



# Talking together *Te kōrerorero*

Talk information  
*Ngā ariā reo ā-waha*

This is a printable version of the Talk Information section of *Talking Together - Te kōrerorero*, an online resource filled with information and practical tools for kaiako to support children's oral language development.

To see the most up to date version of the whole resource go to: [tewhariki.tki.org.nz/talkingtogether](http://tewhariki.tki.org.nz/talkingtogether)

# Talking together

## Te kōrerorero

**Tōku reo, tōku ohooho, tōku reo, tōku māpihi maurea, tōku reo, tōku whakakai marihi.**

*My language is my awakening, my language is my treasure, my language is my prized possession.*

### What is Talking together, Te kōrerorero?

- *Talking together, Te kōrerorero* is a resource that promotes effective teaching practices so that kaiako and teaching teams can strengthen how they support the oral language across children's language pathways.
- Language is a taonga and nurturing this treasure is too important to be left to chance.
- This resource is for all children. In *Te Whāriki* (p. 25) oral language encompasses any method of communication the child uses as a first language. This includes New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) and for children who communicate using Communication Assistive Technology or Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) to replace or augment their speech. ([TalkLink](#)).
- This is an English language resource that also provides information about English language learning for children experiencing bilingual and multilingual pathways. It provides support for kaiako to integrate te reo Māori in early learning settings; recognising this is essential for a rich oral language environment.





## Sections of *Talking together, Te kōrerorero*

### Talk information

In this section find key information about oral language including oral language progression, differences in monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual pathways, and underpinning theories.

### Talk tools

In this section find practical approaches and strategies for building oral language including through conversations, music, storytelling, asking questions, and digital technology.



### **The foundation: *Te Whāriki***

*Talking together, Te kōrerorero* is underpinned by the principles, strands, and learning outcomes of [Te Whāriki](#). The vision is for all children to become increasingly competent and confident communicators, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society.

This resource aims to help children to become increasingly capable of understanding and using oral language within the context of a local curriculum. The approaches described are designed to be implemented through practices that reflect the distinctive character and values of each early learning service's community.

### **Te Tiriti o Waitangi**

Enacting Te Tiriti o Waitangi is a commitment to upholding the intent of the Treaty articles. These articles reflect a desire to live together in a spirit of partnership. A commitment is the acceptance of obligations for participation and protection. This commitment has implications for our education system, particularly in terms of achieving equitable outcomes for Māori and ensuring that te reo Māori not only survives but thrives.

Te reo Māori is a taonga under article two of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Fostering the learning and use of te reo Māori is the responsibility of all kaiako and the education system as a whole.

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# Understanding oral language

## *Te mārama ki ngā āhuatanga o te reo ā-waha*

### What is oral language?

In *Te Whāriki* oral language encompasses any method of communication the child uses as a first language.

This includes New Zealand Sign Language and, for children who are non-verbal, alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) technology and devices to replace or augment verbal communication (*Te Whāriki*, page 25).



### Why is language important?

One of the major tasks for children in the early years is to develop competence in and understanding of language.

Oral language is essential for:

- Communication – oral language helps children share with others what they feel and think and understand how others feel and think
- Learning – oral language helps children learn about other people and the world
- Wellbeing – oral language helps children manage their emotions and their behaviour
- Identity and belonging – oral language connects children to their culture
- Literacy and educational achievement – “Reading and writing float on a sea of talk”! This means that oral language in early childhood is the foundation for literacy learning and achievement in school and kura

Mana Reo | Communication in *Te Whāriki*, page 41.

## What makes up communication?

Communication is multifaceted. It is described as being more than words. Speech, language, social interaction and early literacy skills are all parts of a child's communication repertoire.

