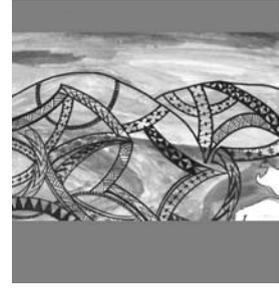


Speech Language Assessments in Te Reo in a Primary School Māori Immersion Unit



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ABSTRACT

This research originated from the need for a speech and language therapy assessment in te reo Māori for a particular child who attended a Māori immersion unit. A Speech and Language Therapy te reo assessment had already been developed but it needed to be revised and normative data collected. Discussions and assessments were carried out in a culturally-sensitive manner in partnership and consultation with Māori staff and the parents concerned. Results indicated that it is difficult to compare and interpret individual student results with aggregated data due to the varying levels of te reo spoken by the students assessed.

Research paper

Keywords: *Collaborative consultation, immersion unit, speech language assessment, te reo*

INTRODUCTION

This article explains the development and trialling of a speech language assessment in te reo Māori in a primary school's Māori immersion unit. The rationale for this research originated from the need for a speech and language therapy assessment in te reo Māori for a particular child who attended the school's Māori immersion unit. It was noted that the previous assessment carried out on this child was done in English and so did not meet his needs. The Deputy Principal (DP) requested that an assessment in te reo Māori be carried out in order to be more reflective of the curriculum and the child's needs.

To meet this request, the Speech Language Therapist (SLT) who was to conduct the assessment, gained support from the Kaitakawaenga (KTW), (cultural advisor) This support involved:

- obtaining a cultural profile of the student;
- discussions with the student's mother;
- obtaining informed consent;
- liaison with Māori staff at the school, and

- sourcing culturally-appropriate assessment tools and resources together with the Speech and Language Therapist.

After an in-depth literature research and discussions with special education staff, it emerged that a Speech and Language Therapy te reo assessment had already been developed in 2001 by a Speech Language Therapist and Special Education Advisor. However, it was noted that there was no normative data obtained on this assessment and therefore the recommendation was that the assessment be revised with the following modifications:

- Administrative instructions added to make it more user-friendly.
- Adaptation for appropriate scoring included.
- Under concepts area the term 'poaka' (pig) be replaced with 'hoiho' (horse).
- A language sample section added together with an appropriate activity picture (this was to be obtained from the school which would make it relevant to the school).
- Revisions to increase the relevancy of the assessment to the Māori immersion unit at the school and to make it more holistic (these revisions to be done in partnership with the DP).
- Two resource kits created and all pictures updated.

Furthermore, in order for individual assessment data to be interpreted, normative data needed to be obtained.

It was envisaged that the outcome of this assessment would be threefold:

1. To determine the child's present level of functioning in terms of speech and language skills in comparison to those of his peers.
2. To obtain normative data to interpret the assessment results.

3. To provide a suitable individual intervention programme and classroom strategies to facilitate language skills.

and letter shapes (Berryman & Rau, 2003). Provides strategies to develop a stronger language base and increase children's phonological awareness (SES, 2002).

LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature search of the language development of Māori students indicated that there was little qualitative or quantitative research available, especially for those children aged from birth to seven years.

There are five contexts in which language development differs for Māori students. These may include any one or a combination of the following:

- Monolingual (English speaking) parents who have their children taught in Māori-medium classrooms.
- Bilingual parents who have their children taught in Māori-medium classrooms yet seldom speak Māori to their children at home.
- Bilingual parents who have their children taught in Māori-medium classrooms and consistently speak Māori to their children at home.
- Monolingual (English speaking) parents who have their children taught in English-medium schools.
- Bilingual parents who have their children taught in English-medium classrooms".

(Special Education Service (SES), 2002.)

The following resources were reviewed:

- Junior Oral Language Screening Tool (JOST), 1996, translated into Te Reo, He Korero Whakataki (SES, 1996).
- Korero Kia Mohio (Rameka, Te Iwa, Tokarangi & Winton, 2005, based on "Talk to Learn").
- He Kete Rauemi 2002-2005: Catalogue of Māori language learning material 2002-2005 (Ministry of Education, 2007).
- Aromatawai Reo a Waha, 2006, (Poutama Pounamu Educational Research and Development Centre, 2006).
- Riki, 2002, Ministry of Education. This resource was designed to assist pre-emergent and emergent readers with the very first step of letter recognition in the Māori alphabet. It was being used in the immersion unit at the time.
- Tata-te tautu reta: Making connections between spoken language, letter sounds

Additionally, library resources for Māori from the Ministry of Education were also reviewed by the KTW and SLT. The literature reviewed informed revisions made to the original speech language assessment in te reo.

