# Popoia Te Reo Kia Penapena: Nurture the Language

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## Abstract

*Research to develop a Māori language screening tool (Specialist Education Services, 2001), identified that students entering Māori Medium at five, could be classified into one of four Māori language competency, groups. Concurrently, teachers raised their need to identify the Māori language proficiency of five year olds entering Māori Medium so that more appropriate teaching strategies could be incorporated in preparation for literacy.*
*Accordingly, three Māori oral-language assessment tools, to help identify the Māori language competency of students entering Māori Medium settings at five years of age and provide formative information, were developed in response to this need. This paper details the development and trial of these tools.*

## Kaupapa Māori Movement in Education

The imminent loss of the Māori language in New Zealand (Benton, 1983) contributed towards the strong kaupapa Māori movement of resistance to the ongoing colonisation of the minds of Māori people (Smith, 1997). In the 1980s, kaupapa Māori led the establishment of Te Kōhanga Reo (Māori language pre-schools), which in turn drove an increasing number of people to both learn in and teach through the medium of the Māori language (Smith, 1995). Families of kōhanga reo graduates started the wave of Māori medium education (accessing the curriculum through the medium of the Māori language) into primary schooling and thus, the revitalisation and retention of the Māori language at an iwi (tribe), hapū (sub-tribe), and whānau (family) level, and at the level of education provided by the state. Kōhanga reo and kura kaupapa Māori (schools designed by Māori for Māori to uphold and present authentic Māori values and beliefs) provide social and pedagogical structures for learning, from traditional Māori society.

To this end, the Ministry of Education's shift in policy direction (Ministry of Education, 1998) enabled Māori language to be taught as the centre of the learning process and as the medium for delivery of the entire curriculum (Māori medium education or rumaki), rather than merely as a separate subject within it. The development of kura kaupapa Māori, and rumaki classrooms or schools, have focused on two important objectives of higher levels of achievement for Māori students and the revitalisation and maintenance of the Māori language (Education Review Office, 1995). One of the basic tenets of the Māori medium education movement was to afford Māori learners and their families, rangatiratanga (self determination) over what constitutes an appropriate model of education, including the language medium of that education (Smith, 1997).

In order to better understand the present Māori medium situation, it is crucial to acknowledge that relative to English medium education, Māori medium is still in its infancy (Bishop, Berryman, Glynn, & Richardson, 2000; Rau, Whiu, Thomson,

Glynn, & Milroy, 2001). While Māori medium attempts to offer an alternative form of education and this suggests we can expect pedagogy and practices different to English medium, it appears that policies of parallel development and parallel provision from English language learning contexts have been, and to some extent still are, driving what is developed for Māori medium (Rau, et al., 2001). While this may be financially expedient, it assumes that English and Māori medium are at similar starting points and share common priorities for development. However, much of the theory and practice regarding effective practice in pedagogy and curriculum for Māori medium is still being identified. While there is undoubtedly a genuine desire in Māori medium, to ensure effective practice and high educational outcomes, there is also a degree of tentativeness as these teachers and school communities work to identify what this might look like.

**Māori language assessment tools**

Māori medium teachers in the Northland, Bay of Plenty, East Cape, Waikato and South Auckland areas identified Māori medium diagnostic tools that they used to assess student's achievement in reading, writing and mathematics in the first four to five years (Bishop, et al., 2000). Diagnostic tools or instruments in this study were broadly defined as tests that allowed a child's strengths and weaknesses in a particular learning area to be identified, thus providing information for future teaching.

The overall picture from the areas sampled indicated limited availability and use of diagnostic tools, with few diagnostic tools being used across the schools sampled. This is not surprising given the limited resource that had gone specifically into the development, trial and promotion of diagnostic tools for Māori medium education. Researchers did identify a number of less frequently seen diagnostic tools in some of these schools, many having been reconstructed by translating English medium tools. Teachers indicated a strong resistance to tools such as these, however, tools developed or reconstructed in accordance with cultural aspirations, did have acceptance. They also indicated that there needed to be a clearly identified link to learning for teachers to want to use these tools.

The development of the Kawea te Rongo resource (Berryman et al., 2001; Specialist Education Services, 2001) identified that students entering Māori medium could be classified into one of four groups according to their individual Māori language competency. These groups included students who communicated with others:

1. mainly in Māori;
2. in Māori and in English;
3. mainly in English;
4. in neither good English nor good Māori

These teachers identified a need for Māori language assessments that would help them to make better judgements about their students' Māori language ability on entry to school. Anecdotal evidence from some of these teachers indicated that they were mainly targeting a middle ability level, ignoring those with the most or least Māori language proficiency. This was frustrating for them as teachers as well as for their learners. Although Kī Mai, (a Māori language equivalent to an English oral language assessment 'Tell Me') an oral Māori language assessment tool from Aro Matawai Urunga-ā-Kura (AKA) (a Māori language equivalent to the School Entry Assessment,

SEA) (Ministry of Education, 1997), was available, many found this to be too time-consuming and difficult to implement. This was further supported by an evaluation of teachers' perceptions and use of AKA (Bishop, et al., 2001).