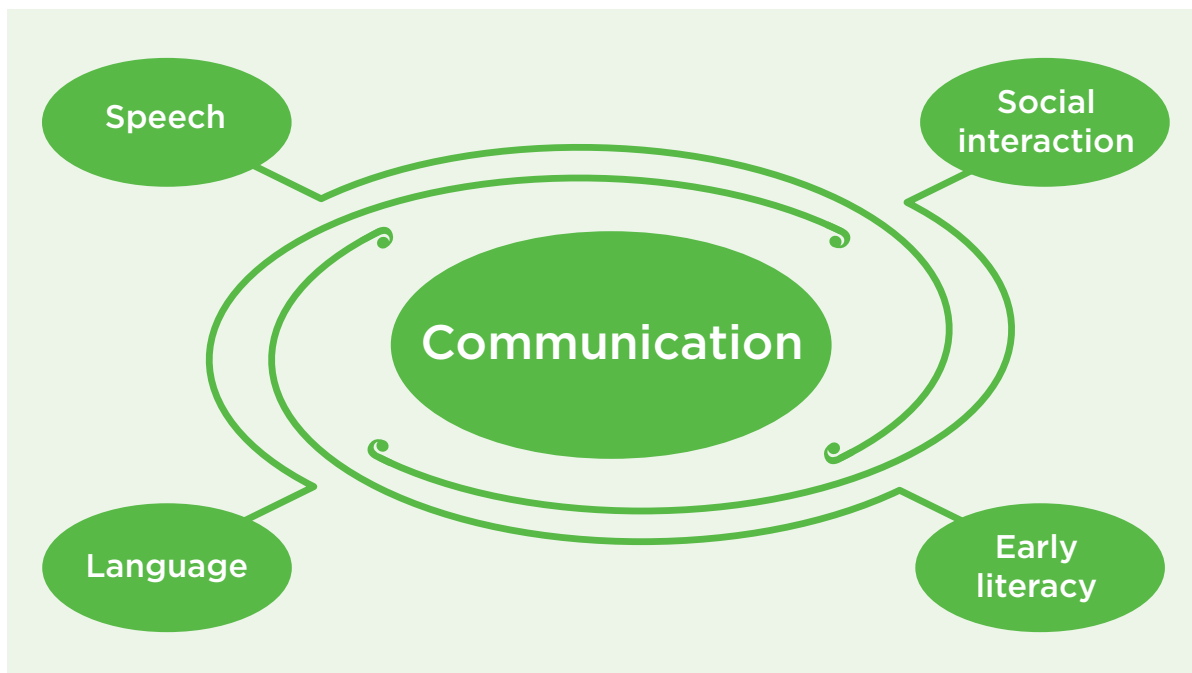


Diagram based on *Much more than words* p. 5. (Ministry of Education)

### Speech

The words, rhythm and intonation of sentences are made up from speech sounds.

### Social interaction

Learning how to use language appropriately by listening and taking conversational turns. It includes using social conventions and learning to speak differently with those who are older, younger and more or less knowledgeable.

### Emergent literacy

Learning the building blocks towards reading and writing.

This includes:

- concepts about print and books
- story comprehension and storytelling
- phonological awareness skills including identifying and manipulating units of oral language, such as in rhyming, letter sound identification and breaking words into syllables.

### Language

The term 'language' includes New Zealand Sign Language.

Oral language is made up of receptive (understanding) and expressive language and can be broken down into:

- words – labels for people, objects, actions, concepts and the beginnings or endings to those labels that show how many or when
- sentences – putting words together into a statement or question
- stories – putting sentences together into a causal chain of events with a beginning, a middle and an ending.

Tamariki need to hear rich language and connect it to real world experiences in order to first understand and then to speak (or sign).

The way you talk to children matters!

## Further information on oral language development

Find out more in:

- [Stepping stones to oral language](#)
- [Understanding bilingual and multilingual language pathways](#)

## References

1. Britten, J. (1970). *Language and Learning*. Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press.
2. Ministry of Education, (2016). [Much more than Words](#).
3. [Te Whāriki Online Webinar 6: Communication/Mana reo – Do you hear me?](#).



# Stepping stones in oral language

## *He poutama mō te reo ā-waha*

Children's oral language grows from a base of nonverbal skills to listening and taking turns, understanding and using body language and adjusting to the audience, for example, older or younger, tuakana or teina.

