

Task-based language teaching as a tool for the revitalisation of te reo Māori: One beginning teacher's perspective

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Martin East, School of Cultures, Languages and Linguistics, The University of Auckland,
New Zealand (m.east@auckland.ac.nz)

Abstract

This article explores the extent to which task-based language teaching (TBLT) as an emerging but increasingly popular language teaching approach can be used successfully for teaching te reo Māori as a minority and endangered language in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The article presents the experiences and perspectives of one beginning teacher of te reo in an initial teacher education programme. This teacher participated in a one-year course with a dedicated focus on TBLT, designed principally for teachers of the so-called Modern Foreign Languages (MFLs). The article outlines this teacher's initial struggle to see the relevance of the MFL course for her work as an intending teacher of te reo, and her ultimate embracing of her peers and the ideas explored in the course. The study raises issues for the pertinence of TBLT for strengthening and supporting New Zealand's indigenous language, and concludes that an approach such as TBLT may have an important role to play.

Key words: indigenous languages, language revitalisation, task-based language teaching, languages in schools.

Introduction

Ko tōku reo tōku ohooho, tōku māpihi maurea, tōku whakakai mārihi
My language is my precious gift, my object of affection, and my prized ornament
(Hotere-Barnes, Bright, and Hutchings 2014)

This article addresses whether task-based language teaching (TBLT) as an innovative but increasingly established pedagogical approach can be applied successfully to the teaching of *te reo Māori* (the Māori language) as a minority and at-risk language in Aotearoa/New Zealand. TBLT is a learner-centred and experiential approach to teaching languages. However, its contrast to more traditional teacher-led communicative approaches has meant that it has sometimes struggled to find traction, at least in time-limited instructional contexts (East 2017c). Te reo Māori is unique to Aotearoa/New Zealand as the language of *tangata whenua*, the indigenous 'people of the land'. Over recent years te reo has experienced significant resurgence, and is now an official language of the country. However, its history in New Zealand as a consequence of colonisation has been fraught, and today, despite revitalisation efforts, it is regarded as endangered.

Studies that explore the interface between TBLT and indigenous language learning are rare (see Ko 2017, and Riestenberg and Sherris 2018, for recent exceptions). In the broader contexts of challenges with pedagogical innovation and issues of language revitalisation, this article adds to the scant literature by considering how the experiences and perspectives of one beginning teacher of te reo Māori were shaped and developed through participation in a one-

year initial teacher education (ITE) course for teachers of languages that had a dedicated focus on TBLT. Building principally on two prior articles published in *The Language Learning Journal* in which I explored the programme and its implications from the perspective of teachers of the so-called Modern Foreign Languages or MFLs (East 2014, 2019), this article presents the experiences of this one teacher of te reo. The article first considers the benefits and challenges of introducing TBLT in school programmes. It goes on to outline the unique case of te reo Māori in the New Zealand context. A study into this one teacher's reception of TBLT is then presented, and issues are raised for the pertinence of TBLT for the strengthening of New Zealand's indigenous language.

TBLT as innovation

As East (2014) explained, TBLT as a means of promoting second language acquisition (SLA) is built on the learner-centred and experiential foundation that 'the most effective way to teach a language is by engaging learners in real language use in the classroom ... by designing tasks – discussions, problems, games, and so on – which require learners to use language for themselves' (Willis and Willis 2007: 1). A range of theoretical definitions of task exist, the central tenets of which are a primary focus on meaning (rather than grammatical form) and an outcome beyond purely practising a particular grammatical rule in a communicative context – see, for example, Ellis (2009); Samuda and Bygate (2008); Willis and Willis (2007). TBLT has been developing since the 1980s, and is now globally recognised as 'a potentially very powerful language pedagogy' (Van den Branden, Bygate and Norris 2009: 1).

Despite strong advocacy, Long (2016: 28) reminded us that TBLT is 'a relatively recent innovation.' The innovative nature of TBLT constrains the power and potential of TBLT for widespread mainstream adoption. This is arguably particularly the case in time-limited instructed contexts, such as MFL programmes in schools. Although the notion of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is now well-established in many school MFL programmes (Pachler, Barnes and Field 2009), East (2014: 262) noted that the dominant model of CLT prevailing in school classrooms is the so-called weak form. East explained that, in this approach, 'although the essentially communicative purpose of learning an MFL is acknowledged, grammar is often foregrounded and taught in an explicit, teacher-led, systematic way via the "classic lesson structure" of Presentation / Practice / Production or PPP (Klapper 2003).' In this approach, grammatical rules are first presented and practised before they become proceduralised or produced in various "communicative" contexts. Although, in both theory and practice, TBLT does not negate the need to attend to grammar (East 2017c), TBLT's departure from more traditional and teacher-dominated CLT approaches has led some to question its feasibility for school-based MFL programmes (Bruton 2005; Klapper 2003; Swan 2005). Essentially, this is due to a concern that, if SLA is primarily left to communicative interaction through tasks, students will not learn sufficiently about how language works.