**Assessment Development and Description**

The development of the three oral Māori language assessments in this paper, therefore, was the result of this identified need to more effectively discriminate the Māori language competencies of students entering Māori medium education at five. Researchers, including kaumātua (elders), understood that the metaphor, popoia te reo kia penapena (nurture the language) was important if the language was to flourish and grow. This metaphor has, therefore, guided the development and trial of these tools.

The development of these tools drew upon understandings from both kaupapa Māori and socio-cultural constructs. Socio-cultural perspectives on human learning emphasise the importance of the responsive social and cultural contexts in which learning takes place as being key components to successful learning (Glynn, Wearmouth, & Berryman, 2006; Gregory, 1996; Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 1998; Wertsch, 1991). Children acquire knowledge and skills through social interactions and activities, in formal and informal settings. Contextualised social interactions such as these are also fundamental to the acquisition of intellectual knowledge and skills (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bruner, 1996; Glynn, Wearmouth, & Berryman, 2006; McNaughton, 2002).

Assessment information, therefore, may be attained by taking into account what can be learned from the direct observation of students in authentic responsive, social settings. In these settings it is possible for the assessor to implement strategies that will promote a responsive and interactive role, rather than a directive role; where students have opportunities to exercise a measure of autonomy in their learning. By providing students with material that is interesting to them, then maximising opportunities for them to direct their own engagement with the material, the assessor can capitalise on the responsive context that emerges when students are encouraged to show what they can do.

The recognition of students' own prior experiences or 'cultural toolkit' (Bruner, 1996) and the importance of the contextualised social interactions between the assessor and the child were a significant part of the development of the three oral language assessments, Kia Tere Tonu, Takapiringa and Kōrerotia. These assessments use a series of carefully constructed tasks with the assessor attending and responding to the child's engagement with the tasks, providing consistent cues and support to keep the child engaged, but, at the same time, not pre-empting or supplying the correct answers.

The content of all three assessments relies heavily on the use of pictures to stimulate language responses. Therefore, pictures used in the assessments were chosen on the basis of their perceived relevance to Māori students, with the intention that they would then be able to use their prior knowledge and experiences in their responses. The assessments involve the student handling the pictures and, to a certain extent, being able to direct which pictures to talk about and the content of the discussion. It

was understood that this would give them some ownership of the process and make the assessments more user-friendly.

**Assessment Description: Kia Tere Tonu, Takapiringa and Kōrerotia.**

*Kia Tere Tonu*

The first assessment, Kia Tere Tonu (Hurry Up), was developed as a screening tool that would provide an efficient and effective means for identifying the different Māori language levels of emergent Māori language speakers. Kia Tere Tonu involves a sheet of 24 different pictures. The pictures include items associated with everyday experiences (hū/shoe), items with Māori names as their most commonly known form (poi/item used in cultural performances) as well as a few items that may be less well known (roro hiko/computer). After modelling the naming process on a separate model card, the assessor gives the child 30 seconds to name, in Māori, as many of the items on the assessment card as they can. Items named are concurrently ticked on the recording sheet.

The student is next asked to choose one item that they would like to talk about. Three separate starter questions are then used to elicit oral language samples, from the student, based on the selected item. The language sample is recorded and on the basis of the language sample the assessor makes three global judgements about the student's oral Maori language to do with:

- māramatanga (meaning);
- hangarerenga (language structure);
- pakari (overall language competency).

*Takapiringa*

Takapiringa (Set them out) uses five sets of five sequential photograph cards. Photographs of five common childhood experiences, (getting ready for bed; making breakfast; feeding the cat; getting ready for Kōhanga Reo, making a drink) are used. Five cards, one example from each of the five themes, are presented to the student and the student is asked to select the theme card that they would like to tell a story about. Once the student has chosen their picture the appropriate picture set is laid out in front of the student, one card at a time, in random order. As each card is placed down the standard prompt from the assessment sheet is also read out. The student is asked to organise the cards into the order of the story they are going to tell. When they are satisfied with the sequence of their pictures, the student is asked to tell their story. The oral language sample for each picture is recorded and scored separately. Each story is taped and later used for further checking.

*Kōrerotia*

Kōrerotia (Talk about it) involves a series of ten photographs to motivate personal narratives. After the assessor has demonstrated the assessment procedure with the model photograph, the set of assessment photographs is presented and the student is asked to select three photographs that show activities that they are familiar with. The following sequence is then followed one photo at a time.

