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**OVERCOMING LANGUAGE BARRIERS
IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

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Abstract

New Zealand's increasingly heterogeneous population places manifold demands on the education sector to educate and integrate children who do not speak English. Children of migrant background attending early childhood settings are assumed to benefit in English language obtainment from attending early years educational facilities, but does the mere placement in such settings achieve the desired outcome? Limited research exists into how minority language children acquire English whilst attending preschool settings, how this impacts on their first language, or on how teachers support their second language development.

There is little insight into what motivates teachers in their interactions and decision-making, how they adjust teaching content, and whether they engage in language-specific teaching activities at all. To address this gap, this study considers questions regarding the relationship between early childhood teachers' knowledge of second language acquisition and the type of support they report implementing. I investigate educators' views and reported practices, as well as the influence of professional training, institutional policies, and philosophies.

This research used a qualitative perspective and was benchmarked against comparative reflections of my own teaching experience. The inductive methodology involved semi-structured interviews of early childhood practitioners, covering a selection of educational settings in the Wellington region that practise distinct philosophies.

Results show that teachers rely on their centres' philosophies and socio-cultural practices as per Te Whāriki - the New Zealand curriculum - in their work with minority language children. The consensus was that early childhood education is to prepare language foundations through emotional confidence and cultural capability, not to set

academic standards, and children's perceived natural ability to learn by osmosis is accorded much credence. These findings suggest that teachers' knowledge regarding complex language and cognitive processes could be significantly improved. Furthermore, support for te reo Māori and Pasifika first languages in New Zealand notwithstanding, practices tend to facilitate institutionalized monolingualism. Future research in all migrant language learning would add to the knowledge base about second language acquisition in New Zealand and the role of early childhood education in this dynamic. As well, there is scope for a discussion on language inequities and the possibilities of a plurilingual society.

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“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.”

Nelson Mandela

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	viii
Chapter One: Introduction and Background	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Research Objectives	4
1.3 Background and New Zealand Perspectives of Second Language Acquisition	7
1.4 ESOL Practices	9
1.5 Te Kōhanga Reo	11
1.6 Pasifika Language Nests	14
1.7 Chapter Overview	17
1.8 Conclusion	18
Chapter Two: Literature Review	19
2.1 Introduction	19
2.1.1 Monolingualism	20
2.1.2 Bilingualism and Multilingualism	23
2.1.3 Additive and Subtractive Language Acquisition	26
2.1.4 Language Shift	28
2.1.5 Summary	28
2.2 Theoretical Considerations of Children’s Second Language Acquisition	30
2.2.1 First Language Acquisition Theories	30
2.2.2 Second Language Acquisition Theories	31

2.2.3 Sociocultural and Bioecological Considerations	33
2.3 Current Classroom Practices and Findings on Second Language Acquisition	36
2.3.1 The Importance of Social Inclusion	36
2.3.2 The Importance of Knowledge of Cognitive Processes and Pedagogy	38
2.3.3 The Importance of Teachers	40
2.4 Conclusion	42
Chapter Three: Methodology	44
3.1 Introduction	44
3.2 Participants	45
3.2.1 Description of Participating Centres	47
3.2.2 Participant Profiles	49
3.3 The Study Design	49
3.4 Research Parameters and Limitations	52
3.5 Data Generation	52
3.6 Conceptual Framework	54
3.7 Conclusion	56
Chapter Four: Data Analysis	57
4.1 Introduction	57
4.2 The Social Context	58
4.2.1 Parents	59
4.2.2 Culture	63
4.2.3 The Individuality of the Child	65

4.3 Immersion or Submersion	67
4.4 Professional Knowledge and Training	69
4.5 Centre Philosophies	71
4.6 Conclusion	72
Chapter Five: Discussion and Recommendations	74
5.1 Introduction	74
5.2 Significance of Teachers' Knowledge	74
5.3 Institutionalizing Monolingualism	81
5.4 Recommendations	83
5.5 Future Research	85
5.6 Conclusion	87
Chapter Six: Conclusion	88
6.1 Introduction	88
6.2 Summary	89
6.3 Research Context	91
6.4 Concluding Comments	92
References	93
Appendices	103
Appendix A - Interview Questions	103
Appendix B - Information Sheet	106
Appendix C - Consent Form	108
Appendix D - Self-reporting sheet	109

List of Tables

Table 1	People who speak te reo Māori	12
Table 2	Participation in Pacific-medium education	14
Table 3	Most common languages spoken by multilingual people	21

Chapter One - Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

In New Zealand, early childhood education (ECE) is regarded a key support for vulnerable children, and the rationale that high-quality ECE can improve social outcomes (Ministry of Education, 2016) is the driving force behind government efforts to increase participation. Notwithstanding the value of ECE for children's preparation for schooling, it has been my experience as a preschool teacher that ECE does not always serve children from non-English speaking backgrounds as well as is assumed. Particular consideration is accorded to the general provision and accessibility of ECE services, as well as support for te reo Māori and Pasifika bi-lingual speakers to retain their first language (Ministry of Education, 1996), but there is no counterpart service or language learning support available for migrant children whose first language is not English, New Zealand's majority language.

This research explores the relationship between ECE teachers' knowledge pertaining to second language acquisition, their resulting pedagogical strategies, and whether their philosophical stance determines the support they provide for children under their tutelage who speak English as a second language. I will argue that teachers primarily base their strategies on their centres' philosophies and practices and that the general unstructured approach to familiarize children with English prior to entering the school system neither prepares them optimally in their second language, nor does it support their first language. This raises doubt about the language and related learning capabilities of children who speak English as a second language as they transition into primary schooling. Indeed, it raises the question of whether this unstructured practice unintentionally facilitates the institutionalization of monolingualism.

Whilst specific provisions are made for supporting English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) as part of the primary and secondary education curriculum, this does not extend to the preschool sector (Ministry of Education, 2015). International

research shows a link between oral achievement and academic achievement, but it is less certain what kind of intervention proves most useful for young children (Dockrell, Stuart & King, 2010). The New Zealand ECE curriculum, Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996) reflects the experience and knowledge of practitioners in addition to research and understandings concerning child development. The curriculum's key directive is for children to learn through a socially and culturally mediated context based on reciprocal and responsive relationships. The expectation is that children act in collaboration with adults and peers, and practitioners take into account individual variations and different needs depending on age and cultural perspectives. The document provides links to school settings, but emphasizes the difference in learning environment and the special nature of the early childhood years, i.e. learning goals must be appropriate for the preschool age range. Te Whāriki is a bicultural statement specific to the New Zealand context, and includes content for Māori immersion services and Tagata Pasifika programmes. Acknowledging the multicultural nature of New Zealand society, the curriculum also suggests that the learning examples provided could be used as models for other ethnic groups in devising their learning programmes.

Migrants arrive in New Zealand with a range of language skills, i.e. from highly skilled to poor knowledge of English. For example, most immigrants' English language skills are reported to be at a high level (86.5%), particularly those who enter through the skilled migrant category, which is in line with immigration policy requirements (Department of Labour, 2004). However, 50.7% of family/parent and 41.6% of business migrants rated their English ability as moderate to poor (Statistics NZ, 2008). These figures do not specify the number of dependants and their English language skills as this knowledge is not available. In 2013/14, 1,390 people were approved for residence under the Dependent Child Category, with Samoa representing the largest source for approval (45%), China with 11%, followed by the Philippines with 7% (Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, 2015). In addition, New Zealand accepts 750 refugees per year through its annual quota programme (Immigration NZ, 2014) and

although a wide range of support services are in place for refugees, these do not include English language provision for young children.

Children who attend early childhood services and do not speak English are significantly dependent on the quality of teacher support. Moreover, there is little information about the provision for early years' second language acquisition, or the preservation of first language in young immigrants other than te reo Māori and Pasifika languages. Government statistics are available on the number of children attending early childhood settings where they can practise Pasifika language or te reo Māori, and information is collated regarding ethnicities represented, including to what extent different languages are spoken in preschools. According to the 2014 Early Childhood Summary Report (Ministry of Education, 2014) of 4,299 licenced services, 484 (12.3%) services reported using te reo for more than 50% of the session time, and 96 (19.3%) services used Pasifika languages (mostly Samoan and Tongan) more than 50% of the time. There has been an increase in centres where Asian languages are used, reflecting continued growth in both Asian enrolments and teaching staff in early childhood education. The majority of these languages are used 1-11% of the session time.¹ The Ministry also gathers data to compare language spoken in the home of the child with language spoken at early childhood services, but for the time being these efforts concentrate on Pasifika languages. As yet, there is insufficient detail of the upkeep of other minority languages, for example Somalian, Arabic, Mandarin, or German.

In addition, not much is known about possible language shifts, i.e. children making the switch from their home language to the majority language, English, and making it their first language, and the role mainstream early childhood possibly plays in facilitating monolingualism and/or bilingualism. As Haworth et al. (2008) point out, teachers engaged in the development of bilingualism in children face complex challenges, and

¹ The Asian language category for ECE services is subdivided into Chinese, South Asian, East Asian, and Southeast Asian languages used at centres (MoE, 2014).

some literature supports a strong pro-active role for early childhood teachers, but as yet it is not clearly defined what it is they should do.

This chapter outlines current first and second language practices, and the pedagogies used specifically within the New Zealand early childhood education context, which also includes the relationship between minority and majority languages. This thesis will draw a link between the education sector's responses to the demands of language diversity in New Zealand and the political. It will outline current global and local language acquisition knowledge and practices and how minority languages' positioning in society often begins within education. The thesis will discuss the sociological implications of ECE practices and how these may reflect power relations in everyday language use and facilitate the discourse of power. The following research objectives explain in detail the purpose and trajectory of the study.

1.2 Research objectives

The purpose of this research is to ascertain the reported relationship of teacher-led interactions and English language experiences of preschool-aged children prior to them entering education at primary school level. I will be enquiring into the knowledge sets that practitioners' actions are based on and how professional teaching philosophies influence classroom practices and thus possible outcomes for children. I investigate whether teacher training influences English language support practices and whether support is provided through immersion or represents the submersion approach. Through this research I intend to identify strategies teachers derive from their practical experience and what they consider beneficial for the second language development of migrant children.

Finally, this research explores to what extent preschool-aged children are positioned in the role of ESOL, i.e. with the goal of learning English whilst in ECE, and whether this facilitates institutionalising monolingual practices. As there has been little research to

date into second language acquisition in early childhood in New Zealand, I intend to generate insight that will provide impetus for further research. In addition, this information would be of assistance in planning future teacher training content and curriculum guidelines. It may also clarify aspects of the unrealistic expectations that placement of young children from non-English speaking backgrounds in ECE by itself will produce language competency and show how this disregards the complexity of maintaining first languages.

A series of concepts are necessary language for considering the objectives of this thesis: immersion, submersion, and institutionalised monolingualism. These concepts relate to the variety of how language is used, and how it differs in its outcome and how language is a cultural tool that is used for specific purposes by society. In the following I will briefly outline each of these in turn, as they relate to the thesis in hand.

Immersion teaching models range from complete to partial, but the commonality is that education content is expressly taught in the language that is not the first language of the students. It is usually the dominant majority language or an elective language programme, where students know they learn a second language. Immersion teaching involves techniques such as speaking styles and body language and the purpose is to foster bilingualism and develop learners' communicative competence. Fazio and Lyster (1998) describe the aim of immersion as enhancing second language knowledge alongside gaining proficiency in the first language, termed additive bilingualism. In New Zealand, immersion teaching is used in kura kaupapa, i.e. Māori immersion schools, where 81 -100% of the teaching content is taught in Māori (Ministry of Education, 2015). The emphasis is on academic understanding within a cultural context, through specific instruction and practice, with fluency as the goal. Knowledgeable and specifically trained teachers are a crucial component to ensure a high quality of learning, and programmes can range from methodical application to a purely conversational approach but always with active support for students.

Submersion on the other hand is a type of exposure to a foreign language that essentially denotes a non-approach. Here children or students are placed in classes and are surrounded by an unfamiliar language they are expected to 'pick up' by osmosis, without any instructional or explanatory strategies. It represents a language experience through a single language and at its extreme categorizes the students' native language as a problem. For example, Johnson (2012) describes Arizona's anti-bilingual education policy, where minority language students are effectively marginalized and students' native language is actively discouraged. As a result of low educational achievement, policy-makers concluded that bilingual programs impeded minority language speakers and stipulated English as the instructional language in classrooms. This type of language policy is often the case when a deficit model and value judgments are used, typically arising from an ethnocentric view. Although generally children eventually acquire communication skills in the second language, they also tend to lose their mother tongue. As Johnson (2012) points out, in the Arizona model the outcome of all instruction and testing being delivered in English resulted in even more pronounced academic struggles in the affected schools.

In the New Zealand context, this submersion model used to be practiced in the 19th century and up until mid-20th century. The Native Schools Act 1867 stipulated that schools instruct in the English language only in order to receive funding. Children were not allowed to speak Māori at school and were forced to adopt English for all communication. Law, policy, as well as punishment of children in schools for speaking Māori were factors in supplanting te reo Māori as the majority language (Parliamentary Library, 2000).

Monolingualism, also referred to as monoglottism, means being fluent in one language; institutionalized monolingualism utilizes a society's dominant language to set the discourse for social life and all spheres of society, particularly officialdom. As

Piller and Takahashi (2011) assert, the monolingual bias of institutions is one of the key agents for exclusion. For example, language proficiency is often the admission criterion for skilled migrants, as well as for work and promotions. By setting particular linguistic practices as the standard, language functions as a gate-keeper.

Billig (1995) describes the common-sense assumptions and myth-making understandings of what it is that makes a nation and the role of language as a tool in societal identification and argues that in modern times language plays a key role in claiming boundaries. The power to define language and to decree which is official forms part of the politics of state-making and national hegemony, and an official language is often formed through suppression of others (Billig, 1995). A nation's population characteristics can be multicultural and multilingual, and yet possess one language that is elevated to the main mode of communication. By conferring the status of official language, countries claim to draw on the unifying factor of a majority language and connect language to national identity. However, this signifies that other languages are of lesser value in a social hierarchy and the mainstream language evolves into economic, political, and social power that has the potential to impede equality. The official language sets a threshold of belonging, and becomes an incentive for citizens to comply, enforcing a simultaneously essential and desirable societal norm that does not even require enforcement. In the following sections language practices and experiences within the New Zealand context will illustrate the significance of the preceding concepts in practice.

1.3 Background and New Zealand Perspectives of Second Language Acquisition

As part of professional prerequisites, early childhood teachers are educated in the theories and practices of child development, and how to care for and provide learning opportunities and environments conducive to the development of the child. However, training generally does not include foreign language teaching techniques or understandings such as those relayed above. Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996,

p.78), the New Zealand early childhood curriculum, notably requires that “children experience an environment that values their own and others’ language and culture”. The curriculum pays particular attention to the distinctive contexts of Māori immersion and Tagata Pasefika programmes and requires inclusiveness of te reo Māori and first languages, although these first languages are not further defined. As well, practising teacher criteria, the essential knowledge and capabilities required for teaching in New Zealand include the necessity to acknowledge and respect the languages, heritages, and cultures of all learners (Education Council, 2016). Still, this multicultural approach does not structurally equip teachers for managing the intricate cognitive mechanisms involved in the acquisition of a second language or the societal implications of speaking majority and/or minority languages.

Acquiring a second language can mean manifold things in different contexts and parents’ decision-making is informed by their own set of priorities. The New Zealand ECE education system offers a range of options that in some way address language-driven needs, for example parents can opt for their children to attend Kōhanga Reo, Pasifika language nests or other culturally and language specific private playgroups where children can play and practice their heritage languages. These are community centred and whānau (family) led services set up through private initiatives and their programmes can range from encouragement of use of language for acculturation purposes to immersion environments.

The early childhood curriculum uses an avowedly holistic approach, i.e. it accords equal value to all aspects of the child’s physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and language development, with a strong commitment to literacy achievement. The holistic approach means that ECE teachers concentrate on providing socialization and emotional support in order to promote linguistic confidence and ability for all children, regardless of their language background. However, if the rationale for children’s attendance at ECE is that they are better prepared for the demands of primary school

education then that would mean that migrant children should be prepared for what is a predominantly English-medium environment.

Hamer and Adams (2003) point out that, children's literacy learning experiences in New Zealand should take place within the wider sociocultural framework and take note of influences from all aspects of life. They argue that literacy's prominence is justified by the role it plays in school success and other educational and societal outcomes. As the majority of New Zealand's education system and societal success markers require proficiency in English, it makes mastery of the dominant language a prerequisite. This emphasis begins in early childhood education and is continued thereafter. For example, in the case of children whose native language is not English, the focus in ESOL documentation in primary and secondary schooling is primarily on how to ensure that migrant or foreign language students do not fall behind their peers and are able to partake educationally. Efforts are made to encourage the bilingual development of Pasifika students, with learning materials provided and guidelines for teachers to co-construct learning that affirms Pasifika languages. The aim as set by the Ministry of Education (2015) is for students to integrate their language with English and curriculum learning.