New Zealand is a case in point. As means of operationalising a school curriculum that had been in force for many years (Ministry of Education 1993), language-specific curriculum documents – e.g. *French in the New Zealand curriculum* (Ministry of Education 2002) – had been published as primary guidelines for planning the teaching programmes in schools. These documents effectively proposed a syllabus that was hierarchical and synthetic (i.e one that suggested language topics, content and grammatical structures to be taught at different levels in a step-by-step way), and pre-supposed communicative approaches such as PPP.

A revised subject-wide school curriculum – the New Zealand Curriculum or NZC (Ministry of Education 2007), mandatory from 2010 – contrasts with teacher-led didactic models by encouraging learner-centred and experiential pedagogical approaches. In the context of the dedicated curriculum area *Learning Languages*, the revised NZC focused on *communication* as central to learning outcomes and precipitated opportunities to promote TBLT as an alternative to practices such as PPP. To support this recommendation, the former language-specific guidelines were officially withdrawn and are no longer to be used as the basis of programme planning. In their place, opportunities to develop the teachers' expertise in task-based learning have been encouraged through newer publications to support curriculum implementation and Ministry-funded professional development programmes (e.g. Ministry of Education 2011, 2017).

It must be pointed out, however, that, despite real encouragements and support initiatives, TBLT is not mandated as the approach to be adopted in schools, and teacher uptake of TBLT ideas remains in the hands of individual teachers and MFL departments. This has created a challenging environment in which to enact TBLT. East (2014) noted Van den Branden's argument (2009: 666) that teachers 'teach in the way they themselves were taught, and show strong resistance toward radically modifying the teaching behavior that they are so familiar with.' Furthermore, the prescriptive guidelines (even if officially withdrawn) continue to exert an influence, whether directly or indirectly. In light of these constraints in practice, East (2014: 262-263) argued that, if we are to see TBLT ideas more embedded into classroom practice, 'it is important for practitioners to be introduced to the innovation, both in theory and in practice, in ways that enable practitioners to evaluate its claims for themselves.'

Before considering how an introduction to TBLT ideas might be operationalised at the ITE level, this paper turns from a consideration of MFLs to the situation with regard to te reo Māori.

The case of te reo Māori

At the start of the 19th century, te reo Māori was the predominant language in Aotearoa/New Zealand. However, colonisation heralded a decline. As Albury (2015: 316) reminded us, indigenous languages such as te reo 'did not fare well under nineteenth-century European nationalism with its self-celebration and intolerance for diversity.' By the early 1860s, *Pākehā* (European New Zealanders) became the majority; English became the dominant language; the speaking of te reo Māori was actively discouraged; and te reo became increasingly confined to Māori communities living in isolation from Pākehā. Under the auspices of the 1867 Native Schools Act, te reo was suppressed in schools that targeted Māori learners, and speaking the language was punished. Ostensibly this was to ensure that Māori young people assimilated into the wider English-speaking community.

By the mid-20th century, and as a consequence of decades of repression, concerns were raised that te reo was endangered. From the 1970s many Māori people began to reassert their identity as Māori. Since te reo was seen as an integral part of what it means to be Māori, major initiatives from the 1980s sought to precipitate a language revival. This reflected 'a 180-degree shift in indigenous policies in many post-colonial situations' (Albury 2015: 318). An example of this radical shift in the schools sector was the establishment of pre-school *Kōhanga Reo* ('language nests') and primary/secondary *Kura Kaupapa Māori* (Māori language immersion schools) that represented attempts to revitalise the language in Māori-

medium contexts. These schools now have their own curriculum document (Te Karauna 2008) which parallels, but is also distinct from, the NZC.

Now well into the 21st century, te reo Māori is enshrined in law as an official language and New Zealand Pākehā are widely exposed to it, such that its appearance and use are becoming normative. The revitalisation of te reo Māori may appear to be a success story. One UK medium, *The Guardian* newspaper (Ainge Roy 2018), speaks of the language as ‘thriving’, ‘undergoing a revival’ and ‘increasingly admired’.