The first photo chosen by the student is briefly introduced with the standard prompt for that photo. For example, there is one photo of a young child at a table looking at picture books. The standard prompt for this picture is, *"kei te pānui pukapuka te pēpi. Titiro, he muramura te kara o te pukapuka kei runga i te tepu"* (The baby is reading the book. Look at the bright colours of the book on the table). The student is then asked to think about and then retell their experiences triggered off by the events in this photograph. If they can not, the assessor asks the child to talk about the next photograph. Once three photographs have resulted in the child providing consistent oral language samples the assessment stops. These personal narratives or oral language samples are scored (according to the scoring sheet) recorded and later transcribed for further checking. Kōrerotia is the most challenging because it provides fewer language prompts.

**Administration**

The structure and administrative processes of the assessments allow for Māori practices of mihimihi (greeting and making connections), manaakitanga (care and support) and poroporoaki (closure and farewell) to be followed before, during and after the assessments. These cultural practices affirm, support, encourage and set expectations of the child during the assessment process. Students are always greeted and made to feel comfortable before they start. They are supported by oral and visual prompts and the modelling of appropriate responses before, and where appropriate, during the assessment and finally they are given words of encouragement for their achievements when the assessment is completed. These cultural procedures allow the child to warm to the test and the tester and feel comfortable during the actual process and after its completion.

**Method: The Assessment Tool Trial**

Given that the assessments were designed to be used in Māori language immersion settings a kaupapa Māori approach was central to the development and trial of the resource. This involved the participation of two native speaking elders within both the development team and the trial; the first, a teacher from Kōhanga Reo and the second, a trained teacher from both English and Māori medium settings. While these developers understood the importance of developing tools according to kaupapa Māori principles they also believed the assessments needed to be rigorously trialled and analysed according to mainstream assessment understandings and standards. Accordingly, it was decided to trial these tools over time and in a number of sites to test their suitability for wider implementation.

**Method**

It was understood that four year olds from kōhanga reo and Year 1, 2 and 3 students (five to seven year olds) from rumaki classes could help to identify the suitability of Kia Tere Tonu as a screening instrument. For this purpose, the following convention was trialled. If the student scored six or less when naming the 24 pictures, they were not tested any further but teachers could be redirected to the Kawea te Rongo checklists for these students. If the student scored between seven and 15 they would be tested on Takapiringa and if they scored between 16 and 24 they would be tested on Kōrerotia. Evidence was collected by scoring students through their use of Kia

Tere Tonu, then comparing the appropriateness of their response on the next assessment level as recommended by this convention.

Importantly and closely associated with this first trial was the need to test that the tools did follow sequential levels of difficulty. This was tested by comparing the students' responses to the different assessments with their time in immersion. It was further tested by comparing both the teacher's and whānau (parents and wider family) perceptions of the students' oral language competency to the students' responses on each of the assessments. Teachers were asked to rate where they felt each child's level of Māori languge competency was on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest level of competency and 5 being the highest level. Whānau members were asked to rate where they felt their own child's level of Māori languge competency was, according to the same scale. Both groups were also asked to provide information on the child's time in immersion settings including pre-school.

Finally the trial aimed to determine the perceptions of teachers and whānau to the effectiveness and suitability of the tools and also the impact of dialectal difference to students' responses to the tools. This was gauged from solicited and unsolicited feedback throughout the trial and from trialling and comparing responses to the tools in separate tribal areas.

**Results**

*Trial sites and Student Numbers*

Trials were conducted in three separate tribal areas, in five kōhanga reo and eight kura, in 2004, 2006 and 2007.

*Site 1*

In Site 1 the three oral language assessments were trialled in five kōhanga reo and three kura. A total of 35 kōhanga reo students from the five kōhanga reo participated and 70 students participated from the three kura. In total 105, four to seven year olds participated in the assessment trial in Site 1. Of the 105 students trialled in Kia Tere Tonu in Site 1; 35 were year 0; 24 were in year 1; 22 were in year 2 and 24 were in year 3. From the initial trial 72 went on to trial the more challenging Takapiringa (22 from year 0; 23 from year 1; 18 from year 2 and 9 from year 3) and 20 went on to trial the most challenging assessment Kōrerotia, (1 from year 0; 2 from year 1; 2 from year 2 and 15 from year 3).

*Site 2*

In Site 2 the three oral language assessments were trialled in one kura kaupapa Māori with a total of 65 students participating. Of the 65 students who trialled Kia Tere Tonu in Site 2, 36 were in year 1 and 29 were in year 2. From the initial trial 48 went on to trial the more challenging Takapiringa (24 from year 1 and 24 from year 2) and 16 went on to trial the most challenging assessment Kōrerotia, (11 from year 1 and 5 from year 2).

*Site 3*

In Site 3 the three oral language assessments were trialled with 23 students in a total immersion rumaki class within a mainstream school. Fourteen students from a kura kaupapa Māori also trialled Kia Tere Tonu. In total 37, five to seven year olds participated in the assessment trial in Site 3. Of these 37 students, 4 were in year 0; 12 were in year 1; 9 were in year 2 and 12 were in year 3. From the initial trial 14 went on to trial the more challenging Takapiringa (7 from year 1; 1 from year 2 and 6 from year 3) and 1 from year 3 went on to trial the most challenging assessment Kōrerotia.