1.4 ESOL practices

In New Zealand, it is implicitly understood that a native speaker speaks English, and whilst te reo Māori - the indigenous language - and sign language also have official language status, unlike English, these are not essential subjects at school. Migrants and refugees from non-English speaking countries, who gain entry under residence and humanitarian categories, are referred to as speakers of other languages, and programmes catering for the needs of learners are termed ESOL, English for Speakers of Other Languages. New Zealand social policy directives aim to facilitate participation in social, educational, and economic opportunities for immigrants who struggle with English. White, Watts, and Trlin (2002) recommend that New Zealand as the host

society support learning efforts to facilitate immigrants' acculturation to the New Zealand environment through active participation in society. The authors point to research findings that speaking the language increases the chances for employment, assists in becoming anchored, and contributes to a sense of well-being.

The need for language provisions and their significance in the settlement of immigrants has been investigated in studies, but only considers adult immigrants' experiences (White, Watts & Trlin, 2002). Government funding is available to support language learning through ESOL Home Tutor schemes, as well as ESOL institutions and groups and organisations such as Skill New Zealand, Work and Income New Zealand, the Ministry of Education, and the National ESOL Home Tutors Association. Here, too, provisions and insights are solely aimed at adult participants to facilitate their acculturation and social participation.

As far as official provisions for young children and students are concerned, ESOL begins in Year One of primary school, but only if students show lack of educational progress. In all other cases teachers are expected to provide teaching support and teach language forms and structures as part of overall literacy skills. The Bilingual Assessment Service for English Language Learners (ELL) establishes the needs of refugees, international students, and/or students from a non-English speaking background. The Ministry of Education determines funding and strategies for schools to support foundation literacy and learning. The New Zealand Curriculum provides the educational framework, and the Ministry measures how well curriculum standards are met. Teaching English to students who speak other languages is facilitated through ESOL teachers, RTLBs (Resource Teachers Learning and Behaviour), or alternatively, through paraprofessionals and bilingual teacher aides. As they are able to make links to cultural connections and model how to live one's cultural identity whilst incorporating the host language, their contribution goes beyond language assistance.

1.5 Te Kōhanga Reo

New Zealand has a distinctive perspective on first and second languages, with efforts being made to support te reo Māori, which means in this context the minority (albeit official) language. In the course of creating pathways of learning and preserving this indigenous language, valuable insights have been gained of how children can acquire another language as well as cultural values from earliest childhood. For example, the early childhood language nests, Kōhangas, have been instrumental in reviving interest and competencies in the Māori language, as these were the first coordinated response to stem the rapid decline of te reo Māori. Whereas in 1913 over 90% of Māori schoolchildren could speak in Māori, by 1975 less than 5% were able to speak the language (Calman, 2012).

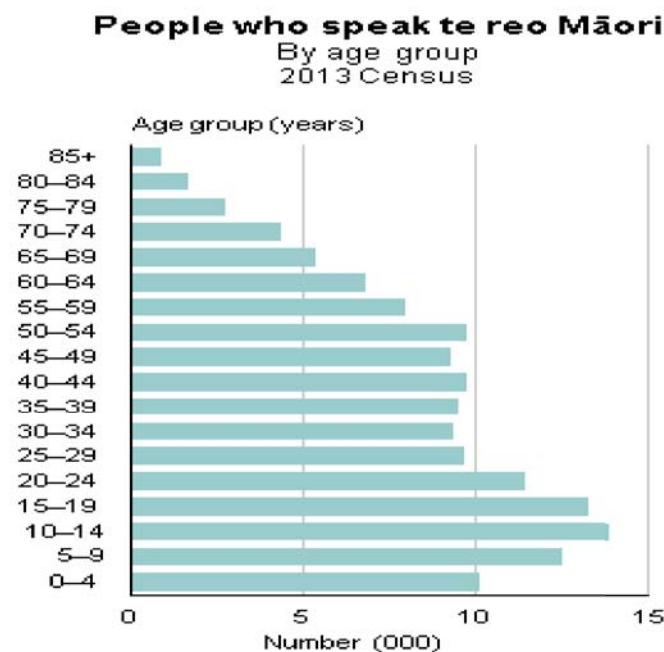
Te Kōhanga Reo is a Māori initiative brought into life by the Department of Māori Affairs and Māori elders in 1981 (Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust, 2015). Its purpose and philosophy is to maintain and strengthen Māori language by total immersion of children and the inclusion of parents and communities (Ministry of Education, 2015). Whānau (family) is the foundation of the movement and instrumental to its success. Te Kōhanga Reo is not just an early childhood service, but is very much concerned with the survival of te reo, the Māori language, and country-wide, 460 Kohanga, representing 5% of all children attending early childhood settings, offer courses and language assistance to the entire whānau (Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust, 2015). Children can be enrolled from infancy and are immersed in te reo and tikanga Māori (culture) until six years of age.

The number of children successfully acquiring te reo during the preschool years encouraged parents to establish Kura Kaupapa, total immersion primary and secondary schools that deliver the state curriculum in te reo. As at July 2015, 17,842 students were being educated in Māori-medium education, representing 2.3% of all NZ students (Ministry of Education, 2015), contributing significantly to reviving te reo

through a very active bilingualism. Notwithstanding that, there has been a decrease in the number of schools offering Māori language in English medium and immersion, and 2015 statistics show that 77.8% of the total school population were not enrolled in Māori education at all.

Most children attending Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa would, nevertheless, be ensconced in mainstream New Zealand culture outside school and will have been exposed to English language as a matter of growing up and appear to seamlessly adopt English as the majority language. According to Statistics NZ (2013), between 1996 and 2013, the proportion of Māori able to converse in te reo has decreased by 3.7%, indicating that despite efforts to boost the language, te reo is in decline and with this, so is an important aspect of New Zealand’s indigenous culture. As Table 1 illustrates, children and young people are most likely to speak the indigenous language but this is not consolidated in the middle age cohorts, dropping further away with the older generations.

Table 1: People Who Speak te reo Māori (Statistics NZ, 2013).



Source: Statistics New Zealand

Until WWII, te reo used to be the first language for the majority of Māori, but by the 1980s, only 20% of Māori could be considered native speakers (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2015). As is the case in many countries around the world where native languages disappear, well-intended parents often encourage the study of the dominant language primarily because it enables children to partake in educational opportunities which are so important for prospects in life. This has also been the finding of a language research project, in which May, Hill, and Tiakiwai (2006) report that students in Maori-medium immersion schools who are removed before they achieve academic literacy and sent to mainstream schools to learn in the English medium, are done a great disservice, as they may end up struggling in both languages. This happens because the Māori language is not consolidated at an advanced level yet and therefore they are not proficient language users. Then these students are expected to seamlessly switch to English but at that stage they experience a language delay. This means that students can be below an academic level in English as well.

Language studies have shown that it is possible for children to achieve high levels of competency in two or more languages given a favourable learning environment (Genesee, 2015). May, Hill, and Tiakiwai (2006) also conclude that partial immersion of less than 50% proves ineffective as a language learning method. Given the relative infancy of bilingual and immersion in New Zealand there is now a developing store of local practices that shows how cognitive processes relate to indigenous languages and which processes generate best results. Indications are that early immersion is most advantageous but it seems that the discussion about the merits of bilingualism in New Zealand has yet to be held. Traditionally learning a second language involved the standard teaching of vocabulary and grammar at secondary schools and as a chosen subject. It is an entirely different philosophical stance to advocate the importance of attaining academic literacy in both te reo Māori and English and to begin this process at early childhood level.

1.6 Pasifika Language Nests (Aogas)

Pasifika communities have also encountered struggles with the retention of their heritage languages and have established language nests similar to Kōhanga Reo, where Pacific languages and culture are modelled for children of preschool age. A number of Pasifika immigrant communities make efforts to provide language sessions for their children, where parents organize playgroups with the objective of providing young children with some heritage language experience outside their homes. The Ministry of Education states that Pacific ‘language nests’ have become an important part of the rich tapestry of early childhood centres in New Zealand (ECE educate, 2015). Language nests are an immersion-based approach in the early years sector, managed and run by people of Pacific descent. They reflect their community, may be underpinned by Christian faith, and range from bilingual to multilingual and multicultural, depending on the goals of the community (Education Review Office, 2007). Through these services communities attempt to ensure cultures and languages remain an active component in the social interaction of communities. As Table 2 shows, a number of Pasifika languages are represented in early childhood settings, with Tongan and Samoan languages receiving the highest level of language immersion (81-100% of teaching). However, the overwhelming majority of teaching for all Pasifika languages was at a level of under 12%, underscoring the struggle of maintaining heritage languages.

Table 2: Participation in Pacific Medium Education (Statistics New Zealand, 2015).

Language of teaching	Level of Pacific-medium education			Total enrolments	Total ECE services
	Under 12%	12-80%	81-100%		
Cook Islands Maori	1,271	427	25	1,723	45
Fijian	1,067	34	--	1,101	23
Niuean	687	123	59	869	20
Samoan	11,217	1,386	1,166	13,769	304
Tokelauan	441	145	22	608	15
Tongan	2,806	161	557	3,524	74
Other Pacific	224	--	--	224	7
Total Pacific	17,713	2,276	1,829	21,818	488

Source: Ministry of Education

As per the 2013 resident population count, 7.4% of the New Zealand population (295,941 people) identified with one or more Pacific ethnic groups, of whom 62.3% were New Zealand born. NZ Statistics (2013) also recorded more than 100,000 Pacific language speakers in New Zealand, but the communities' concern is that their first languages will disappear within the next two generations, as children adopt English as their first language at a young age. In a paper that examines the status of Tongan, Samoan, and Cook Island languages, McCaffery and McFall-McCaffery (n. d.) suggest that it is necessary to expand the role of these languages into education and the public domain to ensure the survival of these languages. They particularly comment on the Pacific communities' tendency to place high value on formal schooling in English because of its promise for upwards social mobility. McCaffery and McFall-McCaffery also draw attention to the colonialism aspect and argue that historically Pasifika languages were accorded little value and their use was actively discouraged at school. The high ranking of English ensured that it was increasingly used as the key mode of communication, even within island communities. Today, the combination of deficit construction that places less value on the heritage languages, as well as the lack of language provision exacerbates the dwindling use of some first languages.

The Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (2013) states that as part of the 2013 Innovative Approaches (Ministry of Education, 2013) to boost Pacific children's early childhood education participation, 86.8% of Pacific children attend early childhood education, with a government target of 98% by 2016. Great store is set by the benefits of attending early childhood facilities and government commitments have been made to set targets of increasing Pasifika teaching in ECE to over 50% of the time by 2016, meaning teaching content is not delivered exclusively in English (Ministry of Education, 2013). However, not all preschool children attend language nests, and of those who do only small numbers receive immersion education in their heritage language, mainly due to the low numbers of trained teachers who speak a Pacific language. In addition, there is little opportunity for children to speak Pacific languages once they attend school, which exacerbates the language shift of which the younger generation is most affected (Te Kete Ipurangi, 2015).

In 2008 there were 115 Pacific early childhood services, educating children in at least one Pacific language and culture (Statistics NZ, 2015). The services' philosophy of Aogaa is to strengthen the social and cultural bonds and with it collective group cohesion. As Pacific cultures impart knowledge orally, teaching and learning the Polynesian way represents an enculturation process that would be difficult to replace. Still, early childhood education is currently considered the preferred stepping stone to entering the school system, as preparation for future success in mainstream education (Ministry of Education, 2013). Government efforts to increase participation in early childhood education, combined with parental hopes to enable Pasifika children to achieve educationally in what is an English medium education system is likely to exacerbate the trend of language shift in young Pasifika people and may undermine efforts to preserve first languages.

The following research investigates the role of early childhood education and gains an insight through reports from practitioners across Wellington. Wellington was the selected site for this study as the ethnic composition of New Zealand's capital indicates the diversity early childhood settings cater for. Wellington has a relatively diverse population, as migrants settle predominantly in Auckland and then Wellington, as well as being one of the refugee settlement regions (Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, 2013/14). In 2013, the number of residents who moved from another country was 19,803, 10.4% of the Wellington population (Ministry of Education, 2016). In addition, there is a wide range of childcare facilities available in the Wellington area, making the capital a suitable location for conducting this research.²

² Indicative examples only: Kindergarten, Kohanga Reo, Pasefika services, Parent Cooperatives, Community Centres, Montessori, Steiner, private pre-schools and daycare centres, preschools affiliated with primary/secondary schools, specialised care services, Playcentres, In-home care providers.

1.7 Chapter Overview

Having situated the thesis and provided background information, Chapter Two presents a critical review of the literature on the subject matter and generates further context. It outlines relevant theories pertaining to language acquisition and child development to provide a framework for further discussion of current international and local language acquisition practices. Its purpose is to clarify patterns of linguistic hegemony and provide a sociological perspective of classroom practices.

Chapter Three describes the methodology employed in generating the data that allows for an insight into teachers' pedagogical practices. The parameters of the research, including the data generation and processing methods are explained and information regarding participants is provided. Supported by a conceptual framework, the methodology chapter also sets out the limitations of the research and how the decision to choose qualitative research was arrived at.

Chapter Four provides a data analysis that describes findings as to teachers' reported knowledge and practices and how this relates to second language acquisition in the classroom. It outlines teachers' perceptions of their actions and motivations and connects their understandings with their pedagogical strategies.

Chapter Five discusses the findings in relation to institutionalized monolingualism and offers recommendations for a different approach to language support in early childhood classrooms. In addition, it invites further research and suggests how this thesis is of assistance in discussing second language acquisition approaches in New Zealand early childhood.

Chapter Six summarizes the intent of the research and provides answers to the research question and its implications. It provides context to prior research and links linguistic debate and child development theories with sociological considerations.

1.8 Conclusion

New Zealand perspectives of preserving its own indigenous language, recognizing immigrant communities' first languages whilst providing opportunities to achieve success in the dominant language, frame the complexity of language issues. The decline of heritage languages and the weighting and social classification of what constitutes a majority or a minority language are determined by many factors and sets the course for children even prior to attending school. The desire by parents for their children to learn English so they can achieve in society or the wish of parents to preserve their heritage and carry it on through the next generation is understandable but difficult to reconcile with each other. Above all, the majority language, English, remains powerfully dominant in all aspects of society and therefore the multilingual challenges as well as opportunities arising in New Zealand's classrooms may not appear an overly pressing issue to a monoglot society.

Although New Zealand's education system rates early childhood education highly, mere placement in an educational facility is not the panacea to language issues. With an increasingly multicultural population New Zealand is already potentially becoming a multilingual society, but to date seems to perpetuate a monoglot pattern. This thesis shows how pedagogical practices in early childhood settings are subject to these patterns and potentially facilitate monolingualism. The following chapter will provide an insight into facets of second language acquisition and international research into classroom practices that could provide alternatives to the monolingual paradigm.

Chapter Two - Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review provides a framework for the research, collates information with regard to cognitive, structural, and philosophical debates surrounding second language acquisition, and positions my argument that young children's second language acquisition in New Zealand deserves more attention. International research into classroom practices to assist children in the acquisition of another language and their outcomes offers comparative insight into current educators' practices. Also examined are structural constraints such as meritocratic practices in the education sector and linguistic hegemony as this highlights how children are positioned in their roles as non-majority language speakers. Finally, this review investigates possible implications for entrenching monolingual practices.

The main themes of this literature review are the concepts of monolingualism, bilingualism, forms of language acquisition, as well as the theoretical framework for second language acquisition. Key theories regarding language acquisition and child development provide the context for further discussions that draw on existing knowledge pertaining to the New Zealand experience. With its own existing body of knowledge regarding immersion and sustaining heritage languages, New Zealand's education system is in a position to craft strategies to support teachers and build a multilinguistic approach that reflects an increasingly diverse society.

Current prevailing practices in the New Zealand early childhood education context revolve around English as the majority language, albeit with reference to other cultures, particularly te reo Māori. In specific heritage culture settings such as Kohanga reos and Aogas (Pasifika language nests), te reo Māori and Pacific languages are spoken to a varying degree. In the primary and secondary schooling sector, English is used predominantly, with provisions made for Māori-medium education in bilingual units. Pasifika education resources are available for teachers to implement alongside

the English language subjects, as well as other elective languages at secondary school level. Māori immersion education is available to primary and secondary students in Kura Kaupapa Māori, where biliteracy is the educational goal (Ministry of Education, 2015).

2.1.1 Monolingualism

Monolingualism does not necessarily mean that only one language is understood or practiced but dominant languages give the impression that no other languages are required for communication purposes. Ellis (2006, p.190) calls monolingualism a “linguistic ideology” and scrutinizes three perspectives often used in public debate, one is the view of monolingualism as the norm, second is as the absence of communication skills, often referred to by policy makers espousing language learning as intellectually, culturally, and economically enriching. The third representation is - controversially - to view monolingualism as pathological, and cites authors such as Skutnabb-Kangas (2000, cited in Ellis, 2006) who argues that monolingualism is a social construct designed to marginalise groups of people on a societal level.

Ellis (2006) is critical of the literature espousing that bilingualism offers advantages and that monolingualism is restrictive, and suggests that a more socially constructive path would be to consider monolingualism as a continuum instead. The range of a monolingual person could thus entail being able to say a greeting to having studied other languages but not being able to communicate in them. This range shows that monolingualism does not necessarily mean being entirely without knowledge of more than one code of communication, but could very well include passive knowledge of another language. It can even denote a monolingual society despite the presence of many languages, if the civic discourse and domestic routine is dominated by one language. For example, according to Statistics NZ (2013) 410,514 people in New Zealand are able to speak more than one language (see Table 3). However, English was spoken by 96.1% of people who stated at least one language, numbering nearly 4

million people. Although New Zealand is a multicultural society it presents itself as a monolingual country.

