspects of the Maori language, research that contributes both to the improvement of their performance in the classroom and their overall knowledge of the Maori language. Every aspect of the course is evaluated, and the overall grade that a student achieves is a reflection not only of outcomes, but also of the processes leading to the achievement of those outcomes.

The stance adopted by the trainers on the *Whakapiki Reo* programme is that their delivery of the programme should be a reflection of good, current, language teaching. Their teaching approaches are varied and they present a range of teaching strategies which can be copied and/or adapted by the trainees in their own teaching practice. The teaching/learning environment is a collaborative one where cooperation, inclusiveness and a sense of group responsibility are fostered. The course is delivered, as much as possible, in the Maori language by teacher educators who are competent speakers of the language and opportunities to use the language are optimized.

Adherence to culturally appropriate practices is an important dimension of this course. Cultural knowledge is shared and transmitted through the music and dance which makes up part of each day's programme, through the formal and informal sharing of food and drink, through adherence to appropriate welcoming and farewell protocols. Thus, the entire programme is conducted in a way that reflects and promotes those courtesies that are so fundamental to the culture in which the language is embedded. Cultural considerations are not simply part of the programme: they provide the context within which other aspects of the programme operate.

Evaluating the trainees and the programme

Evaluation of the trainees on this programme, in common with other effective teacher-training models (Harmer 1989), is essentially formative in nature. Every aspect of the training (lesson plans, teaching practice feedback, post-lesson evaluations, seminar

presentations, assignment work) contributes to a constantly evolving profile of each the trainees and it is on the basis of this profile that a final assessment of each of the trainees is made. In addition, trainees are given a Maori language proficiency test designed by staff of the University at the beginning and end of the course so that they can have a clear measure of the progress they have made in relation to language development.

This formative approach to the assessment of trainees is accompanied by formative assessment of aspects of programme delivery. This is intended to ensure that trainers have sufficient information, including ongoing information about the progress of individual trainees, on which to base programme adjustments. Such adjustments may, for example, relate to the type of tutorial provision made available to individual students or groups, or it may involve altering or adding to the content of input sessions dealing with particular aspects of the training.

Since its inception, the programme has also undergone a series of annual evaluations that have resulted in some fundamental changes. Some of these changes have been related to changes in location and teaching personnel. New trainers with different types of skill have been appointed and the programme itself is now located in the University's School of Māori and Pacific Development rather than being attached to a division which was responsible for providing postgraduate programmes in second language teaching and learning. There have also been changes in the language backgrounds of trainees: the first few groups included a significantly higher number of trainees with a high level of proficiency in Maori (including first language speakers) than has been the case in recent intakes. This has meant that the original 12 week course has been extended to cover 20 weeks in order to allow for a greater focus on language acquisition.

The changing profile of the trainees has had other important knock-on effects. Whereas in the early stages of the course, the establishment of a Maori language domain within the boundaries of the course was a natural and normal process that needed no real monitoring or control, trainers now need to be conscious of insisting, in a non-threatening but determined way, that this Maori language domain be preserved. For many of the current trainees, speaking Maori all day, every day is an extremely demanding requirement, a requirement that is inevitably associated with high levels of fatigue. Nevertheless, this is considered to be a necessary part of the achievement of overall language proficiency enhancement. Furthermore, it helps trainees to understand more clearly the types of problem that are likely to be experienced by their own students and reinforces the need for teaching methodologies that emphasize clarity of presentation and explanation and that include ongoing comprehension checks.

The *Whakapiki Reo* programme is now in its sixth year of delivery. There continues to be a high level of interest in the programme, and both trainers and trainees continue to report that they find the experience challenging and rewarding. Anecdotal evidence indicates that the teaching and learning experiences of students whose teachers have graduated from the programme have been considerably enhanced and that there has

been a knock-on effect as a result of the fact that graduates of the programme have been encouraged to share their skills with others in their schools. However, a more systematic approach to assessing the effectiveness of the programme needs now to be put on place. Such an approach would supplement the language proficiency records that have been maintained.

From the beginning of the programme, trainees have been given a language proficiency test on entry and exit. The results indicate that the acquisition aspect of the programme is generally successful. *Table 1* below reports, in terms of percentage scores in the language proficiency test overall, on the average proficiency gains of *Whakapiki Reo* trainees who attended the programme over the period from 1996 to 1999.

Table 1: Average language proficiency gains made by Whakapiki Reo trainees: 1996-1999.

	1996	1997	1998	1999
Entry test mean	57%	43%	57%	56%
Exit test mean	57%	63%	69%	69%
Average proficiency gain	0%	20%	12%	13%

In 1996, no overall language proficiency gain is discernible. This may be, in part, because 1996 graduates had, overall, a higher level of proficiency on entrance to the programme. However, this type of reasoning does not explain why average overall proficiency gains peaked in 1997. Furthermore, the approach to reporting proficiency movements needs to be refined to include **(a)** proficiency descriptors that can be related to international proficiency benchmarking, and **(b)** separate recording of proficiency achievements for different skill areas (reading, writing, listening and speaking). This would facilitate comparison with research findings (e.g. Brown, 1998) on the progress of other second language learners in similar contexts over similar periods of time.

The second area worthy of further examination relates to the entry and exit test results of trainees identified as first-language speakers of Maori. Trainees who are first language speakers of Maori are likely to have very similar exit and entry scores in relation to speaking and listening. However, the pattern in relation to reading and writing may be different. Whatever the results should turn out to be, they are bound to impact on the question of the criteria that are applied in determining whether a trainee is best treated as a first or second language speaker of Maori, something that inevitably affects individualized aspects of the training programme.