*Site 4*

As part of a further assessment of reliability of the oral language assessments Kia Tere Tonu and Takapiringa (Berryman, Cavanagh, & Woller, 2007) in site 1, 21 further students from a kura kaupapa Māori and 15 students from a rumaki immersion school, were tested and then retested within a two week period to assess the reliability of the assessments. In total 36 five to seven year olds participated in the assessment trial in Site 4. Of the 36 students who trialled in Kia Tere Tonu in Site 4, 28 were in year 1; 24 were in year 2 and 20 were in year 3. From the initial trial 40 went on to trial the more challenging Takapiringa (14 from year 1; 14 from year 2 and 12 from year 3) and 13 went on to trial the most challenging assessment Kōrerotia (1 from year 1; 4 from year 2 and 8 from year 3).

*Number of students in the trial*

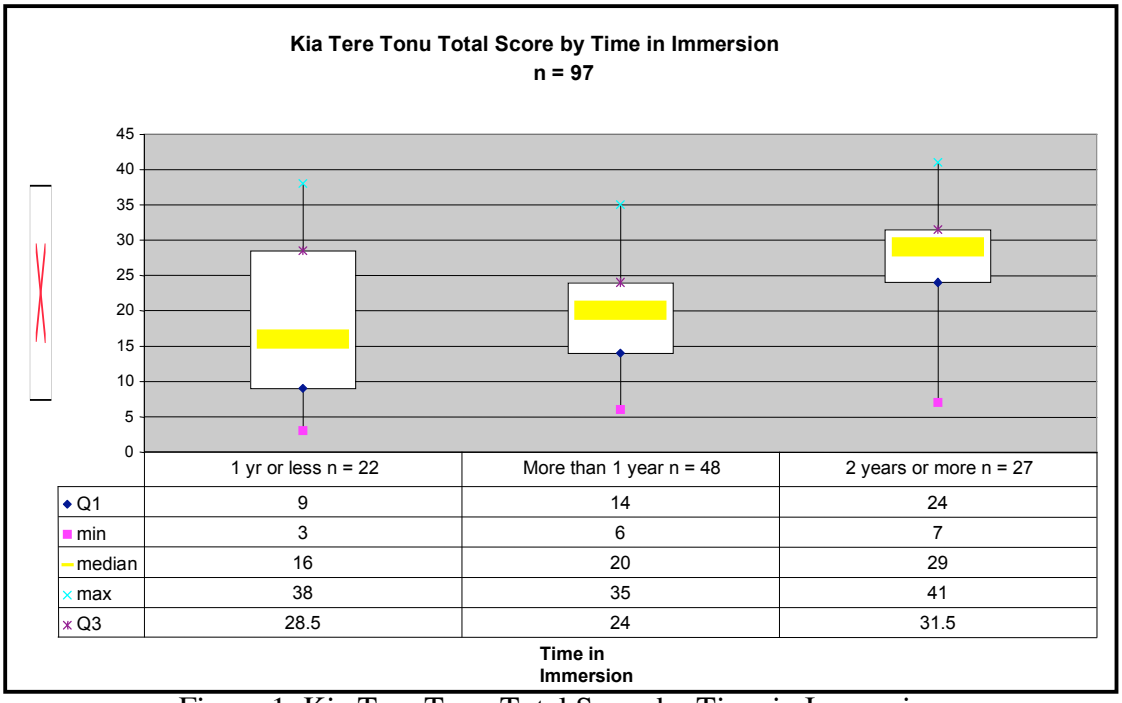
Table 1: Student numbers in each assessment by Year in all Sites

| | **Kia Tere Tonu** | **Takapiringa** | **Kōrerotia** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Yr 0** | 39 | 22 | 1 |
| **Yr 1** | 100 | 68 | 14 |
| **Yr 2** | 84 | 57 | 11 |
| **Yr 3** | 56 | 27 | 24 |
| **Total** | **279** | **174** | **50** |

Table 1 above shows that overall 279 students have now trialled Kia Tere Tonu, (39 from year 0; 100 from year 1; 84 from year 2 and 56 from year 3). From these initial trials 174 went on to trial the more challenging Takapiringa (22 from year 0; 68 from year 1; 57 from year 2 and 27 from year 3) and 50 went on to trial the most challenging assessment Kōrerotia (1 from year 0; 14 from year 1; 11 from year 2 and 24 from year 3).