Table 3: Most Common Languages Spoken by Multilingual People (Statistics NZ, 2013).

Most common languages spoken 1) by multilingual people For Auckland, Wellington, and Canterbury regions, and New Zealand 2013 Census								
Rank	Auckland region		Wellington region		Canterbury region		New Zealand	
	Language spoken	Number	Language spoken	Number	Language spoken	Number	Language spoken	Number
1	English	372,615	English	86,757	English	59,310	English	730,743
2	Samoan	51,336	Māori	15,000	Māori	8,277	Māori	139,959
3	Hindi	47,157	Samoan	13,380	French	6,117	Samoan	76,953
4	Northern Chinese 2)	32,649	French	8,886	German	4,731	Hindi	63,342
5	Māori	29,253	German	5,928	Samoan	4,059	French	48,777
6	Yue 3)	25,044	Hindi	5,067	Northern Chinese	3,714	Northern Chinese	44,967
7	Tongan	23,088	Yue	4,137	Dutch	3,477	Yue	36,516
1) Includes all people who stated each language spoken, whether as their only language or as one of several languages. Where a person reported more than one language spoken, they were counted in each applicable group. 2) Includes Mandarin. 3) Includes Cantonese								

Source: Statistics New Zealand

Monolingualism can be used as a defining feature for a nation-state, in which case one language is accorded unifying qualities, or is wielded as an exclusionary tool. For example, although Great Britain, like many other societies all over the world, is increasingly diverse and multicultural, as well as multilingual, a dominant ideology sets a monoglot standard (Blackledge, 2000). The civic discourse, which includes the normative languages of everyday commerce, media, and schooling, as well as institutional communications of central and local governments, excludes those who are unable or unwilling to speak the dominant language. The dominant language, in this case English, is used for social positioning and leaves minorities struggling against the prevailing discourse of power.

In the United States, too, English has the status of undisputed *lingua franca* (official language), despite a multicultural and multilingual population, illustrating how monolingualism is less to do with describing linguistic abilities but rather with political power structures. Diaz Soto and Kharem (2006) decry the dominant use of English in the American education sector and perceive language dominance as a form of colonialism, with children relinquishing their cultures and identities to assume the more 'prestigious' identity.

Language ideology serves to entrench linguistic hegemony in societies by setting the majority language as the norm. For example, official documentation, signage and media tend to be in the majority language. Karrebaek (2013) describes how dominance is created and perpetuated despite diverse classroom environments. It is in classrooms and through education policies and strategies that socialization into acceptance of a dominant language is established. Karrebaek (2013) points out schools' role as participants in this socialization and the way children's existing repertoire and linguistic skills are undervalued and discouraged. This facilitates a system of language hierarchies in societies, meaning that children who already speak one language are given to understand that this skill is meaningless in their learning environment, maybe even within their social environment outside home. They may be told outright or through assessment that they fail society's standard criteria. To be granted acceptance it may be necessary to discard that which is useless and adopt different cultural markers, in this case the 'better', the prestige language. This is particularly insidious as it requires the active participation and belief in this hierarchy. It can even lead to instances where migrants who are already learning a second language, are required to take up English as a 'second language' at school, because English is a valuable foreign language that carries prestige, whereas a minority language would be disregarded as having low value.

As Gramsci (1971, cited in Karrebaek, 2013) claimed, true hegemony requires the consent of the governed. The very desire to be accepted and to prosper in a society may prompt immigrants to consider their own language a low priority and place more value on learning the majority language rather than maintaining their own. It also speaks to the structural constraints of a meritocratic education system, of which early childhood education is a part. If success is equated with speaking the majority language then it follows that not being able to speak it renders someone a failure. As McLennan, Ryan, and Spoonley (2004) explain, meritocracy refers to the belief that social rewards are allocated on the basis of merit and not by pre-determined social categories. Status is thus achieved through language and it could be argued that language functions as a gatekeeper. This is certainly not the stated purpose of education, but forms part of the hidden curriculum that includes significant aspects of hegemonic learning that are not part of the official curriculum (Illich, 1971). Illich argued that the passive consumption of the school routines and assessments and organisation of learning teaches students to adopt the prevailing social order. The monolingual structures of the education system positions ESOL students in their roles, maintaining a largely uncontested hierarchy.

2.1.2 Bilingualism and Multilingualism

Dual, or indeed, plural language acquisition, as is the case in ESOL and monolingualism, is shaped by context, which has the potential to both complicate and enrich societal processes. Language experiences may differ vastly and language development is affected by many variables, for example, whether language is learnt from monolingual speakers and who speaks it, e.g. parents or peers, community influence and socio-economic circumstances, as well as the characteristics of the child and the language learnt (Mueller-Gathercole, 2014). Children acquiring two languages simultaneously may learn through the one parent / one language pattern, and may grow up in a multilingual environment to begin with. For example, Switzerland has several official national languages and it is not unusual to speak more than one language. Some

children may grow up bilingually; others are exposed to a second language once they enter the school system.

In a highly globalised and mobile world that puts a premium on ease of communication and transferability, bilingualism or multilingualism can offer social, economic, and educational benefits. For example, the Council of Europe (2014) encourages linguistic diversity and even plurilingualism as a means for respectful dialogue in the 21st century. The Council's Convention to promote reciprocal teaching and learning of European Community member states' languages aims to consolidate democratic citizenship and social cohesion, in doing so going beyond economic considerations. The Council's ideal of practiced plurilingualism acknowledges that individuals possess a dynamic and lifelong ability to enrich their linguistic repertoire and fosters plurilingualism to engender cultural respect and to counter monolingualism.

An example for official bilingualism is Canada, where 17.5% of the population speak two national languages, English and French (Statistics Canada, 2015). According to the 2011 census, more than 200 languages were reported as mother tongue, with 20% of the population speaking a language other than English or French in the home. In addition, 60 aboriginal languages are spoken amongst Canada's indigenous peoples. Overall though, the vast majority of citizens are reportedly monolingual (22.5m citizens out of a population of 33 million). Despite an official commitment to bilingualism, Canada has thus one majority language, English, which is also the one that is adopted as second language by most immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2015). It can be argued therefore that this relegates aboriginal and minority languages to the sidelines.

To date the cognitive consequences of bilingualism have generally been the focus of research (Barac, Bialystok, Castro and Sanchez, 2014). The concern used to be that the second language would lead to mental overload and confusion in the child, but current beliefs are that bilingualism has cognitive benefits. Still, it has not been determined yet

which specific areas are experiencing an advantage (Barac et al, 2014). Bialystok (1991) describes how research has moved on from considering bilingualism a disorder and asserts that there are no universal advantages for children arising out of bilingualism - but neither are there disadvantages. In Bialystok's (1991) view the processing systems for two linguistic systems used are necessarily different from monolingual children and they may have advanced awareness, due to the fact of their different social backgrounds, which exposes them to two different languages and cultures.

Genesee (2015) argues that the neurocognitive mechanisms underpinning language acquisition make learning two languages a natural process for children but it does depend on the quality, quantity, and consistency of the language input. However, he regards the practice of comparing language proficiency between monolingual and bilingual children as counterproductive because the language experiences and contexts are necessarily different from each other, resulting in logical differences that have no bearing on intelligence or capabilities.

Another factor that is commonly underestimated in evaluating children, who speak a minority language at home and are learning a majority language at school, is that learning a language takes a long time and requires long-term commitment. Language can't be seen in isolation; the child's environment and background necessarily have implications for teaching practitioners. Children who speak two or more languages grow up in a culturally diverse environment and already have a vast store of knowledge. This store is a work in progress, though, and highly individualistic. Drury (2013) advocates a socio-cultural perspective on young children's learning for this reason, as the processes of language learning, social, and cultural interaction are interlinked with socialization and enculturation.

Sociocultural influence on educational success is much debated in New Zealand, resulting in efforts to identify contributing factors for underachievement and

disadvantage within the education system. A report on community and family influences on children's achievement identifies specific indicators that can lead to children being placed at a disadvantage (Biddulph, Biddulph & Biddulph, 2003). It states family attributes such as ethnicity, culture, and home language are main factors, which tend to be confounded by low socio-economic status (SES). For example, research data shows that low SES children have noticeably lower achievement than middle or high SES children. Parental knowledge, particularly maternal education is but one factor influencing educational outcomes, as are family adversity, mobility, and health. Low SES children are more likely to experience chronic health problems, which can exacerbate educational disadvantages.

Children who do not speak English tend to also encounter low expectations, as well as perceptions of deficit and incompetence that require remedial intervention. For example, in a study on socio-economic status and reading input in either ethnic and/or host country language, it was established that the mother's language use, quality of reading input, and choice of language all had a bearing on host language development (Prevo et al, 2013). However, the focus was entirely on the detrimental effect of the first language input, not on the fact that children were in the process of building up two language stores. New Zealand studies also show that often teachers' low expectations of children from diverse backgrounds hinder educational progress (Biddulph et al, 2003).

2.1.3 Additive and Subtractive Language Acquisition

Most language related research is based on the understanding that the process of language acquisition is nuanced and complex and that it cannot simply be reduced to monolithic concepts such as monolingualism versus bilingualism or multilingualism (Mueller-Gathercole, 2015). In many countries efforts are made to preserve immigrants' own languages and to support language education on many levels, often commencing with preschool education. In this way, first languages are utilized as a

valuable asset, a resource with status in the community. This is referred to as additive language acquisition, where another language is added without replacing the mother tongue. A bilingual preschool education model in Israel described by Schwartz and Shaul (2013) uses additive language acquisition, where Hebrew is taught, whilst actively teaching families' first language, Russian, as well. The programme accentuates the role of bilingual teachers and their value, yet highlights the many complicating factors arising out of family circumstances, parental education and aspirations. They all play a significant role in children growing up using more than one language.

An alternative form to the remedial or segregation language teaching model is described by de Jong and Howard (2009), who suggest Two-Way-Immersion as an additive language acquisition. In this American immersion teaching model, where both majority and minority language users learn each other's language, a language is added instead of replaced. The results of this programme, which has been running in the USA since the 1960s, show, that the programme utilizes the scaffolding role of native speakers and performs better or at least equal to conventional programs. However, here, too, there is a tendency for minority language speakers to shift to English, i.e. the dominant language, particularly outside school.

Subtractive language acquisition means the loss of one language in the process of acquiring another. Minority language speakers are generally expected to acquire the majority language. Particularly when migrant children enter the school system, they are faced with cultural and educational expectations that place a premium on majority language proficiency. However, this means that minority speakers' first language is devalued and more often than not discarded in the process. Heritage language maintenance may protect against subtractive bilingualism, but this requires a minimum level of first language proficiency to be in place already and that subsequent instruction take place in an immersion system (Lois and Taylor, 2001).

2.1.4 Language Shift

A language shift describes the atrophy of one language whilst replacing it with another, typically losing one's heritage language. Young children entering majority language preschools speaking their own first language are encouraged to learn another language before their own is firmly established. For example, Pasifika children attending New Zealand schools are observed to become engaged with this acquisition process without even being taught (Taumoefolau, Starks, Bell & Davis, 2004). As English language increasingly dominates a wide range of social contexts, the immersion process through peer interaction is a powerful motivator. This shift may not even be wholly intended but as English proficiency is the success indicator, this shift becomes the desired outcome. Language acquisition research shows that the age of the learner in this process is relevant, for example, if a child is very young and from a minority language background, and language and literacy are not well established it may lead to the loss of the first language and uptake of the second. In the Pasifika context it was considered vitally important by immigrants to speak English to be able to succeed in New Zealand society, and the encouragement for English proficiency hastened the loss of Pasifika languages, particularly in the younger and New Zealand-born generations (Ministry of Education, 2015).

2.1.5 Summary

Outlining the main concepts of monolingualism and bilingualism has shown the complexity of the language acquisition process, and the variations of how languages are adopted and others relegated to insignificance suggest a hierarchy. Language discourse is a hegemonic manifestation of power, which can be observed in the struggle to protect native languages against dominant languages. Aboriginal languages are most threatened by the subtractive language acquisition model and it is often through education, along with broader social contexts, where heritage languages are replaced most effectively. The very desire to become an integral and successful part of the dominant societal structures leads to the erosion of minority languages and to the perception that these are of lesser value. In the early childhood education context

studied it becomes apparent how routine practices arise from an English language habitus that may accord other languages a niche or novelty status, but assumes dominance as the language of communication for all.

An additive pattern may enhance proficiency in the first language, but as children acquire the dominant language there is a disruption to the native language development. Some research suggests (Genesee, 2015) that it is possible for young children to learn two languages simultaneously given favourable circumstances, as their neurocognitive mechanisms possess the capacity to do so. In contrast, other studies strongly recommend (Louis and Taylor, 2001) that a majority language only be introduced once a certain threshold of proficiency in the native language is achieved to avoid subtractive bilingualism and prevent a language shift. This study poses the question of what role the early childhood sector plays in the process of language shift and subsequent institutionalization of the majority language and whether teachers' actions and knowledge have any bearing on the outcomes.

2.2 Theoretical considerations of children's second language acquisition

In the following language acquisition theories in general as well as second language acquisition practices are explained. Key language acquisition theories position much of current practices and are relevant to this discussion. In addition, sociocultural and bioecological considerations are discussed within the context of pedagogical strategies that are subject to this study.

2.2.1 First language acquisition theories

Linguistic approaches to language acquisition generally invoke classical theorist positions, such as the behaviourist theories of Skinner (1957) and the nativist principles of Chomsky (1976). Behaviourist theory and social cognitive theory consider reinforcement and adult corrective feedback as the key factors in a child's language development. The child responds and adapts to the environment and social surroundings and receives stimuli that in turn encourage further utterances. On average, children begin to speak around 12 months of age, toddlers between 12 and 26 months begin to combine words, and by age 6, children may have a vocabulary of about 10,000 words and are able to converse (Berk, 2002). The behaviourist perspective is that as babies begin to vocalize, parents reinforce this by smiling, hugging, imitating, or other responses that results in early language development. However, this is criticized by nativists as insufficient explanation for children's abilities to form complex constructions or using language they have not been explicitly taught.

Chomsky's (1976, p.39) approach is founded on the principle of an innate learning mechanism, which he termed "language acquisition device", and this is still drawn on in debates concerning first language acquisition. Chomsky's central claim is that language is learnt by exposure, not through teaching, as humans are endowed with a system of intellectual organization, which grows with maturity. Thus, language is merely filling in details within our innate structures, as the system operates independently from specifically learnt knowledge that may require talent or labour.

This system is also continuously updated and upgraded, and subject to new input or experimentation. Chomsky (1976, p.144) is also specific about the difference between “cognizing” a language and “knowing” something, and his concept of “universal grammar” proposes that children are born with an innate device for language, that allows them to absorb language by instinctively cognizing linguistic rules, principles, and parameters. This is in contrast to “knowing” expressions and rules that have been consciously learnt. Some aspects of the principles of first language acquisition suggest that they may be transferable to second language acquisition, however, there are no current definitive theories to draw on.

2.2.2 Second language acquisition theories

According to Krashen (1981, p.37), the “good language learner” is an acquirer, which encapsulates his argument that language is absorbed as a way of communicating, as opposed to conscious learning via memorizing grammatical rules. He therefore argues that acquisition of a second language is akin to how young children absorb their first language. He argues that the way young children develop their first speech represents an entirely natural process and is solely for the purpose of conveying meaningful messages, i.e. speakers are not concerned with the form, only with conveying and understanding. In first and in second language acquisition children may use whole routine phrases and patterns without fully comprehending what they are saying because of the conversational demands, which is referred to as ‘gestalt mode’. Krashen’s acquisition / learner distinction hypothesis states that this process is subconscious and second language learners are not aware of using rules but have a feeling for what sounds right or wrong. This is distinct from learning a language by ‘knowing’ grammar and both adults and children are capable of acquiring language this way.

Krashen’s hypotheses are widely discussed in the linguistic field, for example, input hypothesis states that the child relies primarily on acquisition and therefore having

access to rich intake (input) is sufficient. Here Krashen refers to the meaningful language that is understood, plus the added information that is slightly above the current level of competence, which requires language students to draw on context and their understanding of the world. This is referred to as (i +1), and leads to Krashen's claim that merely being a native speaker does not qualify someone as a language teacher, and mechanical drill produces no useful outcomes, either. In addition, he recommends intake should be supplied by teachers through meaningful activities and interaction with fellow students. Furthermore, contextualisation of structure in language acquisition aids comprehension and communication, and intake is encouraged through engaging in conversations. In informal environments children tend to have an advantage over adults as they tend to receive more unstructured and 'real' intake.

Krashen's natural order hypothesis stipulates that there is a predictable order to grammar structure and that there are similarities between first and second languages. This means that the first language plays a role in second language acquisition, and Krashen (1982) established what is called 'interference' by the first language is merely the language learner falling back on prior knowledge. Therefore what is perceived as error is actually the use of the first language as a substitute, i.e. the learner fills gaps in the target language. The monitor hypothesis argues that two separate processes are at work in the adult language learner and are used in specific ways. Conscious language learning is assisted by error correcting and rule practice, with self-assessment and self-correcting by the learner operating as a monitor. Krashen argued that both attitude and aptitude play a role in adult second language learning whereas age is not a factor in second language acquisition and proficiency; it is the quantity of comprehensive input that is the decisive point.