However, despite positive rhetoric and significant practical steps to revitalise the language, the situation remains precarious. The Government’s strategy for Māori language revitalisation 2019 – 2023 (Te Puni Kōkiri 2019) is built on the following assertion:

We are now at a critical fork in the road for te reo Māori. On one hand, there is growing demand from people across all ethnicities and walks of life to value, learn and use the language. ... On the other hand, te reo Māori remains listed as vulnerable in UNESCO’s Atlas of Languages. (Te Puni Kōkiri 2019: 5)

In similar vein, Hotere-Barnes, Bright, and Hutchings (2014: 12) asserted that the rise and visibility of te reo Māori might make it ‘easy to think that the language is in a healthy and thriving state.’ They acknowledged the gains that have been made, but maintained, ‘the assumption that it is “healthy” and “thriving” is misleading.’ Rather, they argued, the language is in ‘a precarious state.’

Albury’s (2015, 2019) problematisation of the revitalisation efforts helps to shed some light on the precarious situation. He spoke of two distinct approaches to indigenous language revitalisation, which represent opposite ends of an ideological continuum: neotraditionalism and biculturalism. In his view, the former stance ‘reserves indigenous language for indigenous folk for indigenous self-determination,’ whereas the latter ‘emphasizes indigenous language as an interethnic post-colonial interest’ (2015: 329). In other words, neotraditionalism makes language revitalisation solely a matter for the indigenous people; biculturalism assumes a broader societal responsibility.

Albury’s perspective with regard to te reo Māori (2015: 329) is that, although the New Zealand government has ‘historically held a centralized reign on language policy as part of a biculturalist agenda,’ policy has ‘increasingly focused on language acquisition by Māori only, and asking the non-Māori majority simply to show positive attitudes.’ According to Albury (2015: 322-323), at present a ‘paradoxical situation’ has been created where ‘New Zealanders exhibit *sentiments* that lean towards *biculturalism* but *attitudes and behaviours* that are sooner *neotraditionalist*’ (my emphases). Initiatives such as *Kura Kaupapa Māori* reinforce this view. As a consequence, ‘[b]iculturalism and positive ideologies have ... [thus far] not fostered significant language revitalization.’ In a context where ‘Māori alone would carry the responsibility to acquire and use the language,’ te reo Māori remains endangered.

From the perspective of the indigenous people, Albury (2015: 316) argued that a neotraditionalist approach may be predicated on the assumption that ‘indigenous people may legitimately fear that majority-group members acquiring the indigenous language equates to the colonization of yet another indigenous commodity.’ Stewart (2014: 6) presented a counter-argument from the perspective of the “majority-group”. She spoke of ‘wide support amongst non-Māori for the efforts being made to ensure that te reo Māori ... does not become

an extinct indigenous language.’ She suggested, however, that ‘*not* knowing the Māori language is a strong, if nonarticulated, aspect of Pākehā identity.’ Stewart argued that this attitude ‘*could* be seen as showing respect, by leaving to Māori what is Māori’ (my emphasis). She asserted nonetheless that ‘[e]ven the most respectful attitude of non-engagement by Pākehā with te reo Māori reinforces the binary that is characteristic of our society – the hard-edged separation between Māori and Pākehā identities.’

Stewart (2014: 5) concluded that the *English*-medium education system needs to develop ‘[a]ppropriate programmes of professional learning and high-quality classroom resources’ to support the teaching and learning of te reo. She also argued that English-medium ITE needs to ‘boost to more credible levels the provision of opportunities in their programmes for new teachers to develop competence and confidence in delivering sound programmes of teaching and learning in te reo Māori.’ Hotere-Barnes, Bright, and Hutchings (2015: 13) similarly suggested that ‘[t]he English medium system has an important present and future role in recognising, promoting, and revitalising reo and mātauranga Māori [Māori knowledge].’

Task-Based Language Teaching, Te Reo Māori, and Initial Teacher Education

As previously stated, building on New Zealand’s revised curriculum (Ministry of Education 2007) and its encouragement to develop learner-centred and experiential pedagogical approaches, teacher expertise in TBLT is supported through both published documents and professional development programmes. In this context, the situation with regard to te reo Māori in English-medium schools (as opposed to *Kura Kaupapa Māori*) is somewhat unique and reflects the neotraditionalist/biculturalist tension.

On the one hand, in English-medium contexts which are governed by the NZC, te reo Māori is one of several languages afforded a ‘special place’ (Ministry of Education 2007: 24) and is (theoretically) included in the *Learning Languages* learning area. Published curriculum guidelines for the teaching and learning of te reo Māori (Ministry of Education 2009) arguably serve to strengthen programmes that may be offered. In the guidelines the concept of task is clearly articulated – teachers are encouraged to ‘construct tasks that reflect real-life communication as closely as possible’ so as to ‘establish a genuine need for communication,’ and are to plan programmes where ‘interactive, learner-centred tasks’ should be ‘central’ (Ministry of Education 2009: 21, 24).