*Scores compared to time in immersion*

To test that the tools followed sequential levels of difficulty, students' responses to the assessments were compared with the students' time in immersion. Figure 1 below shows the Kia Tere Tonu results of 97 students from sites 1 and 2 whose whānau had indicated the time their children had spent in Māori immersion settings. The participants in each of the three groups were from all the 4 year groups i.e. year 0 to year 3.




| | 1 yr or less n = 22 | More than 1 year n = 48 | 2 years or more n = 27 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Q1 | 9 | 14 | 24 |
| min | 3 | 6 | 7 |
| median | 16 | 20 | 29 |
| max | 38 | 35 | 41 |
| Q3 | 28.5 | 24 | 31.5 |

Figure 1: Kia Tere Tonu Total Score by Time in Immersion

While Figure 1 shows that there is a trend demonstrating increased ability in te reo Māori in line with increased time in immersion there are obvious disparities. The 97 participants in the above sample, included year 0 to year 3 children (4 to 7 year olds) i.e. some of the participants identified as having one year or less in immersion were kōhanga reo students while others were year 2 or year 3 students. This meant that students demonstrated a wide range of language ability in both Māori and English. Research has shown that a range of factors impact on the proficiency of children entering Māori medium education and, while time in immersion before entering school is a key factor, it is qualified by other issues. These include regularity of attendance, the quality of the kōhanga reo language programme and the amount (if any) of Māori language exposure in the home (Rau et al, 2001).

Figure 2 shows the Kia Tere Tonu results for 279 students, from the four sites, ranked by year groups

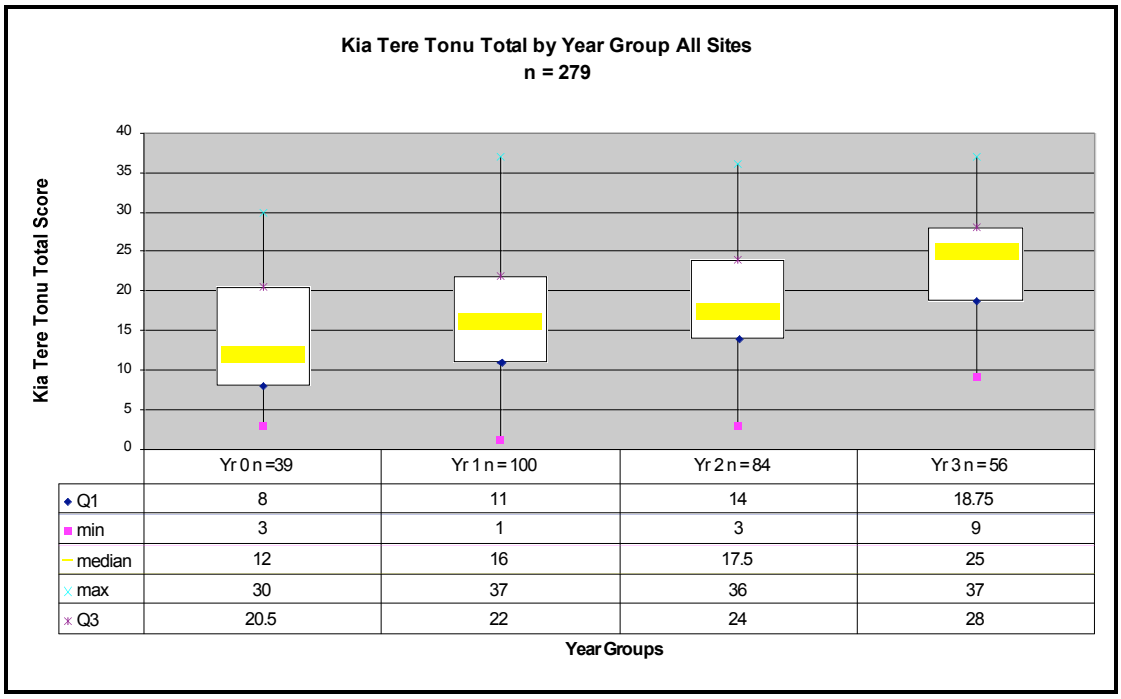
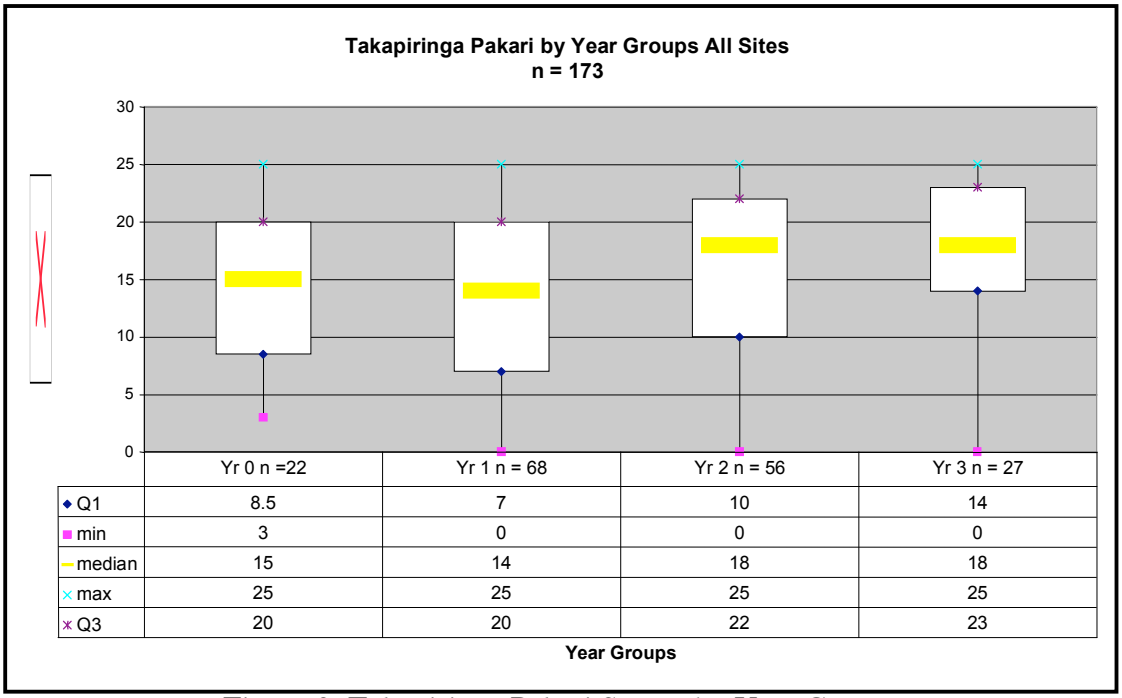