Aside from biological considerations and language development theories there are also pertinent sociocultural and bioecological considerations that form part of this study's

theoretical framework. The following section examines children's language development in light of these environmental influences.

2.2.3 Sociocultural and bioecological considerations

Vygotsky's (1962) constructivist theory explains knowledge development as a method of participation in problem-solving and critical thinking within social interaction, and language assumes a central aspect of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of cognitive development. It is not only a means for social interaction and culture transmission, it also regulates thinking. For example, knowledge and skills increase when learning is encouraged by someone who is more knowledgeable and assists the child to grasp a new concept that is within reach - referred to as the zone of proximal development. Thus learning is achieved within a social context and can be continued as the child moves on to the next level of competency.

In the language context the zone of proximal development principle applies in the same manner. Children acquire language by practising it and by being supported in a social environment and as parents adapt their language to fit the ability of the child they also prepare the way for the next step, providing the linguistic scaffolding for the child's further development. By the time children enter school they generally have a command of their first language, but have also learnt about their culture through social interaction. According to Vygotsky's theory, language is central to children's development and becomes the basis of the development of consciousness. This learning process is aided by competencies being challenged and assistance being gradually withdrawn to allow children to grow as learners. Vygotsky viewed cognitive development as a socially mediated process and his theory has found much traction in early childhood education environments.

Smith (2004) describes how children are embedded in society, where they can absorb and develop language and cultural understanding of that society and how language

provides access to a culture. It was Vygotsky's view that language is both empowering and liberating because it offers a level of control over action and although his theory relates to a child's first language, aspects of it could be relevant to second language acquisition as well.

The psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner contributed to the understanding of child development by way of his ecological systems theory, in which he considers the child to be at the centre of a complex system of relationships. Bronfenbrenner (1979) conceptualized multiple levels, whereby a series of interconnected structures surround the child and represent life influences. The structures extend beyond the home, school, the neighbourhood and wider society and the child's country, and build the child's microsystem, the mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. These structures are also ever-changing, as the environment is not static, and external influences have effects on children, parents, and caregivers. Bronfenbrenner's view is that the child should not be the sole focus of attention and eclipse the natural context and relationships, as these play significant roles. In particular, interpersonal relationships and reciprocity have an impact on children's opportunity to control situations and subsequently on their developing agency. Furthermore, those levels of the environment that do not contain children still influence their development, for example, jobs, working conditions, beliefs, values, accepted practices, as well as laws (Smith, 2004).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) sees the child as active and creative in the social context, and as the child is influenced by context, so are other contexts influenced and shaped by the child in return. Nixon and Gould (1999) recommend practitioners look at these interactions in their work with children and to develop strong two-way communication pathways with parents and caregivers. Assessing the child's development means being inclusive of the child's own routines and environments and to acknowledge its impact. My review of literature concerning language acquisition and second language acquisition, along with minority and majority languages and the influence of prestige

languages, acknowledges this link between children's development and environmental forces. For example, according to Bronfenbrenner's theory (1979), parents' relationships (microsystem) can be supportive or negative, which is likely to have a direct influence on the child's physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and language development. If a child's immediate carers' disposition results in a dysfunctional microsystem then this can well result in impaired development for the child. It is also significantly influential whether a new school and neighbourhood (mesosystem) means a well-resourced educational pathway or learning in a sub-optimal environment. Living circumstances can range from privilege to poverty, making a child's mesosystem extremely important. As has been pointed out previously, there is a connection between lower socio-economic status and children's educational outcomes and the disadvantages experienced particularly by migrant, Māori, and Pacific Island children in New Zealand. In this instance the exosystem of a wealthy country such as New Zealand is challenged to resolve issues that may arise from health, education, poverty, or language issues within children's microsystem.

The structures representing and forming a child's life circumstances are intertwined and can be very complex, and are above all dependent on family dynamics and their life. For example, a child's migrant background can mean they have highly qualified parents who choose to move to another country for economic or professional reasons (exosystem). This would indicate a child's relatively prosperous upbringing and opportunities, maybe even language experiences. This would be in contrast to situations that refugees experience, whereby they may be escaping traumatic events (macrosystem). As Bronfenbrenner (1979, p.47) states, there is both interdependence and plasticity across the systems, and systems can either enhance or inhibit the processes of "making humans being human". It can be assumed that societal structures, which include education systems, and that are rigidly monolingual and unresponsive to the individualistic nature of language acquisition hamper any real understanding and progress in this area.

2.3 Current classroom practices and findings on second language acquisition

Many countries have seen a rapid growth in heterogeneous populations, leading to responsive actions in early care and education programs to ensure school readiness specifically in children with minority language backgrounds. The following review of international literature will extract information about practices on the basis of how useful they prove to children and teachers in second language acquisition. It is of no consequence what languages are spoken, as the pattern of minority language in the midst of a majority language follows similar pathways, and there don't seem to be any guidelines for ECE teachers. As there has not been wide research carried out in the field of second language acquisition relevant to preschool children, there is not much conclusive information for teachers to draw on. However, there are a number of recurring themes that suggest certain factors may play a significant role.

2.3.1 The importance of social inclusion

According to the 2013 US Census Bureau report on language use in the USA, 21% of the population spoke a language other than English in the home. Out of 381 languages spoken, Spanish formed the largest group, the focus of much discussion, particularly in educational fields. Educational programs such as *Head Start* have been designed with the aim to promote English language skills and improve educational outcomes in minority language children. However, as Wong Fillmore points out (1991), the perception that bilingualism was detrimental to results led to bilingual methods being increasingly abandoned, which had dire consequences for migrant children's first languages. Here policies produced assimilative forces as young children's desire to become part of the majority social group and to belong drives their uptake of the majority language. The resulting language shift to date has led to situations where children have difficulty communicating with older family members who do not speak English. In addition, proficiency levels in the second language are not high enough to allow for educational success (Wong Fillmore, 1991).

More current efforts show a willingness to include children's first language in the classroom and have shown to have some positive effect (Burchinal, Field, Lopez, Howes, and Pianta, 2012). The recognition that isolation due to language barriers hinders learning in all areas has led to programme developers using a wider array of teaching tools. For example, Burchinal et al (2012) establish links between Spanish instruction, individualized attention, closer relationships and enhanced academic skills. Positive relationships engender a social context for children where learning is empowered, but emotional aspects surrounding the acquisition of a second language as a child are largely ignored (Gillanders, 2007). Positive relationships engender a social context for a child that makes it possible for them to learn. Gillander's sociocultural perspective considers children's social status as it changes with increasing social ability and she suggests enhanced interaction and social skill could assist in overcoming language barriers.

Drawing on theories by Piaget, Vygotsky, and Krashen to investigate methods of teaching English as a second language, Szecsi, Giambo and Manning (2012) also make a connection between emotional factors and language acquisition. They propose combining theory, research, and best practice to produce effective teaching practices and suggest Piaget's stages of development, Vygotsky's concept of zone of proximal development, and Krashen's second language acquisition theory, as well as their pragmatic application. This would be an alternative to current practices, which generally include submersion, and occasionally bilingual or immersion instruction. As a result, general education teachers are left to devise their own teaching strategies, which may or may not have beneficial outcomes.

In a quasi-experimental intervention study conducted in the UK, Dockrell, Stuart and King (2010) espouse the importance of oral language development for future educational achievement and point to the policy changes made to take the growing number of English Language Learners (ELLs) in the UK into account. Here, too, the lack of knowledge of how early childhood education can improve language skills is stated,

as well as the general lack of curriculum guidance for teachers to address the issue in their classrooms. Dockrell et al. (2010) point out that preschools are well placed to address language learning needs early, but practitioners do not seem to be able to follow that through due to ineffective strategies. The intervention strategy, using literacy tools that targeted language and cognitive skills, showed some promising results and Dockrell et al. (2010) argue that children with language needs require careful support by knowledgeable teachers, making a link to instructional quality of strategies used, but also the importance of relationship-building with peers. This seems to echo American findings, with teachers playing a pivotal role in creating conducive learning environments that also involved social inclusion.

2.3.2 The importance of knowledge of cognitive processes and pedagogy

The many variations of linguistic abilities illustrate the complexity of language learning as opposed to speech formation (Beller, 2008). As well, there is a difference between elective bilingualism and circumstantial bilingualism, where in the latter case migrant children learn a minority language of low social recognition at home and the host country's majority language is learnt as a second language at school. In the case of elective bilingualism it may involve a child from a well-resourced majority language background who opts to learn an additional 'prestige' language that would be of benefit for future prospects. The contrasting social backgrounds imply different socio-economic status and also very different language development aspects that shows that theories of acquisitions cannot be simply transferred (Beller, 2008).

The lack of a cohesive theory of second language acquisition makes it difficult to explain processes about the phenomenon of bilingualism in children. An additional complicating factor is that, if teachers are monolingual, they develop strategies based on their assumptions and personal experience, which could result in a misplaced lack of stimulation or perceptions of inability on the part of the children (Beller, 2008). In her advocacy for prioritising the development of working models of stimulating

environments and the importance of the socialisation process, Beller is in agreement with other researchers who use a sociocultural perspective to consider approaches that are appropriate for all children's language development, and is adamant about the need for recognizing a child's first language as added value, not as a deficit.

Whilst sociocultural practice may generally acknowledge the value of a home language, this may not necessarily be reflected in classroom practice. Cabezas and Rouse (2014) describe the effect of teachers' understandings and beliefs on their strategies for English language learners in early childhood and conclude that a lack of knowledge about the cognitive processes and pedagogy hampers the development of effective programmes. The results point to a need for expanding on multiculturalism and specialist pedagogies in teacher training to assist teachers in forming understandings based on theoretical knowledge and literature. If it is indeed teachers' beliefs that are most influential in how English as a second language is taught, then it is of vital importance that practitioners operate from a sound knowledge base (Cabezas and Rouse, 2014).

In the New Zealand context, a survey of monolingual, bilingual and multilingual student teachers found that they based their knowledge on language acquisition theories learnt in class and personal learning experiences, whereas monolingual teachers based practices on theories only (Schofield, 2007). Bilingual and multilingual teachers also put more importance on emotional security and parent-teacher relationships than monolingual students, and in Schofield's view, it is important for teachers to combine theory and practice in linguistically diverse preschool environments. Bilingual and multilingual student teachers seemed to have a natural advantage as they were able to reflect on their personal language learning efforts. The insights gained in this study were not replicated in my research, with the main difference being that most teaching practitioners were not able to draw on knowledge of language acquisition theory to aid their practice. This was also the case in the bilingual participants.

A different approach is represented in an action research project conducted in a New Zealand multicultural kindergarten where the focus was on first language maintenance. Cullen et al. (2007) engaged in a programme based on the sociocultural foundation of early childhood education in New Zealand, using cultural tools and co-construction strategies to assist and broaden children's learning. This approach is based on the 'community of learners' concept, which means it doesn't see the child in isolation but makes a point of including families and their knowledge. The teaching strategies in this case are imbued by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, and based on the principle that the child's first language is of value. Consequently, knowledge of cognitive processes and pedagogical understanding were used effectively and the first language of children considered a valuable resource.

2.3.3 The importance of teachers

There have been few studies to date in New Zealand involving three-to-five-year olds that seek to ascertain how children who learn English as a second language fare in early childhood. However, there is a growing knowledge base regarding the interplay of first and second languages through te reo Māori immersion and bilingual teaching experiences. For example, in a Ministry of Education research project (May, Hill, and Tiakiwai, 2006) examining language acquisition, it has been argued that it is crucial that teachers are fluent speakers in both languages, but also skilled in instruction, as merely speaking a language does not suffice. In reviews of kura kaupapa Maori (immersion schools) the Education Review Office (2000) found that programme planning skills were essential for teachers so they could deliver effective learning programmes. Teachers needed to be aware of language learning factors such as a time delay in learning the second, i.e. instructional language, and one of the key good practice indicators was that literacy skills in both languages were taught. These findings emphasise how teaching a language requires specific skills and the awareness of processes that take place for the learner and the assistance required.

Schofield (2011) investigated the teacher and peer support of lone speakers of home languages other than English in three New Zealand English-medium early childhood settings, and made recommendations on how to improve English vocabulary intake. Results show that temporal environments, i.e. the teachers' pedagogical approach, the settings' timetables and organisation of routines, as well as types of activities, have an influence on centres' interpersonal environments, which in turn influences how much time teachers can spend with children. Schofield discusses the critical role of the adult in a child's first and second language acquisition and believes it is essential that a reciprocal relationship exist between children and teachers, in line with social interactionist theory. In addition, the quality and frequency (particularly in terms of consistent engagement) of interactions have a definite impact on vocabulary development and Schofield (2011) is convinced that shared thinking, co-construction, and scaffolding are teaching strategies that are highly influential on the language acquisition process.

In a further New Zealand case study, learning barriers for non-English speaking children were identified as running counter to the assumed holistic development approach of ECE. Guo's case study established that the key barrier was the child's perceived incompetence in English, as it led to social isolation and restriction. As was the case in Schofield's (2011) investigation, Guo (2005) shows that teachers proved crucial in overcoming these restrictions and that children cannot overcome barriers by themselves. Teacher intervention and parent involvement are significant factors in the participation of the child so that they can develop effective learning behaviour. Guo points out that lack of ability to interact leads to even less verbal interaction, compounding the problem. It is notable that Guo's study considers the child's inability to speak English as "incompetence", although it is stated that the child is fluent in Mandarin, which may indicate that there could be room for discussion on how children's existing abilities are not taken into consideration by educators and researchers. It speaks to the deficit model of thinking applied in teaching situations,

where learners are positioned as lacking in ability. This is in contrast to the insights gained in the following description, where children's 'other' language knowledge was acknowledged.

In a small study that included bilingual and trilingual early childhood student teachers, Schofield (2007) established that students drew on theories and practical experiences in their learning, but also from personal learning experiences. Having gone through language learning experiences themselves, they were able to relate to children who came from diverse backgrounds. Schofield suggests that it would be useful, particularly for monolingual student teachers, to undergo field practice and experience language teaching as part of their training, as educators' own teaching styles develop over time and incorporate practical knowledge. Given the increasing diversity in classrooms she also recommends the inclusion of current theories of language learning in teacher training content.

2.4 Conclusion

The review of literature points to a need for an increased understanding about the nature of second language acquisition during teacher training because in the absence of curriculum guidance, teachers are ill-equipped to manage such a complex phenomenon. Whilst practitioners worldwide differ in their approaches, there seems to be a common theme of acknowledging the importance of emotional security and social inclusion for the child to be able to learn and the teachers' crucial input in providing conducive learning assistance. In addition, there is a lack of acknowledgment of first language competencies and how these can be deployed in the acquisition of a second language. This review suggests that children are not served well by mere placement in an early childhood facility and much more thought needs to be given to their ability to speak their first language.

New Zealand's own localized knowledge of heritage language, language shift, and second language acquisition could offer specialized insight. In the absence of explicit requirements to preserving first languages and providing effective language assistance for children from a non-English speaking background, and directions in how to accomplish this task, teachers will continue to devise their own individual strategies, but may inadvertently contribute to subtractive bilingualism and language shift. This will ultimately strengthen the monolingual status quo and runs counter to the commitment stated in the national curriculum to respect and nurture first languages.

In the following chapters I research teachers' knowledge regarding second language acquisition in early childhood and how they support children in their classrooms. Enquiries into the different philosophies and perspectives will show how they provide for ESOL speakers and whether early childhood practices facilitate monolingual structures of society. The aim of this study is to show a link between teachers' knowledge base and their decision-making process and reported efficacy of language support strategies and the following chapter will outline the methodology used to ascertain information of specific pedagogical strategies ECE teachers select.

Chapter Three - Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this research is to explore the relationship between early childhood teachers' knowledge of second language acquisition and the support they provide for children who speak English as a second language. To date New Zealand research regarding second language in early childhood education is very limited and tends to focus on children's expressive language, whereas this study examines teachers' insights and motivations. This chapter provides a conceptual framework for the methodology, with an epistemology that presents how I understand knowledge derived from this particular study.

The research question asks what ECE teachers base their pedagogical strategies on, and specifically how their approach to teaching children from an ESOL background is influenced by centres' policies and philosophies and/or professional knowledge and experience. As teaching practice is an inherently personal and nuanced undertaking, face-to-face communication was deemed to be the most effective means of eliciting detailed information. Prompting respondents to examine their practices and elaborate on philosophical understandings was thought to require an in-depth and custom-built approach, in this case individual and group interviews. The aim was to achieve a balance between establishing a rapport with the participants and recording impartial accounts whilst also recognizing my own subjectivity as a practicing early childhood teacher.

The research method is also based on comparative reflections of my own practice as a Montessori early childhood teacher. In fact, it had been my own teaching experience that gave rise to the question how ECE teachers responded to children in their settings who spoke a language other than English. In my efforts to provide young children with emotional and learning support I often felt stymied by lack of resources and guidance and gained the impression that it was left to individual teachers' initiatives and

creativity to provide answers. My personal history permeates this research, drawing on my own experiences with subtractive bilingualism as a child and learning English as a second, 'prestige', language at school, then later as an immigrant to New Zealand. Furthermore, my background as an early childhood teacher forms part of the framework for the methodology chosen for this research, as my professional training, personal beliefs, and practical experience have shaped my understanding as teacher and researcher.