On the other hand, departments for languages in many English-medium schools operate independently from departments for te reo. Additionally, the publication of guidelines for te reo represents a curious move, given the official withdrawal of similar documents for the MFLs. The guidelines also present a topical, thematic and quite hierarchical approach that is arguably more aligned with PPP and that had been abandoned in the MFLs (at least at the level of official guidance). The document therefore has the effect of separating out te reo from the MFLs that may be delivered under *Learning Languages*, and potentially undermines its own ostensible advocacy of TBLT.

A separation also exists at the ITE level (at least in the postgraduate qualification that is the focus of this article), where teacher preparation for the MFLs has remained distinct from that for te reo Māori (see Fig. 1).

The programme in question in this article is equivalent to a one-year Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) as offered in the UK. Intending secondary teachers of the MFLs would

enrol on a year-long curriculum specialist course focusing on *Learning Languages* as one of the eight published learning areas of the NZC, and including the five most frequently taught MFLs as identified by New Zealand’s Ministry of Education – Chinese, French, German, Japanese, and Spanish (Education Counts 2018a, 2018b). Emphasis was placed on the theory and practice of language teaching from a general perspective, but with a particular exploration of TBLT (East 2014). MFL teachers would additionally enrol on a language-specific course, focusing on at least one selected language, and (as a minor) a course in one additional subject area (which could include subject areas additional to the eight that are presented in the NZC). Intending teachers of te reo Māori would normatively undertake dedicated courses in the teaching and learning of te reo in English-medium contexts, alongside the year-long curriculum specialist course, but covering one of the seven remaining curriculum areas *other than Learning Languages*.

Typical pathway for intending teachers of the MFLs	
25%	Adolescent development and learning within the context of implementing the <i>NZC</i>
25%	Practicum experience in schools
25%	Curriculum specialist course: <i>Learning Languages</i> generic methodology course (excluding te reo Māori)
12.5%	Teaching specialism in at least one language (e.g., Chinese, French)
12.5%	Teaching an additional subject area (e.g., Science, English as an Additional Language)
Typical pathway for intending teachers of te reo Māori	
25%	Adolescent development and learning within the context of implementing the <i>NZC</i>
25%	Practicum experience in schools
25%	Curriculum specialist course: a subject area other than <i>Learning Languages</i> (excluding te reo Māori)
25%	Teaching specialism in te reo Māori

Fig. 1: Typical pathways through the one-year qualification¹

Thus, for languages, two mutually exclusive pathways existed, with subject-focused courses delivered by two separate departments (of which one is wholly dedicated to te reo Māori and mātauranga Māori). Regardless of pathway, all participants completed two practicum placements in two different schools (2 x 7 weeks). These were interwoven with on-campus work to ensure that participants could learn about theory, implement the theory in real contexts, and then evaluate with their peers the success of what they did.

Despite the typical structure illustrated in Fig. 1, in 2017 one beginning teacher of te reo – Anahera (pseudonym)² – found her way into the MFL-focused curriculum specialist course (which she completed alongside one dedicated course in teaching te reo Māori). This was because the curriculum specialist course incorporating one of the eight NZC learning areas was core within the qualification, and Anahera was not able to offer an alternative NZC subject area within it. Anahera therefore focused principally on te reo and was advised to select *Learning Languages* as her curriculum specialism. As a consequence, Anahera followed a unique pathway through the qualification. She became the first (and thus far only) teacher of te reo to play a full and integral part in the course. The addition of one participant

who identified as Māori and who wished to qualify as a teacher of te reo Māori in English-medium contexts provides the unprecedented opportunity to explore her unique story.

A study into the impact of the curriculum specialist course for *Learning Languages*

In the curriculum course in question, coursework assignments throughout the year provided opportunities for participants to explore TBLT in theory and practice, and to reflect on the theory in light of real classroom experiences. These included: a reading log assignment whereby participants completed prescribed readings at different points in the year and provided critical reflection on the readings in light of their developing experiences; a presentation in which participants presented to their peers an actual task that they had carried out with a real class, evaluating the task against theoretical definitions and reflecting on the successes and challenges of its implementation; and a summative presentation in which participants could select a pedagogical issue that they found challenging, discussing its implications both theoretically and practically.

One longitudinal study has drawn on aspects of the above coursework, supplemented by interviews, to evidence how effective the course and programme have been in enhancing participants' understandings of TBLT. The 2012 cohort was the first to take part in a course with a dedicated focus on TBLT. Therefore, an initial exploratory study investigated the impact of the course (East 2014). Comparative data were collected from the 2017 cohort. In the intervening years, research has focused on teachers' experiences after ITE had been concluded (East 2019), or the experiences of individual teachers (East 2017a, 2017b).