METHODOLGY

Twenty students from the Māori immersion unit were selected with ages ranging from 5 to 7.5 years. Informed consent was obtained from caregivers before administering the assessments. The assessment included the following areas:

- listening screening test;
- positional concepts (in, on, under, in front, behind);
- vocabulary;
- sentences;
- phrases;
- sentence repetition;
- speech sounds, and a
- language sample.

The twenty assessments were administered by the DP and teacher-aide after receiving appropriate training from the speech and language therapist supported by the kaitakawaenga. This training involved demonstrations using the two resource kits that were developed.

The results were scored by the speech and language therapist and are presented in the following bar graphs. Two subsequent meetings were held to discuss the reporting format. The Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (RTL) also attended one of these meetings. The following were discussed:

- comparison of each student's results;
- students who attended kōhanga reo, and
- students with no previous kōhanga reo experience.

RESULTS

The results of the speech and language therapy assessment carried out on a sample of 20 students can be seen in Table 1. It also includes the assessment results for the target child.

Table 1
 Speech Language Assessment Results for All Students

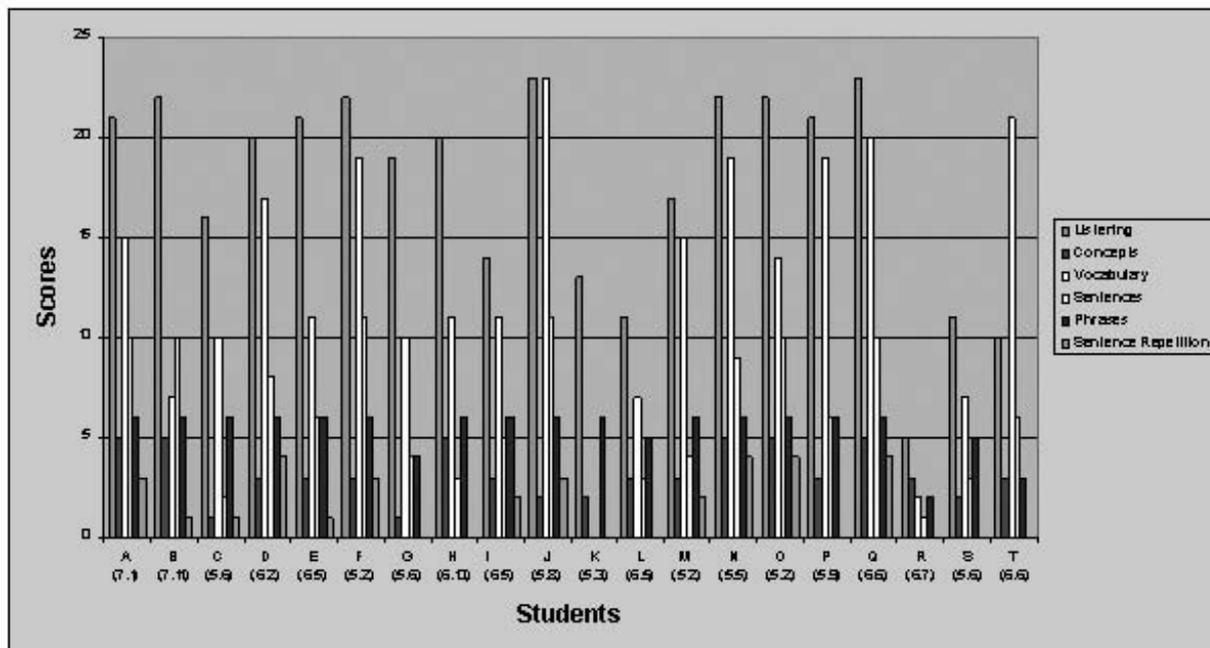


Table 2
 Speech Language Assessment Results for students who attended Kōhanga Reo