The following explains the methodology and how it served the purpose of the research, and provides information pertaining to the study design, research parameters, data generation, and the study's limitations. The participants and their selection process are described, along with centre and individual profiles, as well as the rationale for choosing qualitative research in the form of focus groups and interviews. The data generation process is also outlined to enhance subsequent understanding of the participants' contributions.

3.2 Participants

The motivation for selecting early childhood practitioners was to draw on both practical and personal experience of those who implement the curriculum as they are well-positioned to form opinions on the efficacy of strategies. For example, teachers see results first hand or make changes to programmes depending on outcomes and expectations and therefore hold a significant store of information that could be pertinent to curriculum planners. Their views on how they conduct sessions with regard to children of minority language backgrounds and why they select some procedures over others presents an interesting insight into effective strategies for ESOL learners.

The selection process involved identifying different types of early childhood settings for comparison. My subjectivity as a Montessori teacher played a role in this process as

I am aware of the different understandings and knowledge bases teachers draw on in their practice. Most early childhood settings have their own special philosophies, for example there are distinct differences between the free play philosophy of kindergartens, playcentres where parents are key educators, and the teaching methods of a Montessori preschool. This is the key reason for selecting distinctly different early childhood settings for the research, to provide a comparative basis for investigating practices and perceived efficacy.

Contact was established with either the teaching staff directly or the centre managers, with an introduction to the research topic. Upon agreement to participate, times were set for focus groups or individual interviews at the respective childcare places. Interviews and focus groups were conducted at teachers' work places, providing an authentic background and an environment where participants could draw on their everyday experience for comfort and information. For a number of participants, the assurance of confidentiality and non-identifying information processing was the deciding factor in partaking in the study.

Ultimately eleven participants from a selection of five centres were chosen, each with distinct characteristics, i.e. a kindergarten, a private Montessori preschool, a parent cooperative, a private daycare centre, and a community childcare centre. The motivation for selecting participants working in different ECE institutions was the inside knowledge on my part that although these centres may all cater for young children, they differ in the age range of children, the professional understanding of teachers based on their specific philosophy, as well as the location, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds of parents. All centres had been or were currently attended by children who had English as a second language background, a prerequisite for inclusion in the study.

3.2.1 Description of participating centres

Due to confidentiality considerations there are limitations as to the details that can be given on individual centres. There is one commonality between all five distinctly different settings, in that irrespective of additional and individual philosophies, teaching practices, and governance structures, they all are obliged to adhere to the New Zealand early childhood curriculum, Te Whāriki. As per the 2015 Ministry of Education licencing criteria for centre-based ECE services, all centres must prescribe to minimum standards relating to curriculum, premises, health and safety, and governance (Ministry of Education, 2015).

a) Kindergarten

The kindergarten was situated in the northern suburbs of Wellington and is part of the Wellington Kindergarten Association that is responsible for managing 63 kindergartens in the region. It offers a sessional programme for a roll of 79 children, aged between 3 and 5 years. Its umbrella organization, Whanau Manaaki Kindergartens, is a not-for-profit association, and lists as philosophy a commitment to employ 100% fully qualified teachers, to show a commitment to bicultural practice and to offer a community based, affordable and accessible early childhood education to families (Whanau Manaaki Kindergartens, 2015).

b) Private Montessori preschool

The private Montessori preschool was located in the southern suburbs of Wellington and is part of a nationwide chain of childcare centres. It is licensed for 29 children and offers a sessional and/or all day programme from 8 am to 5.15pm. The Montessori philosophy is the defining character of the childcare services offered there and is based on an educational programme developed by Dr. Maria Montessori in 1907. The programme uses a holistic approach, i.e. it includes all aspects of the child's life, such as individual development, family, and environment, as well as Montessori-specific, developmentally appropriate learning materials (Montessori Aotearoa NZ, 2015).

c) Private daycare centre

A central Wellington preschool and childcare centre was selected for this research. It currently caters for 26 children, offers an all day service from 6.45am to 5.30pm, and is licenced to care for infants, toddlers, and children up to 5 years. The centre's management describes its philosophy as "the sum total of the children's direct and indirect learning experiences at their centre". Dispositions for learning are promoted through an atmosphere that recognises and supports their prior learning and interests in conditions of freedom, dignity, and respect. The centre also states a strong commitment to ensuring that all children are given the opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding of the cultural heritage of both partners of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Te Reo Māori, ako and Tikanga Māori are woven into the centre's practice, while acknowledging the uniqueness of each child's cultural inheritance.

d) Community Centre

A community all day care centre was selected, which caters for children from 6 months to 5 years and is licenced for 50 children. It is located in central Wellington, a non-profit childcare centre that is operated by a management committee. It does not have a specific philosophy but adheres to the guidelines of the national curriculum, Te Whāriki and follows the children's interests and strengths through the free play, i.e. child-directed method, without adult/teacher intervention.

e) Parent cooperative

An established parent cooperative childcare facility located in central Wellington and operated by a parent management committee, was also selected for this research. It is licensed for 34 children aged from 1 to 5 years and runs an all day programme from 7.45am to 5.45pm. Here, too, there was no centre-specific philosophy in place, but a general understanding that children were entitled to care and education that allowed

them to grow into capable personalities with a sense of independence. It was important to staff that children received strong support in discovering that diversity was positive and a strength; something to be proud of.

3.2.2 Participant profiles

There were eleven participants in total, all of them female, aged between 25 years and 55 years. Three identified as NZ Europeans, one as Maori, one as European/Maori, one as Samoan, one as Thai, one as Filipino, one as Indian, and one declined to answer that question. Three of the participants listed overseas teaching experience, local teaching experience ranged from between two years to thirty years. Two teachers spoke another language at a level where they could hold a conversation, and three speakers of another language spoke English as a second language themselves. All participants were trained professionals, with a range of diplomas, Bachelor's degrees, and post-graduate education. Two teachers held diplomas, six teachers held degrees in early childhood education or other disciplines, and three teachers held post-graduate diplomas.

The following section explains the study design and the rationale for selecting qualitative research strategies in the inquiry. It offers some detail and background information regarding the settings and participants, as well as the role of research tools.

3.3 The study design

The question of what motivates teachers in choosing teaching methods is best answered by exploratory strategies. I decided on qualitative research because of the nature of this enquiry, which necessitated that background information was sought, a type of information that cannot easily be accessed through checklists and numerical data. In this instance semi-structured focus groups and interviews were the

appropriate choice to gather the necessary in-depth data. It was also the most pragmatic research design, as there was a high likelihood of my being able to access suitable participants and to complete the project within a timeframe and geographical limitation, making the plan doable, an important criteria for research design (O'Leary, 2014).

Time constraints and ethical considerations did not allow for classroom observations and therefore the focus was exclusively on the professionals' perceptions and motivations. As it was not possible to conduct group sessions at all participating centres, it was arranged to conduct three interviews individually, in one case two teachers at the same centre were interviewed in sequence, as they could not leave the classroom at the same time. At another centre only one teacher was able to participate because the only time available was during specific - and paid - non-contact, i.e. non-teaching times. The three focus groups were conducted outside teaching times. It is a legal requirement for early childhood settings to adhere to a set teacher : child ratio during session times, hence the restrictions on participants - and not all possible participants were inclined to participate after working hours.

The participants were fully aware of my subjectivity as Montessori ECE teacher. This information formed part of the preliminaries and served to establish ethical boundaries, i.e. I was not using a Montessori lens in the process of gathering data but was mindful of it. As it was part of the strategy to investigate distinctly different ECE settings, it was important to be aware of the individual characteristics to use these for comparative purposes but it also necessitated an impartial stance to assure credibility of the research.

The individual interviews were semi-structured in format, using a sequence of questions (Appendix A) for all participants, together with allowance for apposite open questions. Both interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded and supplemented

by note taking during the interviews. Taking note of non-verbal information such as reactions to information, body language showing surprise or dismissal, humour or the exchange of quizzical looks, deferring to authority or hierarchy within the team or other such cues added more context to the spoken word and were also recorded.

Focus groups are generally comprised of individuals who share a common identity and/or experience, in this particular case early childhood teachers. Teachers' understandings and perspectives may inform their interactions, making non-verbal cues throughout the interviewing process a vital component of the notation and later the transcription process. As Stewart and Shamdasani (2015) suggest, group composition is one of the key factors that influence focus group research, as are environment factors, in this case the classroom. All discussions and interviews took place in either the centre's classroom or in the administration office. Either way, it represented familiar home ground for the participants who were able to be host to me, the visiting researcher. The spatial arrangement ranged from formal to ad hoc, which could be interpreted as a distinctly Western-style and informal manner of communication. The commonality of the interview and focus group environment was that it was intended to cater to the participants' convenience as well as cede the position of expert to them. Furthermore, to put participants at ease, it was stated clearly prior to commencement that the study was not for the purposes of assessment but an exercise in knowledge production.

Qualitative research is sometimes described as a contact sport (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015), as it requires some level of immersion in individuals' lives, and a need for active listening, empathy, and interaction to extract meaning. Engaging in focus groups and the individual interviews required a level of understanding of the demographic group, in this case predominantly homogenous groupings of all-female, mostly middle-aged professionals (incidentally mirroring my own demographic profile). The research tool was a mix of verbal and observational data, arising out of the interaction between colleagues and their positioning in a place where they invest much of their own

personality and philosophical convictions of who they are as teachers. In this way it is possible to draw on this personal investment in the focus groups and interviews.

3.4 Research parameters and limitations

The research was undertaken in a number of early childhood centres in Wellington suburbs and central Wellington, given that the capital is a prime example of a multicultural population that places demands on the teaching profession through the influx of migrants and vibrant cultural diversity. As well, according to Statistics NZ (2013), couples with children aged 16 and younger make up 42% of all families in Wellington. This, and the presence of 306 early childhood providers within the Wellington region, made it a reasonable assumption that children of migrant background would be attending some of these early childhood settings I selected for participating in my research.

To protect confidentiality, the socio-economic details of the ECE settings cannot be divulged, limiting the analysis possibilities of the research, i.e. it does not include whether participating centres in lower socio-economic areas of Wellington cater for more or fewer minority language children. It can also not divulge whether there are clusters of nationalities represented at any specific centre, only a summary of all languages spoken (see Chapter Four). Another limitation is that this research only takes into account a small sample of one geographical setting, which is not representative for all New Zealand ECE facilities.

3.5 Data generation

Each participating centre was provided with an information sheet (Appendix B), outlining details pertaining to the research and its objectives, as well as participants' rights to refusal and confidentiality. Written informed consent was gained from each individual (Appendix C), in accordance with the Massey University Code of Ethics

procedures. Consent involved completion of a consent form and signature. The actual names of the centres are not used in this thesis and individual participants' identifying details are confidential. The first step of data generation involved a demographic self-reporting sheet (Appendix D), which collated confidential information regarding age, ethnicity, education, and overseas teaching experience. Following that, a list of predominantly open-ended questions (Appendix A) was used in face-to-face interviews to gather information from participants.

My involvement in focus groups was to ask the questions, ensure that conversation flowed and that equal participation within the focus groups ensued. Prompts and non-verbal cues such as nodding and eye-contact or smiles were used and participants were encouraged to elaborate and use examples from their practical experience. The process involved simple lead-in questions to put participants at ease, for example, how long participants had been teaching and what languages they had come across, and proceeded with more specific questions regarding detailed strategies. In the individual interviews the same questions as for the focus groups were used and the preliminary lead-in questions served the same purpose, i.e. to put the interviewee at ease. If prompting was required then eye contact or a repeat of the last phrase uttered by the participant was used, or a question was repeated and elaborated on. The individual interviews were also not a conversation per se, with myself as the conversation partner, it was semi-structured through the prepared list of questions, although participants were given free reign to express their thoughts.

Depending on participants' interactive style, focus groups took between 45 and 90 minutes, while individual interviews lasted between 25 and 40 minutes. The interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. The qualitative raw data from the transcripts of the interviews and discussions, including the observational notes were processed to find themes and concepts for subsequent sorting and coding. This process of sorting the raw information from the social setting to the first act of interpretation then takes on an agency of its own (Holliday, 2005). As the perceptions

and experience of participants was the explicit aim of the study, the participants were invited to respond in their own words and fashion. The primary process to discover themes in the raw data of the transcripts was carried out by lifting out passages that showed what teachers were doing, what assumptions they made and what strategies they used. Responses from all five centres were initially given a label and scrutinized using diagrams, and through this process patterns became apparent where similar themes arising from all participants provided a clearer understanding. Relevant participant responses were then entered in charts, ordered by centre to allow for comparison, and then assessed as to how often these themes were repeated.

Unarticulated responses such as expressions or behaviour were also entered into the charts to provide further detail and to detect additional patterns. These responses added emphasis and clarity and assisted in arriving at understandings. As O'Leary (2014) asserts, there is a risk of losing meaning in the process of moving from raw data to rich meaning, particularly in qualitative data collection. The patterns collated through this process were of interest to my particular research and therefore provided the links to knowledge, theoretical positions, and values meaningful to me. The analysis is supported by a constructionist framework and examines the sociocultural contexts and structures of the data, which in turn will support my claims in the findings.

3.6 Conceptual framework

Children are at the core of early childhood education and teachers are instrumental in securing their learning and their welfare, and this study aims to fill a gap in information regarding a specific demographic in some classrooms. As Denscombe (2010) states, an account for the research design should describe the philosophy underlying the research and seek to connect it to the purpose and outcome of the enquiry, and this research puts children's and teachers' social interaction as well as their agency within structures at the core of the research.

The conceptual framework of the study is informed by Bronfenbrenners's ecological systems theory because a child's experiences in early childhood education form a large part of the child's life trajectory. In Bronfenbrenner's theory (1979) the child's environment resembles a series of nested structures that are interrelated and includes and extends to the immediate surroundings such as school. Teachers form part of the mesosystem, which is the life experience the child derives from the level of society away from the immediate family, and teachers' interactions with children have a bearing on children's agency. For young children, the experiences taken from this layer are a powerful influence, as it forms part of their immediate world. It is here that the child learns lessons of society, and social mores, and certain stratifications also come into play. For example, a language shift may be initiated as early as at preschool level, where the child is inadvertently given the message that the desired and therefore status language to speak in the New Zealand context is English. For example, immigrant parents may think it crucial that their children learn English prior to starting primary school. Teachers, too, may think it vitally important that children are able to communicate competently in English. Consequently, interview questions included whether the child's home language was actively supported at the centre and whether the use of the home language with family and amongst other children at preschool was supported by teachers.

This framing implies a social constructivist epistemology, as the type of knowledge accessed through the interviews and focus groups is not about 'facts' and 'reality' and does not aim to represent the world as it is. It is much more concerned with people's experience and their interpretation of it, culminating in a thoroughly subjective creation. As the participants in this study tried to make sense of what they experience in the classroom and the actions they take in response to a myriad of influences, they engaged in social interaction, with their colleagues and/or myself, and made meaning. This is not to say that the process of the interview becomes the focus and the data itself, there is a need to strike a balance between reality and subjectivity (O'Leary,

2014). In endeavouring to find out what teachers do in the classroom and how they arrive at their decisions I drew on their subjectivity and asked them to reflect on their teaching personality. My own subjectivity as teacher in a specialist niche also played a role in understanding teachers' motivations and explanations. For example, as my insider position gave me shared knowledge, the resulting familiarity was reflected in the type of questions I asked, i.e. the types of tools and differences in teaching practices. I expected there to be differences because of different understandings as to the efficacy of teaching methods. As Silverman (2006) points out, the interview process grants access to a socio-cultural world, and the teaching profession bases educational methods on principles of socially constructed meaning.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research methodology and motivation for selecting this particular design. It was argued that the qualitative research approach was appropriate to elicit the answers to the research question because the exploratory nature of the focus groups and individual interviews fitted the task. The aim is to produce knowledge by looking for meaning that takes into account individuals' subjectivities, and to conduct research in personal settings, in this case classrooms, representing lived everyday experiences and beliefs of teachers. This approach is akin to following the qualitative tradition as explained by O'Leary (2014) and allows insight into the culture of a type of place and the people within it. The process also utilised my own reflections and experiences as immigrant, teacher, and language learner as my subjectivity had a bearing on how I perceived different philosophies and resulting discussions of what it means for a child to learn a second language. The transcribed and coded data was subsequently examined further, by means of a thematic analysis. The following chapter presents the findings of this research.

Chapter Four - Data analysis

4.1 Introduction

In an increasingly language-diverse teaching environment it would be pertinent to know whether there is a need for specialised pedagogical knowledge and practices and indeed, what the current knowledge/practices in ECE classrooms consist of and are based on. The following analysis will outline participants' reflections of their motivations and consideration of how they arrive at the decision of what type of support to provide for children from a non-English speaking background.

The inductive process of discovery produced findings shaped by social context, beginning with the focus groups and interviews taking place in the participants' workplaces, which enabled the interviewees to draw on their surroundings in support of their statements. The environment also played a role in that it reflected teachers' knowledge, personality, and expression of their professional philosophy. For example, teachers pointed out pictures or features in the environment and explained how these expressed what 'their place' represented.