In the initial (2012) study, the coursework of 20 students was available for research purposes. The cohort included students of a representative range of MFLs taught in New Zealand schools (French and Spanish; Chinese and Japanese). In the comparative study (2017), data were available from eight MFL students (French and Spanish; Chinese, Japanese and Korean). Data to inform both studies drew on the critical reflection section of participants' first reading log (Week 3, March) and final reading log (Week 27, November) – see East (2014: 266).

Essentially, findings of the original study, corroborated by the comparative study, revealed that participants' thinking about, and understanding of, TBLT had developed from the start to the end of the course. There was evidence to suggest that aspects of TBLT could be introduced successfully in classrooms, even though challenges were apparent (such as lack of resources, impact on available time, and the attitudes and perceptions of more established colleagues). East (2014: 272) concluded, 'it is evident that teacher education ... can be effective in encouraging innovation in a way that still provides the possibility to evaluate and critique.'

The present study

As noted above, the 2017 data also provided the important opportunity to consider the experiences of a teacher of te reo Māori as an added dimension. In line with articles that have presented the stories of individual teachers since the inception of the TBLT focus in 2012 (East 2017a, 2017b), this article explores and develops several aspects of Anahera's story. The following research questions (which parallel those posed by East 2014) were addressed:

1. What understandings about TBLT and tasks did Anahera have as she began to engage with a dedicated methodology course in an ITE programme?
2. Did her understandings about TBLT and tasks change and develop as she completed the course?
3. What possibilities and challenges for the implementation of TBLT in reo Māori classrooms are highlighted by the data?

In parallel with sources drawn on by East (2014, 2019), data to answer the research questions included Anahera's first and final reading logs. Following East (2017a) data were also derived from Anahera's end-of-year presentation, including a transcript of the presentation itself and the notes Anahera wrote to accompany it. In what follows, particular emphasis is placed on Anahera's presentation/notes because of the opportunity this assignment had offered her to explore what she perceived as a significant educational/pedagogical issue for investigation – the compartmentalisation of te reo Māori in English-medium contexts.

Findings

TBLT in contrast to PPP – initial thoughts

Anahera's reading log entries suggest that, at both the start and the end of the course, she could perceive several advantages to TBLT. On both occasions Anahera acknowledged, on the one hand, the opportunities for student-centred authentic social interaction in the target language, which she perceived as motivating. On the other hand, she acknowledged TBLT's contrast with more established approaches such as PPP.

Right at the beginning of the course, Anahera argued that, in circumstances where teachers 'may perceive a clash in instruction method or lack understanding of how to incorporate TBLT theory and practice,' TBLT 'requires them to both *challenge and change* their current practice and *reflect on why they teach the way they do*' (my emphases). Anahera thereby appeared to indicate her own openness, at the start of her studies, to consider alternatives that were new to her.

A changed perspective

In her final log, Anahera commented that her thinking about effective pedagogy had 'changed drastically' as a consequence of engaging with the course over the past year. She explained, 'I attended school during the 80s and 90s' and 'was traumatised by language learning in my youth.' Her own experiences of learning an additional language had been 'very dry, scary, boring and extremely academic, even snobby.' For her, therefore, 'being exposed to TBLT, communication-based language learning and SLA theories has been a total turn around in my thinking about what is possible in the language classroom.' She noted that she had come to see in practice that '[u]sing tasks and games as a basis for language learning is inspiring, as it gives students the space and freedom to somewhat direct their own learning and make their own personal meaning out of language.'

Anahera's summative presentation became the space in which she was able to reflect on how her own foundational shift in orientation alongside her experiences in the course and the broader programme impacted her thinking about the teaching of te reo.

Te reo Māori and MFLs - layers of division

Anahera presented to her colleagues her honest appraisal of how she had felt at the start of the course. She explained:

As soon as I walked in the room with you guys at the beginning of the year I felt different, I wasn't sure if I was in the same room. I felt it just immediately, like, 'this isn't right, something is not right here, I'm not meant to be here.'

She commented, 'one of the factors that I noticed during this programme – every time we were going through something, I kept thinking “yeah, but for Māori”, or “but for Māori it's this”.' She perceived 'a whole untapped sort of indigenous perspective on language learning.' In her view, 'it is quite different trying to reclaim a language that has been stolen from you than learning a language because you are really interested in another culture or you want to learn another language.' As a consequence of her own perceptions of difference, 'it took me a long time to get my head around why I was here.'

Having reached the end of the course, Anahera perceived several layers of divide between te reo and other languages which she saw as problematic for the on-going success of te reo.

Division at the curriculum level

Anahera saw the NZC and the guidelines for te reo as distinct rather than complementary, with te reo Māori 'sort of off in its own category and quite separate from the other languages.' At the level of pedagogy, approaches seemed to be 'PPP dominated,' with PPP continuing to be 'a strong feature in *kura auraki* [English-medium] te reo programmes.'