Figure 2: Kia Tere Tonu Total Scores by Year Groups

The results shown in Figure 2, ranked by year groups, are similar to those shown in Figure 1 (ranked by time in immersion). From the students' responses to the assessments when compared with year groups or time in immersion, these results indicate that the tool does allow for maturation with increasing levels of challenge.

Similar results are shown in figures 3 (the Takapiringa) and 4 (the Kōrerotia) trials by year groups. There is a clear indication from these results that the tools are able to challenge students to demonstrate their increased proficiency in te reo Māori with further time in immersion.

Figure 3 shows the Takapiringa results for 173 students, from the four sites, ranked by year groups




| | Yr 0 n =22 | Yr 1 n = 68 | Yr 2 n = 56 | Yr 3 n = 27 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q1 | 8.5 | 7 | 10 | 14 |
| min | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| median | 15 | 14 | 18 | 18 |
| max | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 |
| Q3 | 20 | 20 | 22 | 23 |

Figure 3: Takapiringa Pakari Scores by Year Groups

Figure 3 indicates that there is a trend demonstrating increased ability in te reo Māori in line with increased time in immersion. The lower average scores in year 1 compared to year 0 results, shown above, could confirm the presence of students entering Māori medium at age five with little or no time in Māori immersion pre-school settings (Berryman et al., 2001) and indicate the need for further research.

Figure 4 shows the Kōrerotia results for 50 students, from the four sites, ranked by year groups.