Unarticulated context, such as participants' body language, added to the findings. For example, in discussions it became evident that when there were native speakers of another language or te reo Māori speakers present then they were deferred to and asked for expert opinions on language matters. Eye contact, leaning in, and gesturing was used to invite them to take the lead in the discussion or confirm statements, inferring that these colleagues had inherently advanced knowledge about language matters.

In answering the interview questions, the participants offered their personal viewpoints, often including biographical information to illustrate their points, as some interviewees were able to speak from personal experience. Given the wide array of languages spoken by children attending these ECE facilities - 26 languages were listed in total³ - teachers voiced their awareness of this particular feature within their classroom, but overall regarded this as simply another facet of multiculturalism to be incorporated into the teaching routine. The common theme was that participants did not consider children's lack of English language to be a problem as, in their view, most children tended to assimilate and learn to communicate to some degree. In general, teachers also did not have particular expectations as to children's level of English language proficiency acquired whilst at the ECE facility, which sometimes ran counter to parents' expectations.

The general consensus was that the role of early childhood settings was to nurture children so they could become capable and confident and to be able to communicate needs. Rather than language goals or expectations, teachers aimed to provide a communicative and interaction competency based foundation children could draw from. Strategies to build such a foundation were predominantly derived from the social context; I was able to discern three distinct categories from the responses of the participating teachers and in my view constitute teaching strategies constructed through parents, the child's cultural background, and the individuality of the child.

4.2 The social context

Participants reported learning constantly as they encountered children and families with different backgrounds and languages and considered pragmatism and learning from practical experience valuable skills. Knowledge about the child's circumstances and the families' needs were often seen as the first crucial step of establishing a

³ Languages spoken in the ECE settings were: Arabic, Cambodian, Chinese, Dutch, Ethiopian, Finnish, Filipino, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Malayan, Serbian, Vietnamese, Samoan, Somalian, Tamil, Thai, Tongan, Russian, Spanish, Syrian, Sri Lankan.

relationship and trust. Family circumstances could influence significantly what demands were placed on teachers, for example, in one centre it was not unusual for children to attend only a short time prior to going to school, to 'quickly pick up some English'. In another centre it was more common for parents, who were able to speak English, to practise with their children prior to attending preschool. In other cases children were exhorted by parents to learn English as quickly as possible so they could teach their parents in turn. These scenarios tended to reflect the socio-economic and social circumstances of the families, which meant the social context shifted with each of these scenarios and so did the demands placed on teachers' flexibility, creativity, and knowledge. One reported example concerned a Chinese child who had been raised by grandparents in China whilst the mother lived in New Zealand. Prior to the child turning five years of age the mother - the sole parent - brought the child to New Zealand to attend school here. At another setting a sizeable group of German expatriates had formed a social circle, which included their children after session hours finished. They also illustrate how, in accordance with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, the child's life experiences are interlinked with the life experiences of immediate and wider family members and their circumstances, which then encounter entirely new social circumstances in a New Zealand childcare environment.

The following findings describe support strategies adopted by teachers, which are in the majority practical and pragmatic responses to situations arising out of communication barriers. Key support is drawn from the socio-cultural context of both children and parents, as well as the commitment to accept the child as an individual.

4.2.1 Parents

Parents play a crucial role in devising strategies to assist children attending ECE facilities, beginning with the enrolment process, as this process requires communication and procedures to ascertain basic information, which could raise the

first obstacle if parents do not speak English themselves. The initial step often includes an enrolment information form or is entirely based on conversations between teachers and parents. In doing so teachers may assume the role of facilitator to ease the transition for both parent and child. This may include welcoming families to the parent community and helping them make connections, building bridges to the wider community and to other families of the same language and cultural background. This effort to forge relationships allows teachers to build a rapport and a basis from which to foster trust, without which it is not possible to have meaningful interactions, particularly with a young child who doesn't speak the teacher's language. Pam (kindergarten) described an approach taken at her place of work:

They all speak the same language and we encourage them a lot to have playdates together...and it helps sometimes with the sense of belonging...the mum was saying that she felt more at home because she had someone she can communicate with.

In this case Pam discusses how they find ways of making families feel comfortable in the community, not just the classroom. It is also important to be seen to make an effort to communicate, as Sarah (Montessori) pointed out in the following:

You make sure that when you talk to mum and dad and the child you're talking slowly, you're using gestures and expressions on your face so they can add to the meaning of what you're saying and you make sure they have understood...and a child can see that you're making the attempt to talk to mum and dad as well, and you don't just categorise and say oh well, they don't speak English, but actually there are lots of other ways to talk.

Another facet to creating language support strategies is that teachers feel it is of absolute importance to work with parents, as they hold vital information and know the child best. This may sometimes involve negotiations because of different opinions or agendas and requires tact and cooperation. Hannah (private daycare) described how staff approached the settling-in phase for children at her centre:

We always ask for some really important key words in their first language, things like food, toilet, we always ask for those - we don't always get them, interestingly enough. Some parents prefer that we didn't [use child's first language]. And I had to explain to them that we don't want them [the children] to fail things or you don't want them to go hungry because I can't understand what they say.

She was also clear about the need for establishing trust with the parents:

We work quite hard forming relationships with our parents because that way they trust us enough to actually share those things with us...you see, that's the other thing, that most parents with children who have English as a second language they have English as second language as well.

Involving parents' views and considering their beliefs and expectations forms part of the ongoing communication and teaching practice for some settings. For example, parents are invited to comment on children's progress in regular meetings or are invited to partake and contribute to the centre planning and programme. The principle for this is based on the belief that ECE practices should be inclusive and family centred but also to draw on parents' expertise for everybody's benefit, teacher, parent, and child. Sarah (Montessori) described how the teachers draw on parents' knowledge and involve them in the planning process:

We have parent interviews when we talk to them ... and we discuss things such as language development and ask for their opinion, what they think, we ask is that what's been happening at home so we know.

Lara (community centre) explained the process of parent involvement at her centre as an open invitation:

We have opened it up to the parents through workshops, and that could be anything from, if you did have a different language you could come in and do a movement session using that language, woodwork... we also display our planning on the board and have a section parents can give their feedback. So

we really encourage parents to come on board. We want them to participate and contribute to our planning.

Information derived from parents becomes part of teachers' planning repertoire. Drawing parents in by discussing their children's educational goals and progress not only allows for positive relationships but also for the teaching professionals to work with feedback and consider progression. Anna (parent cooperative) outlines the process of planning participation at her centre:

Twice a year we have parent teacher interviews and that's where we sort of hash out the goals and what those parents' (non-English speaking family background) aspirations are for their child's learning and we record what they would like them to achieve.

The specific inclusion of parents and caregivers in their children's education was cited as an effective language support strategy by interviewees. It is also noteworthy that every centre in this study was emphatic about the support and importance accorded to children's first language. It was acknowledged that the child's existing language skills needed to be supported and valued, not just for cultural reasons, but as a language strategy. For example, all teachers at all centres confirmed that in the event that several children of the same language background were to speak their language in class, teachers would actively encourage it. Some endeavoured to include children's first languages into classroom routines, as reported by Pam (kindergarten):

We try and use the greetings, like with some of the families it would be 'vanaka', with others it's 'Namaste' when they come in. Just at least that...

Monica (Montessori) explained how children's first language played an important role within the classroom programme:

A lot of our German children will speak [German] and we ask them - it's sort of reciprocal, the concept of ako, we ask the older children to help us understand,

interpret what the younger ones are saying, especially words in the native tongue we haven't heard. If we are familiar then next time we can understand and we can give them [the younger ones] the reassurance, yes, mum will be back soon. Then we understand what they are saying and we can give them reassurance with words as well as the English.

The process of interacting and sharing information with parents and families gives teachers the opportunity to form relationships and open up communication. These inclusive measures are considered vital part of teaching strategies, albeit adult-focussed. The following section describes inclusive measures taken in the classroom.

4.2.2 Culture

Professional training programmes heighten teachers' awareness of cultural obligations, particularly those arising from the Treaty of Waitangi, and aspects of biculturalism and multiculturalism. The New Zealand early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (1996), advocates an inclusive approach, which is reflected in the similarity of responses from participants regarding the concept of culture. All the interviewees stated that it was a strong component of their programme to be culturally inclusive, and to particularly acknowledge biculturalism.

All participants considered awareness of and respect for culture vital in their dealings with families and children of a non-English speaking background. They also saw this as an inherent part of how they construct their teaching practices. Questions that delved into how teachers rate the importance of children being able to speak English by the time they go to school elicited strong reactions. Expecting children to learn English was by and large perceived as cultural domination and rejected as a strategy. Kate (kindergarten) expressed how the stance of teaching staff at her centre was that all cultures and languages are treated equally:

I mean I always think that it is important that they [the children] know that we value their culture, that we don't impose our culture and our language on them and that we give equal value and respect to their own first culture.

Rejecting the specific teaching of English language as strategy, most participating teachers regarded their efforts to include te reo Māori in their practice as an effective language learning strategy. Moreover, they asserted that they also acknowledged all other cultures represented by children in the centres, and that this was incorporated in daily practice as strategy, as this increased general awareness of different languages. Liz (private daycare) described how at her centre they strongly encourage both Māori and Samoan:

We try really hard to use Maori here, and obviously Samoan, you know, we do have Samoan children.

Some participants included a focus on particular topical aspects of a non-English speaking child's culture in their programme to teach other children concepts and create curiosity and tolerance for other cultures, also one of Te Whāriki's curriculum guidelines (Ministry of Education, 1996). In the following example Sally (community centre) elaborates on how they foster curiosity amongst children:

We do a trip around the world, so we focus on celebrating cultural diversity, and we look at the child's cultural background, we try and learn the greeting from that country, we try and cook some sort of a cultural dish from that country, or look at the flags.

Culture is also seen as a way of thinking and providing an atmosphere of acceptance, with teachers acting as role models and mediators so that speaking different languages is seen as an everyday and desirable practice. Anna (parent cooperative) offered an insight into how this is implemented at her centre:

Basically, we are very much about encouraging diversity, not only in cultural diversity, but about different family structure, we are open to differences and difference is ok and that is something to celebrate.

Josie (kindergarten) goes on to explain how this can pose a challenge given the different beliefs that parents hold about education and how open-mindedness was important in all aspects.

And what's really interesting is that sometimes it's not the language barriers, it's the educational difference of education in their [parents'] mind. That some other cultures have a different view on of what early childhood is, have pictures in their mind of what education is, that's a lot of conversation that we have with families around our curriculum.

Teachers' responses indicated strongly that for them, language learning encompassed more than learning English vocabulary. They understood their role to foster cultural understanding and tolerance for all children in the classroom, hence teaching strategies revolved around multicultural and inclusive practices, for example learning greetings and songs in different languages, observing and engaging in cultural celebrations, and not language practice as such.

4.2.3 The Individuality of the Child

Participants felt strongly that there was no room for a generic teaching approach in the case of children from a non-English speaking background, and teaching needed to be responsive to the social context of the child and family. It was pointed out that children came from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds, educational backgrounds, family, socio-economic, or migratory circumstances, therefore it was counterintuitive to have a homogenous approach. Individual character traits and aptitude, age and language skills in the first language had to be taken into account to foster second language skills. The practices discussed in these findings therefore reflect teachers'

convictions of how they should treat any child, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, or language.

First and foremost teachers expressed a strong belief in the child's right to be treated with respect and not to be categorised. The consensus was that to focus exclusively on the language aspect would be to adopt a deficit model of thinking and be entirely inappropriate. Sam (community centre) explained her experience with demands placed on teachers:

It's difficult because when a child first starts in the centre you're not going to get everybody who's the same, some children are naturally shy, dependent on age how much language they are going to express anyway, what their acquisition is like anyway, it depends. We may need to be very flexible with going with the needs of the child.

Lara's (community centre) opinion of how teachers need to be prepared to look at individual characteristics of the child to be effective is outlined in the following:

We also see the character of each child as well, for some of them might be quite shy to speak, even in their own language, you kind of communicate with them in body language at first...it depends on the child, really. So it's totally different with each one of them.

In Pam's (kindergarten) experience, too, the matter is multi-faceted and cannot be reduced to language alone:

Sometimes there's learning needs as well as the language needs, which would be different again, so we adapt it for each individual child.

Interviewees concluded that their language support strategies for children from non-English speaking backgrounds did not differ substantially from any other strategies. In fact, the strategy was to treat every child as an individual, regardless of what language was spoken.

These strategies arising from a social context are based on a strong framework of beliefs and values. Study participants were also asked to describe specific methods or tools they select to aid children who acquire English as a second language. There were some variations in responses, depending on centres' educational approaches. As well, teachers expressed a range of opinions of how children acquired second languages and as to the need to use specific methods at all.

4.3 Immersion or Submersion?

Amongst interviewees there were differences of opinion regarding how children learn second languages, i.e. whether teachers' specific input plays a role or whether simple exposure to language is the key factor. Generally the teachers put much faith into children's natural ability to 'pick up the language'. This may be due to the dominance of nativist theories (Chomsky, 1965, p.39) that assert that "individuals are born with a genetic capacity to develop language" or Krashen's (1981) natural acquisition theory, although none of the participants referred to any language theory in answering any interview questions, including specific questions regarding teacher training and professional development. Most teachers were full of praise for the natural ability of the child to speak a foreign language, in this case English. It was also a common theme that this ability was referred to as being 'fluent'. The often stated belief was that language acquisition happened mostly through osmosis, and it was considered the easiest and most effective way of learning for the children. Mary (kindergarten) described language as 'absorption': "...I would say they [the children] just absorb it...", while Sally (community centre) referred to it as a natural kind of process:

It's a kind of a natural thing for us really, it's never been problematic, the children have always just picked up English relatively, you know, soon after they've been enrolled...and they learn really quickly at that stage, you know, at that age, 3 to 5.

Probing questions as to the type of language interactions or specific tools teachers employed to foster language skills found that concentrated verbal interactions, combined with co-constructionist teaching practices were preferred strategies. For Helen (private daycare) it resembled an encompassing language approach:

It's kind of like total immersion, you talk a lot, stories, singing, just really language-rich. I'm talking directly to them, I'm trying to use smaller sentences than maybe I would use with a three year old who was English fluent.

Anna (parent cooperative) explained her centre's strategies as a method of building up language:

Making sure that you are being very clear, slowing your language down, and we do a lot of being visual. If we are naming things, we do a lot of language activities like flash cards and various things like that to build their language.

In comparison, at Lara's (community centre) setting, the methods vary somewhat, as do the aids used:

We usually focus on their interests and try to get them to open up and start using basic phrases and words through that. We use body language, we use short phrase, using command words in their own language, we use media, you know, ICT, computer or television, sometimes using pictures.

On the whole, teachers professed they didn't engage in specific activities for children who spoke English as a second language as these children were able to learn through osmosis and being exposed to a language-rich and supportive environment. Three centres used materials or technology to enhance language practices, and one made it a point of engaging in multi-lingual practices for all children. One single deviation was presented by the kindergarten, where children's language development was thought to emerge largely through peer interaction and the environment.

The following section analyses what knowledge base teachers operate from when they either respond to the social context or make decisions regarding language development and learning strategies. Interview questions aimed at eliciting information as to whether teachers had received training and/or professional development about current second language acquisition theories and practices. Enquiries were also made about centre-specific policies and philosophies in an effort to find out what knowledge or guidelines teachers based their actions in the classroom on.

4.4 Professional knowledge and training

None of the centres had specific policies or uniform strategies on how to address the requirements of children who are from non-English speaking backgrounds. It was only partly considered a necessity and had not presented itself as an urgent issue to any of the participants.

Whilst the findings showed that teachers were able to draw on professional training when it came to children's first language, there was only limited knowledge relating to second language acquisition and teachers were either not aware of or had not been offered professional development or access to resources. It was not clear that teaching strategies were based on concrete information, suggesting that knowledge could be based on ad hoc or unconfirmed sources. Josie (kindergarten) thought the staff's approach at her centre somewhat haphazard:

It's kind of trial and error, I think we do a lot of different strategies. I know we had to google translate before, to try and ascertain that barrier to what it is that they understand really.

Liz' (private daycare) assessment was that her knowledge was largely derived from personal experience:

What we do, what I learnt from experience I share that with the children, Pacific Island, Tongan, Rarotonga, I just use songs, you know. But no, no development.

In contrast, Anna (parent cooperative) had memories of information received, albeit forgotten:

I do vaguely remember doing something about it (second language acquisition)...

A significant deviation in the findings was that in one centre a teacher was able to draw on knowledge regarding second language acquisition through teacher training and professional development. Subsequent responses regarding teaching strategies and influences differed markedly from all the other centre participants', which suggests that well-founded knowledge influences teaching strategies. Sarah (Montessori) shared her knowledge about children and language acquisition as follows:

There's layers and layers of language acquisition, it starts with words, then putting the words together...you're doing it with constant interaction, listening, you take time and make sure you talk to them...and it's the social development together with the language...realizing that if you're learning more than one language at a time, what confusions that can cause and being mindful...difficult trying to make sense of it all.