For trainees identified as first language speakers in the 1996-1999 cohorts, a wide variation of proficiency achievement has been recorded. **Table 2** below reports on the entry and exit scores of those trainees identified as first-language speakers.

Table 2: Entry and exit scores of trainees identified as first-language speakers of Maori: 1996-1999.

	Entry %	Exit %	Overall
Student 1	56.5	51	5.5 % loss
Student 2	82	92	10.0 % gain
Student 3	70.5	59	10.5 % loss
Student 4	82	75.5	6.5 % loss
Student 5	69.5	75.5	6.0 % gain
Student 6	81	74	7.0 % loss
Student 7	77	95.5	18.5 % gain
Student 8	70.5	81.5	9.0 % gain
Student 9	80	77.5	2.5 % loss
Student 10	93	77	13.0 % loss
Student 11	88	71.5	16.5 % loss

Of the eleven first-language speakers identified from 1996-1999, seven show an overall loss of proficiency in the exit test score and four show a significant gain.

An analysis of individual scores for each language component in the tests (listening, reading, writing, speaking) indicates that while there is more loss represented in receptive skills (listening, reading), there is also loss in the productive skills of speaking and writing. **Table 3** below indicates those areas where students have made a proficiency loss between the entry and exit test.

Table 3: Percentage proficiency loss between entry and exit test for first-language speaker trainees in individual language skills 1996-1999.

	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
Student 1	2.0		3.0	1.5
Student 2	0.5			
Student 3	3.5	1.0	4.5	
Student 4		3.0	3.0	6.5
Student 5			5.5	
Student 6		3.0		7.0
Student 7				
Student 8	3.0	2.0		
Student 9		6.5		2.5
Student 10	1.5	14.5		13.0
Student 11	2.5	11.0	0.5	16.5

These data raise a number of important issues. Whatever the overall proficiency gains recorded, it is of concern that some trainees appear to exhibit proficiency regression in certain areas. This may, of course, relate to the natural process of apparent regression that may accompany the internalization of new language prior to its full assimilation. A hypothesis of this type cannot, however, be given credibility in the absence of further testing and is, in any case, unlikely (particularly in the areas of listening and speaking) if these trainees are genuinely first language speakers of Maori who have maintained contact with other speakers of the language. Thus, these scores raise issues relating to the extent to which it is possible to maintain a useful distinction between first and second language speakers in a context in which there has been significant loss of Maori language domains in the community. They also raise questions about the nature of the proficiency testing instruments themselves. Establishing, and maintaining, test instruments whose validity and reliability can be guaranteed is a complex business requiring significant investment. The New Zealand Ministry of Education is currently investing in the development of Maori language proficiency test instruments for young learners (see Crombie, Houia & Reedy, 2000). If it is to be in a position to assess the effectiveness of programmes designed, in whole or in part, to improve the Maori language proficiency in adults, it will need to look carefully at the possibility of promoting the development of national Maori language proficiency tests for adults.

With the major work of establishing the programme now completed, applied linguists associated with the *Whakapiki Reo* programme are in a position to undertake some more in-depth theoretical evaluation of its long-term effectiveness. This research is critical if the programme is to continue to evolve as it must to respond to the changing needs of the New Zealand educational community it is designed to support. There are a number of key tasks that need to be undertaken in relation to this:

- the trainers need to be provided with opportunities to work with other teacher trainers to expand their repertoire of training skills and to keep abreast of developments in a number of fields in applied linguistics;
- the entry and exit tests need to be re-analysed and the task of developing internationally recognised Maori proficiency tests undertaken;
- a number of different types of questionnaire need to be prepared and circulated to different groups of stakeholders in the training process. In these questionnaires, the short and long-term benefits of the training need to be assessed by teachers who have completed the programme, by Principals of schools where *Whakapiki Reo* graduate teachers are working and by students who have experienced a new approach to the teaching of Maori language.

Conclusion

Certainly, there are issues to address if the *Whakapiki Reo* programme is to continue to flourish. Some of these issues are specific to the programme itself; others are of more national significance. There is, for example, a need for pedagogic grammars of Maori which are designed specifically for teacher training contexts. There is also a need for the development of further Maori language textbooks which are based on

communicative principles and which can be used to supplement the resources that are designed by teachers. There is a need for modern authentic text sources in the Maori language, text sources that include a number of different genres such as, for example, advertisements and computer manuals. Finally, a healthy curriculum is one that is the subject of ongoing development. Hence, the curriculum statement for Maori needs to be reviewed in the light of **(a)** ongoing research on the teaching and learning of language generally, and Maori language in particular, and **(b)** experiences gained as a result of its implementation. Consideration also needs to be given to the extent to which this curriculum statement can be adapted so as to meet the needs of all learners of the language, whatever the context in which they are learning. All of these issues impact on the effectiveness of a programme such as the *Whakapiki Reo programme* discussed here.

The *Whakapiki Reo programme* at the University of Waikato grew out of genuine collaborative endeavour, attempting to combine different types of expertise and to take advantage of the strengths of existing programmes. As it has matured and developed, and as staffing has changed, the programme has inevitably taken on a life of its own. Few of those who are now involved in teaching on that programme on a day-to-day basis were directly involved in its initial development and some have no direct experience of the *Canbridge RSA CELTA* out of which it grew. In the initial stages of the programme's development, the intention was to ensure that opportunities for ongoing staff development were treated as an important aspect of the maintenance of programme quality. As time has gone on, this aspect of the original plans has, perhaps understandably, received less attention than the ongoing needs of the trainees. In any re-evaluation of the programme, this is, we believe, a matter that should be given some consideration. At this stage, it might be useful to invite all of those who have been involved with the programme at various stages of its development to a *hui* whose aim is to review current developments and future plans in the light of past experiences.

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