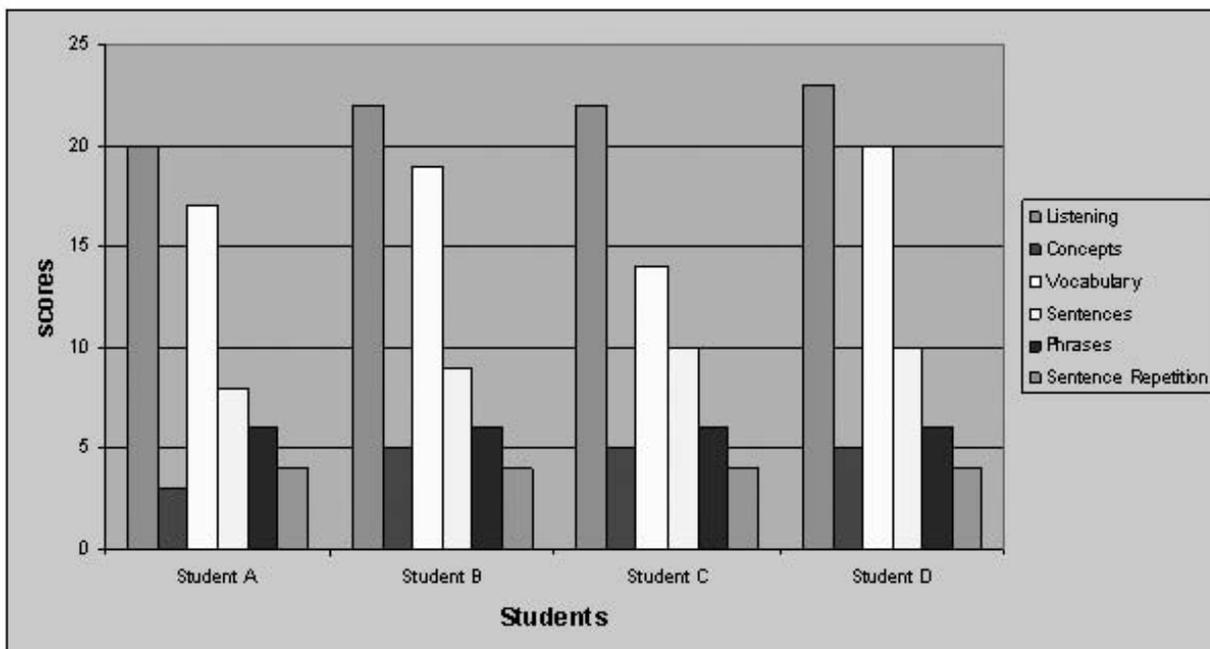
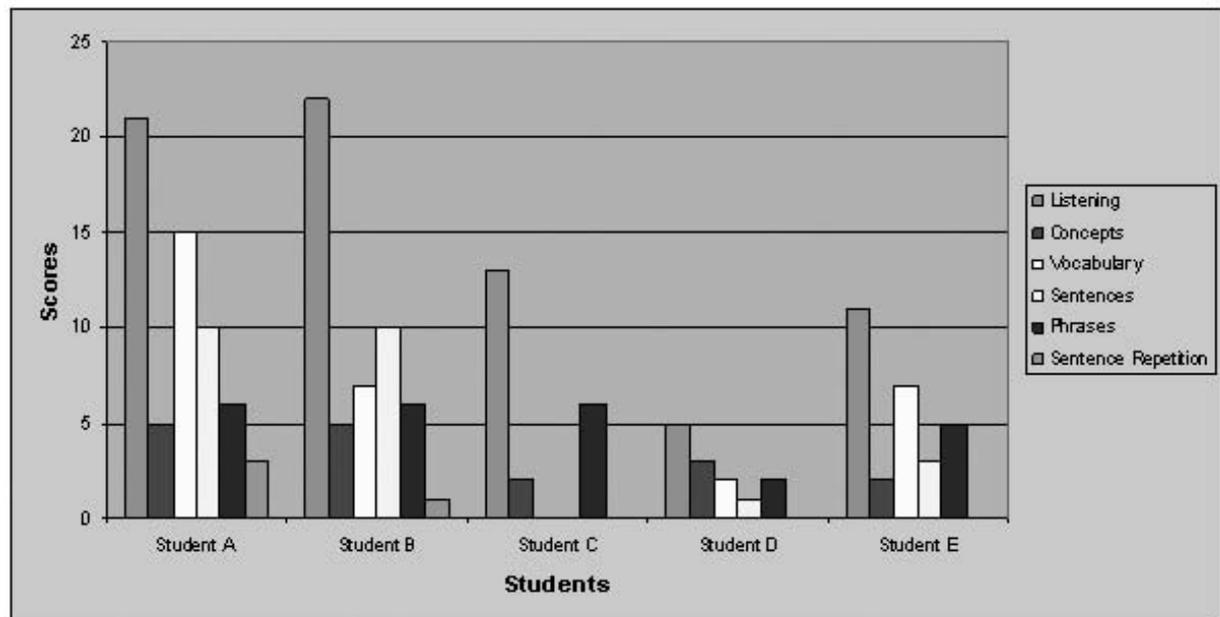


Table 3

Speech Language Assessment Results for Students with no previous Kōhanga Reo Experience



Although the sample numbers were small, the results showed that students who attended kōhanga reo generally performed better in areas of listening, concepts, vocabulary, sentences, phrases and sentence repetition. The greatest difference was in the area of sentence repetition where students who did not attend kōhanga reo performed relatively poorly.