Teachers' reported reliance on pragmatic solutions to communication problems seems linked to the absence of well-founded information. Strategies such as using tools or gadgets were based on ad hoc decisions as opposed to a developmentally appropriate response to learning needs. In lieu of other guidelines, centre philosophies are helpful in setting parameters and examples for effective teaching. In the following their importance to teachers is explained.

4.5 Centre philosophies

It was a feature of all participating centres that each had a distinct philosophy in place, which encapsulated the early childhood setting's values and principles. A centre's philosophy is central to how teachers perceive their role in it and the interviewees clearly identified with the principles of their centres, thus allowing an insight into how the professional becomes the personal and infuses actions and perspectives.

Interview questions as to how teachers viewed their centre's character were answered effusively and philosophies were understood to be the foundation for any strategy used in the classroom. All language support could be expected to be influenced by a centre's specific philosophy. Josie (kindergarten) described her centre's guiding principles as being:

...inclusive, diverse, respectful, with the overarching manaaki, that we're making people welcome, and safe and secure within their environment...everybody's got a right to be who they are and be supported.

Hannah's (private daycare) description of her centre's principles is as follows:

Everything we do and how we act forms the curriculum...and that is based on a responsive, reciprocal relationship with the children, that's the crux of everything. And you come from a place of respect and you can be sensitive.

Sarah's (Montessori) outline of the philosophy of her early childhood setting is detailed and a firm directive for teachers:

Montessori is quite specific, there is Grace and Courtesy, that is all about showing respect. As a centre, as a philosophy, it's down to what we as teachers believe. And as teachers we believe that everybody has a right to communicate, full stop. So whether that's in one language or another, whatever it means, it could be sign language, anything! They have a right to be heard.

On the other hand, Lara's (community centre) description seems more flexible in its approach:

I would say there is a focus on following the children's interests and their strengths...and we foster the free play here, messy play, they normally learn through play and we are also influenced by Reggio Emilia.

Anna (parent cooperative) described their philosophy as about encouraging diversity:

We are very much about encouraging diversity, we are open to differences and difference is ok and is something to celebrate, encourage children to be independent and build their confidence in themselves that they are capable of learning.

Respondents' strong feelings about their philosophy indicate that a centre's philosophy determines how teachers manage classrooms and create environments conducive to learning. Philosophical stances affect how learning is structured, for example kindergartens tend to follow the principles of free and unstructured playtimes, whereas Montessori utilizes learning materials for specific curriculum areas. However, philosophies do not appear to provide teachers with methods or strategies for managing language-specific situations with children from non-English speaking backgrounds.

4.6 Conclusion

The questions posed in the interviews and focus groups sought to find differences and/or commonality in methods deployed in early childhood settings and how teachers arrived at their decisions. The findings in this chapter illustrate that there is a common understanding arising out of the socio-cultural contexts teachers find themselves working in and strong efforts are made to establish personal relationships with families and children, and to understand and operate within varying cultural dynamics. Pedagogical methods tend to be of a co-constructive nature and to

concentrate on the individuality of the child, and although some centres use specific measures for language practice, there is a strong belief in children's natural capacity to acquire a second language by contextual osmosis.

Te Whāriki, the national curriculum, plays a central role, as teachers rely on the tenets of co-construction and cultural inclusiveness for guidance. Current practices are considered effective, as can be derived from the assurances that teachers experience no communication difficulties nor do children have difficulty in 'picking up English'. The unspoken commonality in all centres was that English was the majority language spoken in everyday interaction, indicating that ECE settings are not multilingual islands within a monoglot society. Teachers included and used children's first languages in the programme to the best of their ability but more often than not these attained novelty status at best.

This analysis also shows that there is a complete lack of institutional guidelines, policies and associated practices, and only little professional knowledge about second language acquisition, which is very much dependent on the vocational background of individual teachers. Participants were emphatic as to the value and efficacy of social interaction for learning English as a second language and fostered a strong belief that this was how learning through osmosis took place. The type and quality of such interaction was not within the scope of this research but it seems that the lack of a sound theoretical knowledge and practice base concerning second language acquisition and dominant language biases necessitates an approach that is primarily focused on normalising and justifying current, routine approaches and which accordingly is not robustly considered or reflective.

Chapter Five - Discussion and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The rationale for this thesis is to gather information that can contribute to knowledge about teachers' support strategies to assist children in overcoming language barriers and in doing so understanding what their actions are based on. In this chapter I discuss the findings which concentrate on the significance of teachers' knowledge in deciding on support structures and whether these structures possibly facilitate the institutionalizing of monolingualism. I furthermore offer recommendations that could contribute to policy and practice in early childhood education and make suggestions for further research in this area.

5.2 Significance of teachers' knowledge

It was my intention through this study to ascertain the relationship between teachers' knowledge and their selection of language support methods for minority language children in ECE settings. This study has shown that teachers are well placed to initiate second language acquisition but do so in an entirely unstructured manner. Regardless of the structural composition of the different centres, it was evident that teachers take great care to avoid positioning children in the role of ESOL and to engage in deficit thinking. In fact, there is no expectation of children learning a predetermined amount of English language skills prior to entering primary schooling at all. Teachers seem to share a strong belief in a child's innate ability to learn via osmosis and tend to revert to an ad hoc approach in finding solutions to enable communication should situations require it. As teachers report, the range of children's communication abilities is not an issue in the classroom, and it is their firm belief that social interactions are sufficient to aid language progress. However, this implies that the burden for acquiring language knowledge and communication skills lies with the child who has to both initiate and make learning connections without expert input. This approach seems to run counter to the social constructivist ideal and foregoes the scaffolding methods that are generally applied in ECE. Moreover, this process of submersion and trial and error

takes place in an overwhelmingly English majority language environment and as such it is not clear how a deficit position can be avoided in this scenario.

One characteristic attitude towards second language acquisition shown in this study is that the effort of learning and speaking in a language other than one's native language is underestimated and the ability to do so is mostly thought to simply fall into place when it comes to young children. The process of language acquisition is complex and there are not necessarily pithy theories or instructions for early childhood educators to draw on. However, as participants reported, in the absence of clear ideas about how second language acquisition can be supported, they are obliged to 'learn as they go along' and adopt a trial and error approach. The majority of the study participants had no working knowledge of language acquisition concepts, i.e. submersion vs. immersion and language shift. Neither did they have access to language learning resources, they instead used their initiative to provide individual and commonsense support as they deemed appropriate.

There is - across the board - a dearth of guidelines, policies or associated resourced practices provided by the centres for teachers to work with, presumably because there is no specific requirement for it. This lack points to a substantial oversight of the possibility that there may be specific needs practitioners are ill equipped to identify or address. Alternatively, the assumption is that if there are diverse needs then, as trained professionals, teachers will have the capability to manage any issues that may arise on a specific child by child basis. Centres are fully compliant in following legal and educational requirements in treating all children equally and are under no obligation to make any resources available for such children. As far as ECE providers are concerned there is no need for specialised resources or further professional education for teachers in this area and therefore no impetus exists for drawing up internal guidelines for staff to consult.

As well, there is no uniform educational knowledge or professional development for teachers available regarding second language acquisition in young children. Consequently teachers do not have a solid base of theoretical knowledge or associated practices to draw from in their support of children who speak English as a second language. Activities and preparation of the learning environment are therefore based on the general belief that exposure to as much spoken language as possible produces cognitive results in children and results in acquiring the second language. Each centre used their individual approach to facilitate a measure of exposure to language and had their own creative store of aids, for example technology or visual aids, but essentially teachers relied on guess work to find what would be beneficial. Putting faith into the assumed innate knowledge of colleagues of migrant or second language background gives some indication of how teachers are looking for information from any source available but receive no guidance as to what they should be looking for.

As teachers were adamant that their role was not to teach language or develop children's competence levels as direct academic preparation for primary school, their expectations of children centred on them being emotionally secure and happy. This is entirely in line with the requirements set out by the national curriculum: "Children experience an environment where their emotional well-being is nurtured" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p.50). This, however, raises the question of whether this concentrated effort disregards other requirements of the curriculum, for example that "children experience an environment where they develop verbal communication skills for a range of purposes", or "develop language skills in real, play, and problem-solving contexts, as well as in more structured language contexts, for example, through books" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p.76). Clearly it is not feasible for New Zealand ECE teachers to foster language skills in the range of first languages they encounter, but how then are children to achieve literacy skills in any language, when they do not experience much progress in their second language of English, and do not necessarily experience further advancement in their first language in their home environment? Whilst participant teachers valued first languages and encouraged children to continue speaking them, it cannot be assumed that children receive adequate first language

education for further educational progress through parents and caregivers. Therefore, children who are thought to benefit from attending ECE services may not receive stimulation in their first language and whilst they may acquire sufficient conversational language skills in the majority language to manage well, they may not have adequate higher levels of language proficiency to cope with the demands of primary schooling.

The purpose of Kōhanga Reo and Pacific language nests is to ensure that young children establish their first language competency before they develop a second language, i.e. to encourage biliteracy. Children with a different first language background are assumed to receive all their first language pre-literacy skills and language competency in their home environment. Teachers in this study were aware of the importance of children's first languages from a cultural perspective and proactive in the social inclusion thereof, but did not see it as their responsibility to extend or include first language learning through the home. The positive effects of an individualized approach and culturally inclusive practices are hampered by a lack of planning and structure. Purposeful and advanced learning would require measures that go beyond greetings in different languages but this is not how ECE practitioners understand their role. The overall effect is that the majority language becomes the exclusive tool for learning, with the first language assuming novelty status, which could contribute to language shift.

Another significant factor in the findings is that teachers' interpretations of immersion and osmosis indicate a haphazard approach of determining how children acquire a second language. Teachers were not aware of the concepts of 'submersion' or 'language shifts'. Instead they were convinced that placing a child in an English-speaking environment represents immersion - seen as a beneficial method, as the child is able to simply 'pick up' the language. However, what children experience in the participants' classroom largely represents a process of submersion, a less than ideal approach for language acquisition (Fazio & Lyster, 1998).

Teachers in this study also indiscriminately referred to all levels of English language speaking ability as 'fluent'. They expressed the opinion that all children possessed the innate ability to absorb any number of languages perfectly and without assistance. On the other hand, the language ability benchmark upon leaving an ECE setting was that children would be sufficiently confident to be able to ask for help, which seems quite a low expectation. In the absence of clear information teachers refer to anecdotal observation and assumptions in making decisions, for example, that children did not require assistance in language learning because they always managed to communicate with each other non-verbally. One other general strategy centred on the individuality of the children, which essentially described the absence of any specific approach. Study participants overwhelmingly described their method as 'learning on the job', with their decisions clearly based on the ECE curriculum and their centres' philosophical stances.

Given my own teaching experience, I anticipated that teachers would primarily base their teaching strategies on their centres' philosophies and practices. The findings supported this, along with a strong alignment with socio-cultural principles derived from the national curriculum. Teachers are acutely aware of their obligations to be inclusive of all cultures and centre programmes, and their approaches reflect this commitment. It is this awareness that ensures that strategies aim to make children feel secure and accepted within the class. Regardless of the type of education provider, the strategies are aimed at promoting children's language development through social inclusion in the early childhood education context. This concept of inclusion is not reserved for speakers of minority languages, as social inclusion is intended to envelope all children and families who attend early childhood settings. This is where the strength of Te Whāriki is most evident as equal consideration and equitable programmes are an ingrained practice and an automatic component of programme planning. It is logical then that participants saw a contradiction in being asked to give

special attention to ESOL children, which is why they were at pains to point out that minority and majority language children all received the same education and care.

Children's welfare is always a teacher's priority, accordingly the emotional and social security of the child and family unit is rated highly. Participants reflected that much effort is put into providing the environment and emotional support that helps children develop a sense of strength and self-confidence. From a teacher's perspective it is only logical to concentrate on this self-belief, as lack of self-confidence hinders communication in any language. Hence it is entirely reasonable for teachers to assert that it is their role to prepare the foundation for ongoing language learning by initiating and enabling the socialization process.

Teachers base their actions on a strong framework of values and convictions, and particularly engage in co-constructive pedagogy, based on a socio-cultural concept that places high value on social interactions. As advocated through Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (1962), teachers engage in social interaction, cooperative dialogues and culturally meaningful activities until children can master and internalize knowledge and acquire new skills. Research findings suggest that teachers are putting much store in co-constructing learning, using a socio-cultural perspective. Their expectation is that the second language will emerge through administering socio-cultural principles, and given the child's natural ability to pick up the second language through osmosis.

A critical aspect of the findings was the complete absence of any perception of language problems by participants: they all emphasized how children managed quite well with language barriers. This could be viewed positively as children from non-English speaking backgrounds were not placed in a deficit role and were simply accepted as differently-speaking. Alternatively, it could suggest a lack of information resulting in misinterpretations. For example, children may acquire sufficient second language abilities to communicate but this does not equate to fluency or grammatical

understanding (May, Hill & Tiakiwai, 2006). If teachers are not aware of concepts such as language shift and language delay, then they cannot be expected to recognize the potential for learning obstacles in the classroom. Also, if teaching input occurs predominantly through submersion without it being recognized as such, then teachers' assessments of practices and outcomes are flawed.

Teachers in this study do not consider children's second language development an issue raises the question of whether the learning process and the impact on first languages are overshadowed by the goal of children's assimilation in the majority culture. The tenor in discussions was that children would always find a way to communicate and fit in, and notwithstanding the commitment to respect other cultures, the normative structures for teachers and children are determined by the majority language. Teachers' aim was for children to be able to ask for help by the time they reached primary school, which cannot be described as fluency. There may be some confusion regarding children's ability to adapt to situations and learning processes. It has been my teaching experience that children require a great deal of emotional support as well as active language support to be able to engage in classroom learning and establish relationships. Whilst some children were able to communicate confidently by the time they reached school age, this was not the norm.

My proposition is, that teachers primarily base their strategies on their centres' philosophies and practices, and the unstructured approach to familiarize children with English prior to entering school neither prepares them optimally in their second language, nor does it support their first language. In lieu of other guidance, teachers use their philosophical values and professional knowledge of the early childhood curriculum in devising classroom strategies. This is completely in line with accepted teaching practice and as per teacher training, and fulfils every statutory requirement for early childhood education. It is only in the specialist area of second language acquisition that this practice seems haphazard, which may not result in outcomes anticipated by curriculum planning. Teachers' interpretation of the role of early

childhood is that it is not intended as academic preparation, and in their view specific language instruction is the role of primary schooling. With government efforts to promote early childhood education as ideal preparation for school, particularly for children of minority background, it seems there is room for discussion amongst teaching professionals about the transition from ECE to primary for ESOL children.

Genuine efforts to give recognition to other cultures and first languages gives ESOL children the impression that their language is of value, but English is unmistakably the dominant communication tool in classrooms. English is the primary language ESOL children are required to speak when they enter primary school, and this expectation is implicitly understood, particularly by parents. It is not clear what ECE teachers should do - teach English or concentrate on social immersion? If they actively teach English language competency then this could further undermine the child's first language and convey the message that English is more important. However, if teachers do not build up any second language competency then this impedes the ability of the child to partake in the majority language education system. The issue is not easy to resolve, and for this reason I fear that the unstructured approach currently practiced in ECE settings could unintentionally entrench monolingual attitudes.

5.3 Institutionalizing monolingualism

Institutionalization of monolingualism leads to the tacit acceptance of English as the main code of communication, placing it at the top of the language hierarchy. Teachers in this study emphasized their belief in the importance of being culturally inclusive and respectful of diversity, but the findings suggest that the general submersion of children in a second language may simply reproduce patterns of cultural expectations. For example, teachers and children would mostly use English for social and instructional purposes, and signage, media, along with most learning materials are in English, rendering structures monolingual, regardless of efforts to be inclusive.

Furthermore, societal expectations to have the ability to speak English for success once children transition to primary school turns the majority language into the language of privilege, and places first languages into a deficit position. Participants explained how they sought to integrate different cultures to celebrate diversity through music, food, or greetings for example, but this does not necessarily enhance a child's grasp of their first language. It cannot be assumed that they receive appropriate stimulation to achieve academic capabilities in their first language, and it could be argued that well-intended efforts by teachers who have insufficient resources or training, consequently result in reducing children's first languages to novelty status in the classroom.

As Bourdieu (1974) argued, language is part of cultural capital, both as a social tool and as a means of expressing social strata. Bourdieu's theory concentrated on inequalities created through the class system by means of tacit understandings and knowledge. For example, working class children were not privy to codes and norms within a middle class education system. This applies to different social strata where the same language is spoken and would therefore be even more pronounced when different languages are spoken, particularly where one language is considered more prestigious than the other. Cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1974) denotes how people of the same background have an unspoken and implicit understanding of the social circle they inhabit, which explains the painful loss people of migrant backgrounds experience when language shift undermines engagement and communication within their own cultural groups.

If ESOL children do not acquire academic English language abilities then this positions them on the fringes of the privileged strata of the population who speak the language and have the cultural capital that is embodied in the habitus of those who think, act, and speak in the normative way. Gramling (2009) illustrates this connection between language and cultural capital in the power discourse reportedly currently operative in Germany, where the threshold of belonging is determined by the ability to speak the majority language, German. Here a shift has taken place from ethnicity to language, creating what is described by Gramling (2009) as performative monolingualism.

Although multilingualism is increasingly the norm, German language proficiency is a prerequisite for attaining citizenship, as the civic ideal prescribes that a 'good citizen' speaks the language. In New Zealand, too, language competency represents one of the immigration criteria, and English language is a critical component for access to, and success within, society.