Social and emotional learning is linked to children's increasing competence in communication. See [He Māpuna Te Tamaiti](#). Kaiako effectively support children to be confident and capable communicators by "being knowledgeable about children's learning and development and able to identify their varied abilities, strengths, interests and learning trajectories." (*Te Whāriki*, page 59)

Kaiako are encouraged to develop an understanding of whānau aspirations for their child's language learning and development. (See [Partnering with whānau for language development](#).) Kaiako adjust their supports to each child's language learning pathway – English language, bilingual or multilingual.



Additional information on bilingualism and multilingualism will give guidance on further considerations when you are thinking about children who are experiencing bilingual or multilingual learning pathways.

- Talk information: [Understanding bilingual and multilingual learning pathways](#)
- Talk tools: [Supporting bilingual and multilingual learning pathways](#)

There are differences in some of the stepping stones children progress through across languages.



Below are the broad steps seen in the development of English language across speech sounds, words and sentences, stories and social interaction.

## Stepping stones for infants (birth to 18 months)

The bullet points below show the broad progressions seen in the development of oral language in infants.

Sounds:

- Saying and playing with single vowel sounds for example, “aaa, oooo, eeee”.
- Combining vowel and consonant sounds, for example “ba-ba-ba, do-do-do”.
- Jargoning – putting nonsense words together into what sounds like statements and questions.

Words and sentences:

- Non-verbal communication, such as sharing eye contact with another person or directing another person’s attention to an object by pointing or reaching.
- Starting to understand words in speech – understanding comes first.
- Saying their own first recognisable word. These first words are often short versions of the real thing, for example, “na-na” for banana, “meh” for milk or “bah” for bird.
- Doing their own first recognisable sign, especially for children who are deaf or hard of hearing and are learning in and through New Zealand Sign Language.
- Using imitations (imitates others’ sounds and actions) and gestures to communicate (wave for bye-bye or head shake for no).
- Pointing to body parts or objects and picking objects up to show to others.
- Gradually building their word bank to 50 spoken words and understanding many more words than they are saying.
- Combining words into short sentences, for example, “More ‘nan”. Their first sentences might be phrases they copy such as “all gone”.

Stories:

- Enjoying stories and being read to.
- Tracking with their eyes as pages are turned.
- Picking out favourite stories.
- Pointing to pictures.
- Articulating what is in the pictures in their own way.
- Interacting about what is happening in their immediate context of the here and now.

Social interaction:

- Paying close attention to adults who respond to their babble/vocalisation/talking.
- Taking turns in the conversation by babbling when the adult pauses.
- Responding to questions, for example, yes, no, what, or where, verbally or with an action. This shows that they are listening and understanding.
- Expressing their needs, wants, likes and dislikes through crying, smiling, looking and body movements.
- Joining in waiata and songs with vocal sounds and actions.
- Starting a conversation with a word and a point, for example, “Doggie”, a short question, “What ‘dat?” or a statement, “Me want ‘nana”.



### Stepping stones for toddlers (1–3 years)

The bullet points below show the broad progressions seen in the development of oral language in toddlers.

Sounds:

- Starting to use and play with many new sounds especially m, n, y, p, b, d, h and w.

Words:

- Rapidly learning new words every day – called the naming explosion.
- Understands and expresses a range of concrete words, for example, sit, car, eat and cup. Later develops an understanding of more abstract words, for example, warm, fast, move or nice.
- Starting to refer to needs, wants and feelings, usually their own, for example, “My want ‘dat” or “I mad at you”. These words help children regulate their emotions and behaviour.
- A spoken vocabulary of 1000 words or more.

Sentences:

- Combining words (or signs) into short sentences, for example, “More banana” and “My like banana”.
- Creating more complex sentences, for example, “My want to go home now”.
- Putting endings onto words, for example, “My shoeses” or “We’re having drinkers at our tea party”. These apparent mistakes are actually a sign of progress.

Stories:

- Telling their first stories by talking about the recent past, for example, “Banana allgone” and the future, for example, “Want banana”. This is a milestone because toddlers can now talk about images in their mind rather than describing only what they see in front of them.
- Answering simple questions with words and phrases (what, where or who).
- Telling a relatively complete story about an event that happened weeks or even months earlier.

Social interaction:

- Learning to take turns in short conversations with adults supporting.
- Starting to take part in pretend play, for example, pretending a block is a phone.
- Following simple verbal instructions, for example, “Shut the door”.
- Joining in waiata and songs with words and actions.
- Starting to use common sentence openers in past and future conversations like “Do you remember when ... ?”



