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**Private speech: A window into the self-talk of kindergarten
children from diverse language backgrounds.**

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Abstract

The immense potential of language, for learning, building relationships, as the embodiment of culture, for an understanding of the world and for expressing 'self', is the underlying theme of this thesis. One less apparent aspect of the language of children is their private speech.

In this thesis the research questions focus on whether children from diverse language backgrounds attending English-speaking kindergartens use private speech. Further, if so, what is the context, who is present when it is used and is there a response from the person or people?

These questions are primarily addressed through observations of eight children as well as recordings of their private speech. An understanding of the context is supported through interviews with the parents and teachers in the kindergartens.

The expectations for this research were largely based on the work of Vygotsky, and adapted to the natural, 'free play' environments of the kindergartens. It was expected that children from diverse language backgrounds in English medium kindergartens would use private speech in their own language. While the children did use private speech (unlike the results from Vygotsky's research) they talked to themselves in English using the language that they had acquired from the community, from the media, from their experiences at kindergarten and in some cases from their families.

Based on Krafft & Berk's categories of private speech, a significant focus of this research is the categories of private speech that were used by individual children. These findings pose interesting insight into the experiences of the children.

This research has shown the child's remarkable ability to tune into the language and culture of context and to do so not only in relation to the socio-cultural context but also through thinking and acting. This study has also provided insight into the early childhood environments and the experiences of the teachers.

As the first known research into private speech/self-talk in early childhood in Aotearoa New Zealand it can serve as a spring-board for further research to enhance our understanding of the child's thinking and learning through private speech.

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