Language is but one exclusionary measure societies apply and it is difficult to ascertain where responsibilities lie, particularly with children. The education sector is instructed and compelled to provide children with the requisite tools to have equal access to opportunities. However, in doing so the language discourse becomes a power discourse, and the majority language receives all the legitimization to set the bar for all those who want to partake in the majority society.

Foucault's (1979) explanation of how social structures shape our lives and power relations exert their influence assists in understanding how the language discourse evolves into a discourse of power. As Foucault argues, discourse defines the objects of our knowledge, governs the way a topic can be talked about, and limits and restricts ways of talking. This way of thinking becomes so habitual, that it becomes unnoticed. Such discourses are employed by institutions such as education, the most effective structures for regulating society. The discourse of language / power is the discourse of knowledge, and in this instance all knowledge is contained in the majority language, which is the largely uncontested norm.

5.4 Recommendations

As New Zealand society is becoming increasingly multicultural, a grounded and well-planned response to understand the impact of the corresponding increase in spoken languages is required. This section advocates an examination of the prevailing approach to and ranking of languages, and recommends a number of research-related and education pathways.

My key recommendation is to extend data generation in the early childhood sector to ascertain the level of first language capabilities in young children. The Ministry of Education generates data on the number of languages and the amount of time languages other than English are spoken in ECE settings, and is beginning to investigate how much of the first language is spoken in Pasifika households. However, if biliteracy is the goal, then it is necessary to gain an insight into how well the first language is established and how it is supported in the home, so this can be matched with educational strategies in the learning environment. Conversely, it would be of educational interest to ascertain how much ECE settings contribute to language shift.

A clear official statement that all heritage languages are considered an asset and which encourages their use would be valuable, as this would send a signal that multilingualism is of societal benefit. For example, if the focus shifted from English as the dominant language to a plurilingual approach this could prompt a change to the language hierarchy. In a multilingual and diverse society it can be useful to have the ability to move between cultures. There is a subtle difference between considering speaking English as a second language as a lack of skills and a problematic issue, and thinking of a first language as a competency, with another language in development, particularly in the education context.

A further recommendation is, to develop and nurture an affinity and openmindedness towards languages other than English from a young age. Treating the ability to speak additional languages as a positive and an opportunity requires however making considered provisions. Although speaking a language other than English is not considered a problem per se by ECE teachers in this study, not addressing second language acquisition at all whilst children attend centres cannot be considered an educational approach. Leaving both first and second language development to chance is not serving children well and could possibly contribute to language shift. The mere

acknowledgment of cultural diversity and inclusive practices does not change how children are ensconced in a single language education system, where they are measured and assessed by their proficiency in English without any regard to competencies in first languages. With ECE centres lacking cohesive support for second language development children are ill prepared for the formal education system.

Teachers will continue to address needs of an increasingly multilingual population and attempt to devise strategies that are suitable for use in the socio-cultural paradigm. This study has discussed the lack of resources and language-specific knowledge that would enable teachers to make informed decisions. Teachers therefore need to be provided with knowledge derived from current second language acquisition research, particularly current New Zealand-specific knowledge. Ecological considerations suggest that North American or European second language teaching practices and experiences may not necessarily be applicable to New Zealand or pertinent to the life experiences of children coming to these shores. Pasifika and other migrant experiences and their subsequent life experiences in New Zealand differ from migrant lives in Europe, Asia, and the Americas and second language acquisition processes and heritage language survival may be similar but have their own particularities. In light of increasing migration, the New Zealand education sector would be advantaged by extending current investigations and generate a custom-made knowledge base.

5.5 Future Research

Although this research involved a range of distinct types of early childhood providers, the findings represent only a small sample and a localized perspective. Further research could build on these findings and investigate first language development in migrant children who attend mainstream early childhood facilities, as well as their continued language development, both first and second, once they enter the primary and secondary education sector.

The negative educational outcomes for Pasifika students who go through a language shift through atrophy of their first language and then experience language delay in English, is a development that is already documented and presents a concern for policy-makers (Ministry of Education, 2015). It may be that Chinese, Indian, or Somali children experience the same language problems, but this is not known. In the event that these children do not encounter any ESOL problems at primary or secondary school where the demands for academic English language competency are arguably greater, it would be pertinent to research these trajectories. It would be equally educational to establish a knowledge base about the loss of heritage languages amongst the children in the migrant and refugee population in general.

It seems short-sighted for any society to not utilize this readily accessible array of languages. Although efforts are expected and made within education to move away from the deficit model and label students as 'not able', the wide acceptance of English as the overwhelming and normative means of communication seems an outdated concept and a needless constraint from an educational point of view. There is scope for a discussion on the role of the education sector, and particularly ECE, in maintaining and fostering languages other than English, along with exploring plurilinguistic possibilities.

Government efforts to increase participation in early childhood education centre on the principal idea that this is beneficial for children. As the population's diversity increases, new demands may not be entirely met by the current curriculum. Future research into how teachers in the 21st Century cope with new developments would show whether they are adequately trained and resourced to meet those challenges.

5.6 Conclusion

If it is the expectation that ECE teachers should actively engage with minority language children with the goal to implement an effective immersion programme that conveys second language skills, then appropriate education, theorizing, research, policies, guidelines, and resources need to be made available. Teachers of this young age group understandably consider their role to be nurturing and give priority to inclusive practices that acknowledge the value of diversity. ECE teachers are not trained to be language teachers, hence it cannot be expected that mainstream early childhood settings provide effective language support in either first languages of migrant children or their second language development. However, there is a need for discussion about the role of ECE in language acquisition in general and its possible role in language shift.

As this thesis argued from the outset, it is questionable whether the mere placement of children of second language backgrounds in ECE settings results in favourable educational outcomes for them. First and second language development is an intricate process and currently research states that children acquire a second language best with social support and quality input (Krashen, 1989). This does not indicate formal learning through mechanical drill, but meaningful and contextualised input by qualified teachers. Languages are not absorbed through osmosis and expecting young children to assume responsibility for their own learning within a dominant language environment seems an unreasonable expectation. The following concluding chapter relates the significance of the connection between language paradigms and ecological systems children negotiate.

Chapter Six - Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The trajectory of this research began with an investigation into the microcosm that is an early childhood classroom and established connections to the macrocosm of society, its laws, values, and customs. It continued on to consider some of the circumstances that have an impact on children's lives, markedly teachers who make educational decisions. Recognizing the importance of ecological factors for a child of minority language background, this thesis discussed the link between children's linguistic experiences in a second language and the structural framework that sets the parameters. This chapter summarizes the intent of the research, the research findings, and their implications. Finally, I situate this study in the context of prior research and debates on education and inequality. The concluding comments link linguistic equity and Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory, and invites further sociological research.

Beginning with the inner circles of the ecological system as described by Bronfenbrenner (1979), i.e. the microsystem encompassing immediate family, the neighbourhood, as well as school, this thesis concentrated on how an early education environment is often the first instance a child with a non-English background encounters the majority language. There may be a wide array of individual life experiences that influence outcomes for these children. For example a child may come from an economically deprived background and their first impressions of education could be in a centre that is ill-equipped to promote learning. On the other hand, a child can receive valuable learning extensions in a vibrant community through well-educated and well-resourced professionals. In both instances, the preparedness and resourcefulness of ECE teachers can have a lasting effect on the trajectory of a child's disposition towards first and second language, and their ability to move between two or more linguistic worlds.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory emphasizes how all relationships are bidirectional: adults affect children's behaviour, as does a child's genetically and socially influenced behaviour such as personalities and attributes affect adults', and in this case teachers. This, and the intrinsic value of positive interaction between parents and childcare practitioners is already recognised and part of best practice. This support of the child and parental involvement in education could be utilized and extended further in the language acquisition context.

The thesis also reached to other parts of the ecological system, and discussed how the macrosystem enveloping a child's life exerts influence on how migrant languages are integrated or overpowered by the majority language or how a refugee's life experience plays a role in linguistic development. In all spheres bidirectionality is a factor, as values, laws, customs, and resources influence experiences and learning in a classroom, and strongly influence the outcomes for the individual. Finally, this research considered how in New Zealand, the laws stipulate equality in education and acknowledgment of bicultural values, with resources made available for explicitly inclusive education but also how this is not supported by the prevailing monoglot structures of society.

6.2 Summary

The intent of the research was to elicit information that would show the relationship between teachers' knowledge and their strategies in the classroom with regard to teaching children of second language background. The knowledge of what teachers considered appropriate and effective in developing linguistic capabilities would be instructional, particularly in an increasingly language-diverse education sector. The study also recorded the voices and opinions of the primary agents in early education, i.e. the practitioners.

The findings indicate that early childhood teachers receive limited professional training regarding second language acquisition in young children and no specific guidance through policies or strategies for language-related interactions. Teachers draw predominantly from their site-specific philosophies as well as the national curriculum and work within a socio-cultural paradigm. Their work is based on a strong belief in cultural awareness and inclusive practices that emphasize the social integration of the child as opposed to language instruction per se. Indeed, specific language instruction was resoundingly rejected as an early childhood learning objective. However, this principled stance did not challenge the structural framework where English remained the dominant language and the educational demands children faced upon entry in the primary sector.

Teachers lack up-to-date information regarding second language acquisition and/or any guidance regarding second language theories and practice. The review of literature shows the complexity of linguistic variations and their situational particularities. Despite a significant growth in knowledge pertaining to biculturalism in the New Zealand education context, bilingualism is still regarded as a niche subject and has not entered mainstream education. This study aims to add teachers' voices to the body of knowledge and draw attention to a knowledge gap. If the education sector plans to enhance the existing bilingual or language enrichment opportunities migrants bring to the classroom, then teachers' views and experience cannot remain monolingual.

This research demonstrates how monoglot structures in mainstream ECE settings neither support children's first language nor extend second language development. This could unintentionally facilitate institutionalized monolingualism, and as such, I propose that programme planners and policy makers examine the role of early childhood education. This work raises the question of whether it is intended that the majority language maintain its status and whether the purpose of education is to prepare children for a multilinguistic or a monoglot society.

6.3 Research Context

For a young child, teachers are part of their close environment, the mesosystem. Although this seems a minor extension of the immediate home, this may be the first instance a child encounters institutionalized monolingualism. There are many influences at work, many even conflicting and counteracting each other, and teachers may engage in sincere inclusionary practices but are themselves subject to structures and may unintentionally perpetuate an exclusionary language discourse. As previously discussed, family dynamics and circumstances also have a direct bearing on a child's development, including acquisition of other languages. Cultural heritage and structures, migration background and economic influences add layers to personal experiences, contributing to the bioecological system. Learning experiences in early childhood settings may appear to be inconsequential, however, ultimately the question to pose is what is education for, beginning with early childhood education. Sociological debates on education and inequality explore the concepts of schooling as opposed to education and self-determination in social communities. In Freire's view (1970), education must be liberating and empower people with the ability to act upon the world. Education is also a key site where conforming ideologies are dominant and disseminated, making education a political act (Freire, 1970). The discussion of linguistic equity is consequently part of the educational framework.

The increasing heterogeneity of societies has given rise to a wide array of international research that discusses the linguistic implications of bilingualism or multilingualism as well as the language-related structures that permeate societies and engender or exacerbate linguistic inequities. The opportunities for further research into what it means for children to be bilingual or achieve multi-competencies are manifold, particularly in the New Zealand context. Linguistic awareness and inter-cultural knowledge has increased through accumulating experience in Kōhanga Reo, Aogas, and Kura Kaupapa, but there seems to be a disconnect between this cultural awareness and bilingualism or plurilingualism for society as a whole. Considering the

number of languages spoken by new migrants to New Zealand there is an opportunity to allow for more linguistic awareness. This research serves to draw attention to learning potential within classrooms that goes unused.

6.4 Concluding Comments

In this study a link has been crafted between linguistic inequity arising out of monolingual structures of society, particularly within education settings, and Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory. Research into constraints posed by institutionalized monoglot practices that situate non-majority language speakers in a deficit position and have exclusionary functions shows that whilst not speaking a majority language can be a hindrance, even the ability to speak a majority language - often at the cost of losing the first language - cannot break down barriers. Preserving heritage languages and educational practices in minority languages has benefits that go beyond the classroom. Yet, these added language capabilities may encounter disinterest, lack of understanding, or even exclusion, and as a result of societal structures they are often undermined and underutilized. In addition, life experiences and circumstances beyond individuals' control exert influences in a complex system of interdependence. One prominent factor is the issue of linguistic equity, inviting further sociological inquiry. Finally, in efforts to maintain heritage languages, the existing studies pertaining to the Māori and Pasifika context should be complemented by studies on other migrant language experiences to extend the scope of language learning and explore the concept of a plurilingual society.

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Appendix A

Interview questions

- 1) How many years have you been teaching?
- 2) What is your position at your centre?
- 3) How many children are under your care?
- 4) Do you have experience working with ESOL children at your centre?
- 5) What first languages have children used at your centre?
- 6) Do you speak any other languages than English (well enough to hold a conversation)
- 7) If yes, how long have you been speaking these
 - e.g. from childhood / as an adult
 - How did you acquire this language?
 - Do you use these languages in your classroom?
- 8) How do you determine a child's language support needs? (e.g. parents, assessment, observation)
 - a. Do you ascertain what other language is spoken in the home
 - b. Do you ascertain whether child is fluent / bilingual ?

- 9) How do you view the child upon entry? (as a fluent speaker?) How do you think this influences your actions?
- 10) Do you personally support ESOL children in the classroom?
- If yes, how? (e.g. individual / special language sessions, attention, peer teaching, games etc.) --- immersion model?
 - If no, why not? ---- submersion model / “pick it up”
- 11) What are your aspirations for children from a non-English speaking background? (e.g. school readiness, certain level of proficiency, social inclusion level) How well do you get them to speak English by the time they leave the preschool / kindy environment?
- 12) If you have several ESOL children speaking the same language in class, do you encourage this?
- 13) Do you try and incorporate the child’s language in class?
- 14) Do you try and learn some of the child’s language?
- 15) Do you encourage parents to speak their native language with the child at home?
- 16) Does your centre have any formal policies or informal strategies regarding children with English as a second language?
- 17) What is your centre’s teaching philosophy?

- 18) In your opinion, in what way does your centre's teaching philosophy influence how you cater for ESOL children? (e.g. especially integrative strategies, inclusiveness)
- 19) How do families express their aspirations regarding their children's language development? (e.g. introductory session, feedback, exchange of views)
- 20) Are the families of ESOL children involved in devising language strategies, and if so, to what extent? (do you think this could be useful?)
- 21) Have you been taught about children's acquisition of first language in your training or subsequent professional development? (have you learnt through your own experience?)
- 22) Have you been taught about children's acquisition of second language in your training or subsequent professional development? (any readings / theories?)
- 23) How do you think children at your centre acquire English?
- 24) Have you carried out your own studies into language acquisition and teaching ESOL?
- 25) Are there any particular initiatives that you could suggest that would be helpful for centres catering for ESOL children?

Appendix B



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PŪKENGĀ TANGATA

OVERCOMING LANGUAGE BARRIERS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Information Sheet

My name is Katina Beauchamp, and I am a student of sociology, undertaking a Master of Arts degree through the School of People, Environment, and Planning at Massey University, which is being supervised by Drs Peter Howland and Corrina Tucker.

The purpose of this research is to find out about the methods used by Early Childhood teachers to assist children with English as a second language to overcome language barriers. I want to find out if any specific strategies are found to be successful and particularly if teachers' strategies are influenced by their own and/or their centres' philosophies. Participants will have the opportunity to describe their views on their own methods and express recommendations based on their practical experience in the classroom. I would like to extend the invitation to participate in this research to you.

Participation in this research will involve taking part in a two hour long focus group that I will be facilitating as well as a number of individual follow-up interviews of one hour duration. Focus groups and individual interviews are to take place during September, October, and November 2015. Whilst participants' identities may be evident to others in their focus group, no participant-specific identifying factors will be used in the thesis resulting from this project and pseudonyms will be used. The sound recordings and accompanying notes made during discussions are for research purposes only, and will be kept confidential to myself and my supervisors.

If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- Decline to answer any particular question/s during focus groups;
- Ask any questions about the research at any time during participation;
- Provide information on the understanding that your name and other identifying factors will not be used in the research output; and
- Be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

Please feel free to contact myself or my research supervisors if you have any further questions or require any further information. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Katina Beauchamp

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Katina Beauchamp

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"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Julie Boddy, Chairperson of Research Ethics, telephone 06 356 9099, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz".

Appendix C



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PŪKENGĀ TANGATA

OVERCOMING LANGUAGE BARRIERS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Participant Consent Form

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree / do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I wish / do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the information sheet.

I agree not to disclose anything discussed in the Focus Group.

Signature: Date:

Full name - printed:

Te Kūnenga
ki Pūrehuroa

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Appendix D

Demographic Background Information

1) Age

18 years - 25

25 years - 35

35 years - 45

45 years - 55

55 years plus

2) Gender

Male

Female

3) Ethnicity

..... (please specify)

4) Educational Background in Early Childhood Education

Diploma

Degree

Post-graduate

Other(please specify)

5) Overseas teaching experience

Yes - (please specify)

No