### Stepping stones for young children (2.5–5 years)

The bullet points below show the broad progressions seen in the development of oral language in young children.

Sounds:

- Making more difficult sounds – k, g, f, v, ch, j, sh, zh, l, r, s, z and th.
- Becoming more aware of sounds, and larger parts of words, for example, syllables and rhymes.
- Making up their own rhymes, for example, bees knees. This sound play is vital for their later reading.

Words:

- Continuing to learn new words almost daily.
- Understanding and using words for abstract concepts (helping, above or because), time (yesterday or tomorrow) and more complex emotions and thoughts (wish, think or scared). These will help them deal with heightened emotions, regulating behaviour and resolving conflicts.
- Exploring and using mathematical symbols, concepts and processes, for example, volume, concepts, measurement, classifying, matching and pattern recognition.
- A spoken vocabulary of 300 – 5000 words.

Sentences:

- Making longer, more complex sentences (in oral language or New Zealand Sign Language) with person + action + object + time/place, for example, “I went to Aunty’s today”.
- Beginning to ask simple questions, for example, “What that?” progressing to asking complex questions like “Why is the sky blue?”
- Ninety percent of sentences are grammatically correct.

Stories:

- Telling short stories about real-life, pretend events and dreams.
- More complex pretend play, for example, “Now you be the fairy and I be the frog”.
- Telling longer stories with a basic beginning, middle, lots of talk about thoughts and feelings and sometimes an ending, for example, “There was a monster, and then ... and then ... it was super scary and I wished it would go away. That’s all”.

Social Interaction:

- Learning to take turns in a conversation.
- Starting to adapt their level of language use to different people.
- Starting to predict what others may be thinking and show empathy with how they may feel.
- Following two step instructions without prompting, for example, “Pick up your jersey and put it in your bag”.
- By age four, most children will be able to communicate effectively in most situations.

## References

Acknowledgement for this section to Professor Elaine Reese (University of Otago) and Dr. Alison Sparks, SLT.

*Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa*, Early childhood curriculum.

## Useful resources

[Extending their language - expanding their world: Children's oral language \(birth - 8 years\)](#)

An evaluation investigating how effectively young children's oral language learning and development were supported in their early years of education

[He Māpuna te Tamaiti: Supporting social and emotional competence in early learning](#)

See pages 37-38 for more information on supporting children to understand, express and regulate their emotions.

[Much more than words](#)

A Ministry of Education publication providing information about children's communication development. It includes how to make a referral to Learning Support when a whānau and early learning service have some concerns about a child's communication learning and development.



# Understanding bilingual and multilingual language pathways

## Ngā huarahi reorua, reohuhua

Increasingly, children are likely to be learning in and through more than one language. Besides English, te reo Māori and New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL), some 200 different languages are in use in New Zealand, with Samoan, Hindi, Northern Chinese, French and Yue (Cantonese) being the most common. Children more readily become bi- or multilingual and bi- or multiliterate when language learning in the education setting builds on their home languages.

Te Whāriki, page 12



### Benefits of bilingual and multilingual learning

“Kaiako in early learning have a vital part to play by educating families about the advantages of bilingualism, by helping children retain their bilingual identities and their family ties and by preparing them to live in a diverse society.”<sup>1</sup>

A diverse language environment promotes an understanding of concepts and values associated with identity, language and culture.

Becoming proficient in two or more languages is a proven advantage in any language learning. Research shows that fostering bilingualism (and multilingualism) supports children to develop strengths in cognitive and social learning.

Being bilingual enables children to:

- communicate with people in their families, communities, and learning environments
- relate to others – participate in cultural activities and connect with others in the community
- learn new words and learn additional languages
- develop bi-literacy or multi-literacy skills and have access to additional literatures, traditions and ideas to enrich their later learning
- access and apply cultural knowledge that is embedded in language<sup>2</sup>
- demonstrate flexible thinking and be able to use information in new ways
- come up with new solutions to problems.<sup>3, 4</sup>



Kaiako signing the waiata about colours *Mā is white* with a group of children.