Anahera reflected on factors that might be influencing a more structured and traditional delivery of te reo at the level of curriculum. She suggested that, at one level, 'Māori have been so busy keeping te reo alive that a focus on correct grammar and pronunciation has overtaken the importance of free flow communication and making meaning out of language.' At a deeper level, Anahera reflected that calling te reo a *taonga* (treasure) influenced pedagogical choices. That is:

a taonga is ... like a diamond or a trophy, you know, something really special. Taonga are expensive, they are hard to get, you only get awarded them for a special reason and quite often they are behind glass cases or in cabinets. You are not allowed to touch.

The word *taonga* 'makes it seem hard to get or inaccessible, when actually your right to speak your language is your birth right, there is nothing special about that. That is just having a *taonga* and using it.' However, as a consequence of its apparent special status within the NZC, in her perception both Māori and non-Māori were 'fearful of taking risks developing communicative competence in te reo because they feel that getting the language incorrect would be politically incorrect.' People were 'actually scared to speak it [te reo] because they don't want to get it wrong ... they don't want to be culturally offensive.'

A PPP model might arguably help to ensure a focus on accuracy over making meaning. However, for Anahera, the fear associated with getting it wrong in te reo was 'why I think that *TBLT* is the way forward for te reo teaching' (my emphasis). TBLT, in her view,

provided a valuable model for the teaching of the language because it ‘encourages and expects mistakes. [You are] actually not expected to be perfect, all you need to do is to make meaning out of what someone is saying and have them make meaning out of what you are saying.’

Also, TBLT’s focus on ‘creating opportunities for authentic social interaction in the target language ... and ... a student-centred learning environment, where learners are more able to experiment and have real life experience incorporated into their learning,’ created opportunities for ‘being able to just communicate in a culturally authentic way.’ Since *authentic* communication in the context of te reo is *culturally-embedded*, because ‘all of the language we have, all of our traditional language, is based around cultural activities,’ Anahera saw TBLT as clearly providing room to explore and use language in culturally appropriate contexts. This made TBLT ‘naturally attuned to the Māori world view of connectedness of culture and language, and te reo Māori *ako* [instruction] provides endless opportunities to practise culturally authentic communication.’

Thus, two elements (communication above accuracy; contextual authenticity for language use) provided, for Anahera, strong justifications for promoting TBLT. In her view, these factors made ‘that PPP dominated old school way’ a ‘culturally inappropriate pedagogy,’ due primarily to its focus on language rules above authentic communication. For her, PPP was ‘a way of separating a culture from a language.’ That is, ‘when you look at something and you study it academically, it separates you from it and depersonalises it.’ TBLT was ‘more naturally aligned to the teaching of *te reo me tikanga* [way of being in the language], and more culturally appropriate to Māori in general.’ Thus, on the basis of asserting ‘how much faster can you become conversational or communicate in a language using this technique versus PPP or CLT?’ Anahera named TBLT as ‘a tool for language revitalisation.’

Division at the operational level

Moving beyond the curriculum documents, a significant *practical* barrier which Anahera saw as ‘an obstacle to uptake of TBLT’ was ‘the compartmentalism of te reo Māori in schools.’ That is, when, on an operational level, the Māori Department and the Languages Department were distinct, ‘sometimes the Māori room is so far away and you are just really isolated.’ In her thinking, this ‘compartmentalisation of te reo Māori in education reinforces the idea of Māori as “others” or as separate, different,’ or even, in comparison to other languages, ‘not as important.’ As a consequence, ‘te reo Māori teachers also become separate or “marginalised”.’

Thus, despite what were, in Anahera’s view, considerable theoretical reasons to support TBLT above PPP in the reo Māori classroom, ‘at the end of the day, if Māori teachers and departments are kept over here, separate from the rest, I don’t think that we are going to be able to move forward that well together.’ Compartmentalisation meant that, in practice, ‘there are so many te reo teachers out there that just don’t have the exposure to these [task-based] techniques,’ even though ‘I think that if they knew more about it they would probably switch to using that.’

Anahera concluded that ‘through *Te Marau* [the curriculum guidelines for te reo] being separated out from the curriculum and te reo Māori being sort of separated out from languages, I think that is slowing down the development and the spread of these kind of tools [TBLT ideas] in the te reo Māori community.’

Division at the ITE level

The compartmentalisation of te reo and MFLs within the ITE programme was also problematic for Anahera. She commented, 'I don't understand ... why they don't do languages together all the time,' that is, why the preparation of teachers of te reo was executed in complete separation from the preparation of MFL teachers. She surmised, however, that this 'comes back to the compartmentalisation of te reo Māori from the rest of the curriculum.'