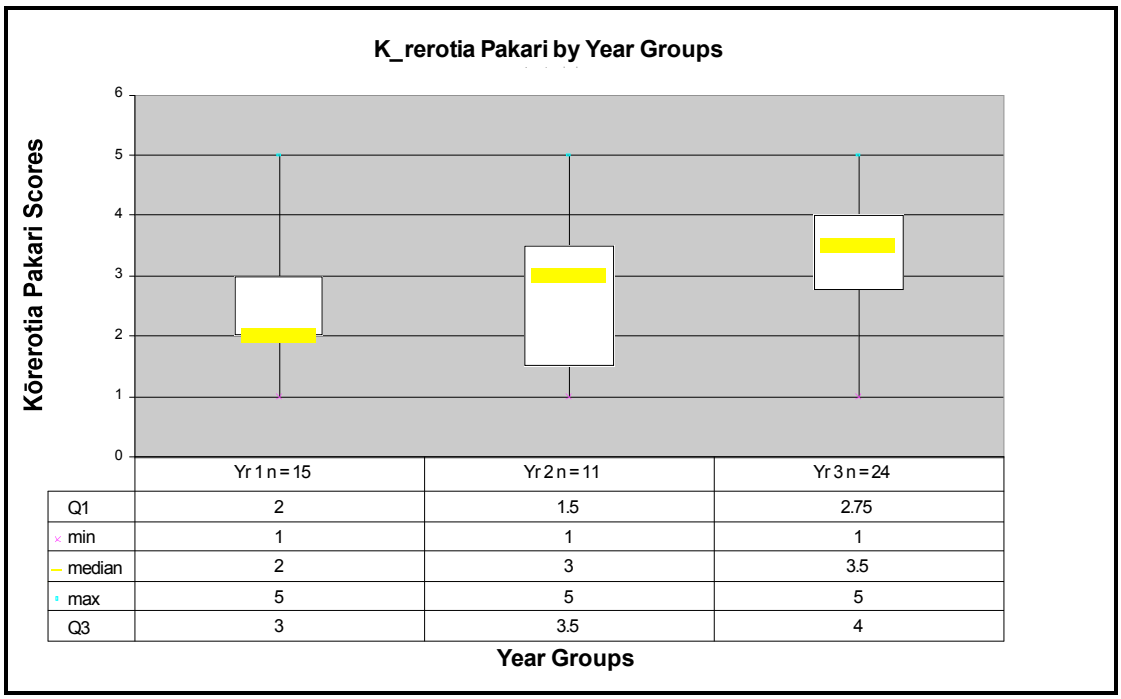
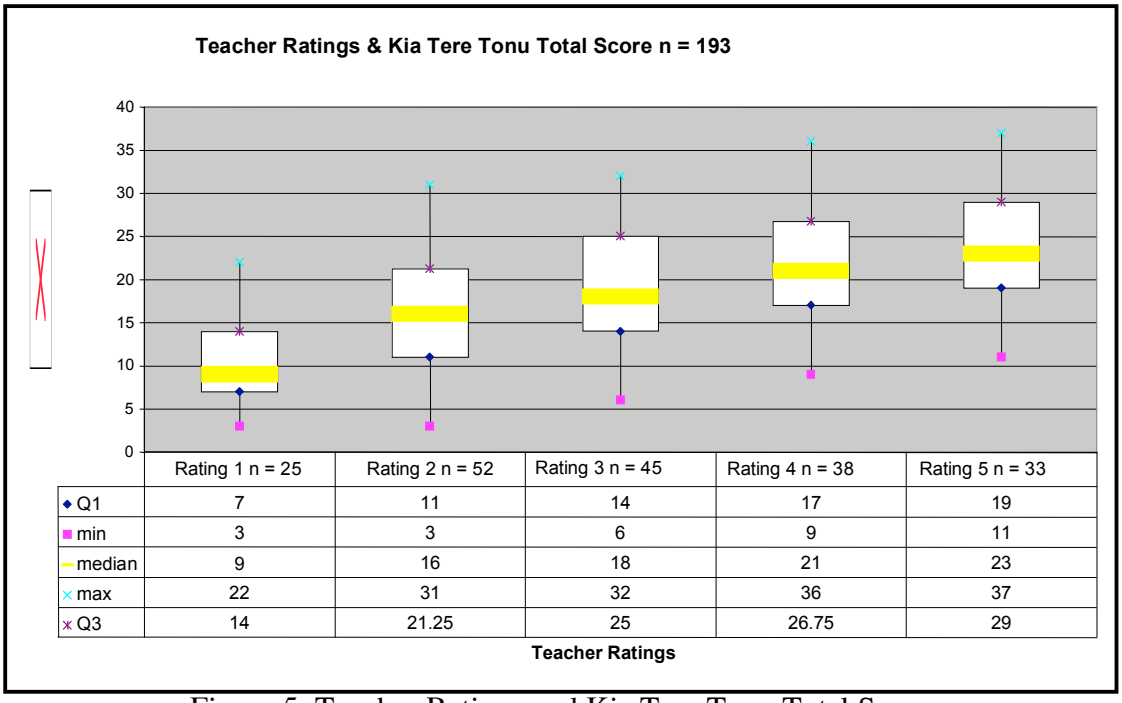



Figure 4: Kōrerotia Pakari Scores by Year Groups

Figure 4 again shows that these tools are able to challenge students to demonstrate their increased proficiency in te reo Māori. The trend from the trial shows increased ability in te reo Māori in line with increased time in immersion.

*Comparison ratings and Kia Tere Tonu Total Score*

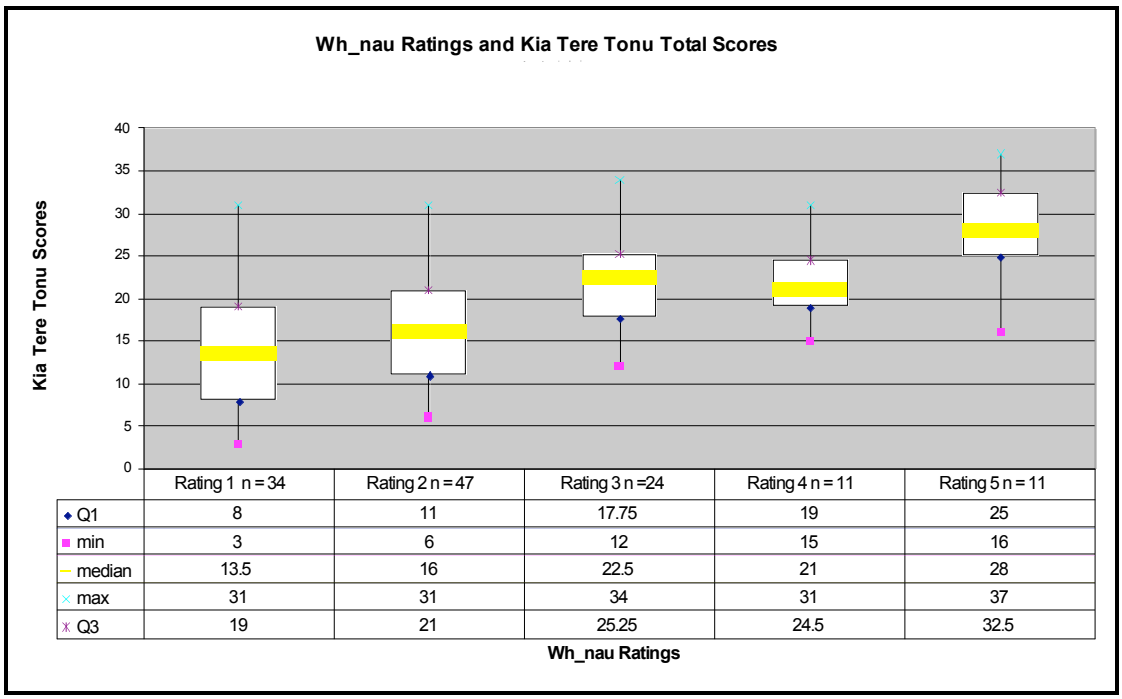
Teachers were asked to rate where they felt each child's level of Māori language competency was on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest level of competency and 5 being the highest level.