DISCUSSION

Although 20 students from the immersion unit were tested in this research, the data for only nine students could be used in the comparison of those who attended kōhanga reo and those who did not because the kōhanga reo attendance of the other 11 students was unknown or unclear. The target student had attended kōhanga reo.

Those students who attended kōhanga reo presented with relatively good listening skills and vocabulary knowledge in te reo Māori. Their performance in sentence repetition was good and may reflect confidence in speaking the language, primarily due to having more exposure to te reo at kōhanga reo at an early age and the benefit of having practice in speaking te reo.

Two students with no kōhanga reo experience, whilst performing better than the other students in the sample group, were much older and had benefitted from a large amount of individual support when they started school. The other

three students with no previous kōhanga reo experience performed relatively poorly in the areas of listening, concept, vocabulary, sentences and had difficulty with repeating sentences. This may indicate a lack of early structured language experience in te reo Māori.

It was difficult to compare the target student’s data with that of his peers because children coming into the immersion unit had varying levels of exposure to te reo. Compared to those students who had kōhanga reo experience, it should be noted that the target student had significant difficulty in the areas of sentence repetition and understanding the positional concepts. However, there was no significant difference in his performance when compared to the group of students with no kōhanga reo experience.

Interpretation of the results indicate a need for the implementation of a standardised screening tool for oral language such as the JOST to be used especially for Māori immersion unit students who start school at age five but have no prior kōhanga reo experience. This is to ensure that, if needed, an appropriate programme such as Korero Kia Mohio can be put into place. Since students who start school in the Māori immersion unit have varying levels of te reo, it is necessary to bridge the gap between those students with a higher level of te reo and those students with a lower level. Students who go through the Korero Kia Mohio programme and continue to have difficulty in speech and

language would then benefit from the revised Speech and Language Assessment in te reo, and a suitable intervention programme being introduced.

CONCLUSION: REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this research project, discussions, assessments and support were carried out in a culturally-sensitive manner in partnership and consultation with Māori staff and the parents concerned. This ensured that staff took ownership and were empowered to carry out the assessment and teaching programme. This is in keeping with the Ministry of Education district Māori strategy and the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. In addition, collaborative consultation with other specialised staff such as the RTLB and KTW indicated the usefulness of a team approach.

Because of the varying levels of te reo students enter school with, comparing individual scores with aggregated data from all students assessed using the Speech and Language Therapy te reo assessment tool may not be useful or valid. It may be more beneficial for students at entry level to be screened using the JOST and screening tests from Kawea Te Rongo (SES, 2002). In addition, Korero Kia Mohio is a suitable programme that can be implemented for those identified as needing it.

As a result of the research the following recommendations were made:

- JOST assessment to be used for all entry level students.
- Additional screening tools from Kawea Te Rongo to be used.
- Korero Kia Mohio course presentation be delivered to staff involved in the Māori immersion unit including the Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour.
- Korero Kia Mohio programme to be available for those students who would benefit depending on the results of the JOST assessment.
- Re-screening in six months.
- Referral for the speech and language te reo assessment for those students who continue to present with speech and language concerns.
- A language processing test to be devised in te reo and normative data obtained.

FOLLOW- UP

The Korero Kia Mohio course presentation was delivered successfully in 2009. The course was attended by five staff working in the Māori immersion unit and the RTLB. Positive feedback was received from all participants. The responses were: "Ka nui te mihi atu kia koutou nga mihi nga arohanui"; "Was great"; "Kei runga noa atu kia koutou nau te rourou, naku te rourou ka ora nga tamariki o te iwi".

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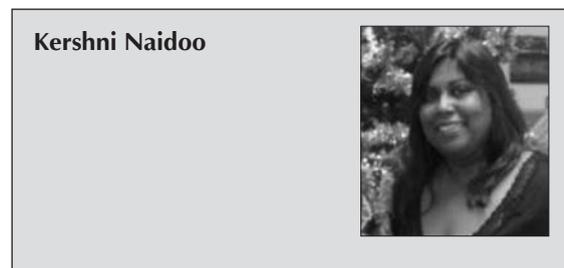
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DEDICATION

This article is dedicated to the memory of Wendy Vivian who passed away in August 2011. She was a treasured friend and a guiding light to me.

AUTHOR'S PROFILE



Kershni Naidoo is a Speech Language Therapist currently working for the Ministry of Education, Special Education in Waikato. She trained in South Africa as a Speech Therapist and Audiologist. Kershni has a special interest in working with students with complex needs, in multicultural communities, and enjoys the diversity it brings.

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