Towards greater integration

Having identified several levels of separation between te reo and MFLs, Anahera provided her reflections on how they might be addressed. There needed, in her view, to be a mutual working together. At a basic level 'language departments and te reo Māori departments ... should have combined *hui* [meetings].' She perceived 'so many benefits to both teachers of te reo and teachers of foreign languages to be able to come together and share ideas and experience each other's cultures.' The emphasis, for her, was on two-way collaboration. For example, on the one hand '*Kaiako Māori* [Māori teachers] can make a conscious effort to liaise with other language departments and participate in professional development, not just in te reo Māori, but with foreign language teachers also.' In response to this input, MFL teachers would 'increase engagement with te reo Māori teachers' and could 'become advocates for te reo Māori and tikanga Māori.' That is, 'I just sort of think foreign language teachers have a real strong role for advocacy of te reo Māori in schools and to use te reo Māori in language classes.' Addressing her colleagues directly, she asserted, 'as foreign language teachers, I really think that, out of anybody in the school, you guys would be the next ones to make sure that you include Māori in your department *hui* and stuff like that.'

In terms of embedding task-based ideas more firmly into the reo Māori classroom, Anahera suggested that teachers of te reo might be supported by other teachers by 'definitely going around working with Māori teachers more around it, how to do it, having examples.' There was thus the need for resources that illustrated tasks. That is, 'I think, if there were some specific TBLT tasks that could be promoted or given out to teachers,' this might lead to higher levels of adoption because 'you don't have to think about it.'

There was also the perceived need for an integrated approach to ITE, that is, 'te reo Māori teachers ... going into languages programmes ... and mixing with other languages and creating more a community of language speakers rather than just Māori out on their own and everybody else is just doing their own thing.'

Concluding thoughts

As Anahera reflected on her own learning journey throughout the year, she was able to identify positive shifts by virtue of working in the course alongside her MFL counterparts. At the beginning Anahera was bothered by the perceived 'separation of te reo from the other languages,' and voiced some discomfort about being different from her peers. By the end, she expressed the view that she had reached a more comfortably integrated position, asserting, 'I've really learned ... from hanging out with you guys, really.' She noted, 'I've just found being surrounded by ... people of different cultures that speak different languages ... has been quite healing for me.' Furthermore, her experiences of interaction had 'made

this class such a positive experience for me, just getting to know everybody and just being around people that have different experiences and different upbringings.’

Discussion

Anahera’s reading log entries indicate that she perceives advantages to TBLT in line with those identified by East (2014). This is in evidence at both the start (when perspectives are theoretical and not informed by classroom experience) and the end (after 14 weeks working in two schools). In particular, TBLT is perceived by her as a learner-centred pedagogical approach which is both motivating and helpful in developing students’ ability to communicate in the target language in authentic contexts.

Nevertheless, her final presentation reveals her initial struggles to find her place among her peers. She expresses a sense of alienation and difference and struggles to relate the ideas being discussed to the Māori context which she perceives as separate. Over time, however, she seems to become more comfortably integrated into the group to the extent that, by the end, this has been a therapeutic experience for her.

In turn, Anahera critiques the segregation of te reo Māori from the MFLs, not only in terms of how school departments are structured, but also with regard to the curriculum documents that guide what should be taught (Ministry of Education 2007, 2009) and how the curriculum is put into practice. Anahera’s engagement with the programme has led her to perceive that classes for te reo appear to be influenced by a PPP model, a grammar-focused approach that she has come to regard as ‘culturally inappropriate.’ This stance can be viewed as representative of a ‘rejection of rote, frontal teaching practices adopted from colonialist conceptions of schooling’ (Riestenberg and Sherris 2018: 435). TBLT, by contrast, appears to her to offer a more appropriate pedagogy because it embeds language use into authentic contexts and de-emphasises accuracy.

It is important here to acknowledge two dimensions that may have influenced Anahera’s understanding with regard to pedagogy. First, as outlined earlier in this article, the curriculum guidelines for te reo (Ministry of Education 2009) do encourage the use of interactive, learner-centred tasks and a focus on meaning. Despite this encouragement, the subsequent guidelines might be interpreted as being more suited to a more strongly PPP-oriented model. The way the document is presented will inevitably influence practice.