| | Rating 1 n = 25 | Rating 2 n = 52 | Rating 3 n = 45 | Rating 4 n = 38 | Rating 5 n = 33 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q1 | 7 | 11 | 14 | 17 | 19 |
| min | 3 | 3 | 6 | 9 | 11 |
| median | 9 | 16 | 18 | 21 | 23 |
| max | 22 | 31 | 32 | 36 | 37 |
| Q3 | 14 | 21.25 | 25 | 26.75 | 29 |

Figure 5: Teacher Ratings and Kia Tere Tonu Total Score

Figure 5 shows the range of Kia Tere Tonu scores in each of the teacher's rating groups in comparison to students' scores. In the same way whānau members were also asked to rate where they felt their own child's level of Māori language competency was, according to the same scale.




| | Rating 1 n = 34 | Rating 2 n = 47 | Rating 3 n =24 | Rating 4 n = 11 | Rating 5 n = 11 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q1 | 8 | 11 | 17.75 | 19 | 25 |
| min | 3 | 6 | 12 | 15 | 16 |
| median | 13.5 | 16 | 22.5 | 21 | 28 |
| max | 31 | 31 | 34 | 31 | 37 |
| Q3 | 19 | 21 | 25.25 | 24.5 | 32.5 |

Figure 6: Whānau Ratings and Kia Tere Tonu Total Score

Figure 6 shows the range of Kia Tere Tonu scores in each of the whānau members' rating groups in comparison to students' scores.

The general trend in both figures 5 and 6 indicate that the students' assessment results were in line with teacher and whānau expectations. However, the wide range of scores in each band demonstrates the need for assessments such as these and the need to interrogate these data further.

## Conclusion

Students in the trial indicated that they liked the pictures and were able to relate to each of the assessment tools. They also liked being able to choose which pictures to talk about and handling the pictures as they did so. Students appeared to appreciate this measure of ownership of the tools throughout the process with the result that, in spite of the majority not having met the assessor before, they still found the assessment process to be interactive, and hence more user friendly.

In the kōhanga reo and kura where the tools were trialled, teachers and whānau saw the tools and the practices involved in their administration to be culturally appropriate. They liked that students were always greeted and made to feel comfortable at the beginning of the assessment and supported and encouraged throughout the assessment process. Given that the assessments were conducted all in Māori with younger students, and that the students' understanding of the instructions might well have caused confusion throughout the assessment, they also liked the way that the assessor modelled each process with a model sample, prior to going into the assessment itself, and that throughout the assessments, consistent oral prompts were supported by visual prompts. They also approved that students' achievements throughout the assessment and again when it was completed, were consistently and specifically acknowledged. The high level of Māori language proficiency of the

administrator also received their approval. Many commented that all of these procedures provided a culturally safe and authentic context for the child to first warm to the administrator and then to the test. Teachers commented that students felt comfortable and supported throughout the actual assessment and, therefore, not disadvantaged in any way. Dialectal differences were not identified as a problem.

Teachers from the kōhanga reo and kura commented that the assessments were easy to use and practical. They could also be understood by kura whānau who were not fluent speakers but who had sufficient reo Māori to understand the required tasks. Teachers wanted to be able to use the tools themselves, and could see that they would be able to do so. Importantly, they believed that the results from the assessments indicated the level and depth of children's reo Māori proficiency for summative purposes but would also provide teachers with information for formative purposes. The results indicate the usefulness of Kia Tere Tonu as a screening tool. The students' responses to the assessments when compared with time in immersion and year groups indicated students were able to respond to the more challenging assessment tools. The comparison of teacher and whānau judgements (of students' oral language) with students' responses to the tools produced a clear trend of matching increasing student scores to increasing teacher and whānau expectations.

Taking all of this information together it would appear that the three oral language assessments have shown themselves to be culturally appropriate and useful for summative and formative purposes for four to seven year olds in Māori medium settings.

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