Second, Anahera makes the assertion that TBLT, with its emphasis on communicative interaction, ‘expects mistakes’, making it, in her perception, a contrast to PPP. However, the guidelines (Ministry of Education 2009) also anticipate that errors will be a natural part of language learning. Also, as noted earlier, both theoretically and practically TBLT does not negate attention to grammar (and therefore attention to accuracy). However, the place of grammar instruction is subject to on-going debate (East 2017c) and, as East (2014) observed, some course participants (who had presumably experienced more PPP-influenced models when learning an additional language themselves) saw grammar instruction as (comparatively) absent in the task-oriented classroom. This is because attention to grammar in a task-based approach would be encouraged *after* attempts have been made to communicate in the target language, rather than as a pre-cursor to efforts to communicate. A misperception about the comparative absence of grammar perhaps reflects the greater attention to communication that the course emphasised in light of the published expectations of the NZC, and no doubt contributes to Anahera’s interpretation of TBLT.

Seen through the lenses of neotraditionalism and biculturalism (Albury 2015, 2019), it appears that, initially, Anahera supports a more strongly neotraditionalist approach which, as Stewart (2014: 4) put it, would leave to Māori what is Māori. At the end, her perspective seems to have shifted towards advocating a more strongly bicultural agenda. It is apparent that this shift has been shaped by her positive engagement with MFL colleagues about whom she was initially wary. She places responsibility for greater collaboration into the hands of both Māori and Pākehā. This is not, however, a fully assimilationist position. She does not see what she is advocating as failing to preserve te reo Māori as a *taonga*, and as therefore distinct, unique, and afforded a ‘special place’ (Ministry of Education, 2007: 24). Rather, she sees potential for mutual collaboration among and between two different groups, one that advocates reciprocated and bi-directional exchange of ideas.

It is important to note that the above arguments apply to English-medium in contrast to Māori-medium contexts. As previously mentioned, both Stewart (2014) and Hotere-Barnes, Bright, and Hutchings (2015) argued that the *English*-medium education system has an important place in the strengthening of te reo Māori. For Stewart (2014: 5), ITE in Aotearoa/New Zealand needs to help beginning teachers to develop their competence and confidence in implementing what she describes as ‘sound programmes of teaching and learning in te reo Māori’ in the English-medium sector. Anahera’s experiences would suggest that programmes that can integrate the teaching and learning of te reo Māori alongside the MFLs are potentially mutually beneficial in and for English-medium contexts as teachers of different languages and epistemological standpoints share with and learn from each other. Furthermore, her experiences would suggest that TBLT, in contrast to PPP, might hold the key to greater success and more beneficial learning outcomes – in her words, TBLT might be ‘a tool for language revitalisation.’

Anahera herself explained that, before engaging with the different components of the programme, ‘the interface between te reo and foreign language learning is something that I’ve never considered.’ It was now ‘an area I’m looking forward to change in the future. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to explore and develop my ideas.’ She concluded, ‘my future is moving away from the cultural isolation of a small Māori department, to strengthening bonds between te reo Māori and foreign language teachers.’

Conclusion

As with any study, it is important to identify limitations. This study has focused on one teacher and self-reports on her thinking and experiences during a one-year ITE programme. Her story is therefore unique, and in different circumstances, and/or with different teachers, perspectives may have been quite different. We cannot therefore generalise. This paper also presents Anahera’s story at one point in time. It neither documents nor explores how, and to what extent, Anahera is able to realise her own vision for strengthening bonds in future real-world contexts. Further studies with a broader range of teachers would provide more evidence on how greater integration between te reo and MFLs might work in languages classrooms or, indeed, provide contrasting evidence that distinct approaches may be relevant or justified.

Notwithstanding the limitation that this is one teacher’s view at one point in time that may or may not be shared by others, Anahera’s case should be seen in the larger context of an on-going research agenda that has considered the argument for TBLT not only more broadly and

over time (e.g. East 2019), but also more specifically through an individual case approach (East 2017a, 2017b). Anahera's case does not negate the challenges for TBLT in instructed contexts as articulated, for example, by East (2014, 2017c), but it does add an important dimension to the wider story.

Finally, as Riestenberg and Sherris observed (2018: 435), 'many of the methods for teaching second languages (L2) currently promoted in the field of applied linguistics have rarely been applied to the teaching of Indigenous languages.' This makes the case of Anahera interesting in two respects. First, it helps to shed some light on the tensions between neotraditionalism and biculturalism as they play out in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Second, it lends further weight to arguments to support TBLT as 'a potentially very powerful language pedagogy' (Van den Branden, Bygate and Norris 2009: 1) and signals TBLT's potential for the field of teaching te reo as a minority and endangered language.

Notes

¹ This figure represents the programme structure as relevant to the participants in the study reported here. The programme has recently undergone a restructure for implementation from 2020. The restructure maintains curriculum specialisms but now also includes additional compulsory core courses in *te au Māori* (Māori worldview) and *te reo Māori*.

² Due to ethical considerations of confidentiality and anonymity it is not possible to provide further details about participants.

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