## Understanding bilingual language learning pathways

Fostering children's oral language in Aotearoa involves bilingual and multilingual language learning pathways. Kaiako have an important role in integrating te reo Māori in everyday activities. Promoting the learning and use of home languages in the early learning setting affirms children's culture and identity.

Being aware of each child's language learning pathway helps kaiako make thoughtful observations, formative assessments and consider how to support learning and development in ways that acknowledge their linguistic and cultural strengths.

There are two pathways for children becoming bilingual:

- developing two (or more) languages from birth
- second (or subsequent) language learning.

## Bilingual from birth

Language steps:

1. Children spend time immersed in two or more languages from infancy.
2. Children mix their use of languages. They learn sounds, vocabulary and grammar across their languages.
3. Children know the distinct features of their languages.
4. They are able to switch between languages according to their conversational partner.
5. Children develop a preferred language over time.

## Second (and subsequent) language learning after age three

Language steps:

1. Children become proficient in their home language. They are introduced to a second language after age three.
2. Children mainly observe and listen in environments where the second language is spoken.
3. Children use patterns of the new language: short sentences that are modelled by fluent speakers.
4. Children become creative in the new language, developing their own correct sentences.
5. Children become proficient and hold conversations in their second (or subsequent) language.

## Code-switching

Children can learn more than one language system at the same rate as monolingual learning. Expect children to combine elements of languages in one sentence as a typical feature of bilingual/multilingual interactions.

## Receptive and expressive language

Expect in all language learning that children's receptive language (knowledge and understanding of language) is a step ahead of their expressive language (what they can express).

## Strategies

See [Supporting bilingual and multilingual learning pathways](#).

## References

1. Ball, C. E. (2012) Masters Thesis. [The richness diversity brings: Diverse languages and literacies in early childhood education](#). Auckland: Auckland University of Technology.
2. Derby, M. (2019) Doctoral Thesis. [Restoring Māori literacy narratives to create contemporary stories of success](#). Canterbury: University of Canterbury.
3. Education Review Office (2016) [Responding to language diversity in Auckland](#). Wellington: ERO.
4. American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA) [The advantages of being bilingual](#).
5. Weitzman, E. and Lowry, L. (2011). Dual language development in typically developing children- part 1. Toronto: Hanen Research Centre.
6. Weitzman, E. and Lowry, L. (2012). Bilingualism in children with language delays: part 2 in our series on bilingualism. Toronto: Hanen Research Centre.

## Useful resources

[Bilingualism in preschoolers](#)

A Radio New Zealand podcast by Wellington speech and language therapist Christian Wright.

[The English language learning progressions introduction](#)

The first downloadable PDF in this series is an introduction and contains information and understandings about learning an additional language.

[Extending their language-expanding their world: Children's oral language, birth – 8 years](#)

An Education Review Office 2017 report on how effectively young children's oral language learning and development were supported in their early years of education.

[Research to understand the features of quality Pacific bilingual education: Review of best practices](#)

A report bringing together New Zealand and international research by Professor Stephen May, Te Puna Wānanga, University of Auckland.

*Learning language and loving it*

Weitzman E. and Greenberg (2002). 2nd ed. Learning Language and Loving It: A guide to promoting children's social, language and literacy development in early childhood settings. A Hanen Centre Publication, Toronto. pp 253-259.



# Background theories and research in oral language

## *Ngā ariā, ngā rangahau o te reo ā-waha*

### He Awa Whiria – a braided river approach

Knowledge and theory are culturally bound. Values and practices are passed down in the traditions of each culture and do not always translate well into other contexts.

He Awa Whiria is a metaphor for considering the relationship between Māori and non-Māori (predominantly Western) streams of knowledge. In braided rivers the water flows through a number of channels separated by alluvial deposits. These channels intersect and shift over time as they respond to the changing water and soil conditions, but they all lead to the same destination. In Aotearoa, braided rivers are particularly common in Canterbury.

This idea is inspired by Professor Sir Mason Durie and developed by Professor Angus and Adjunct Associate Professor Sonja Macfarlane. He Awa Whiria draws from both Māori and non-Māori streams of knowledge and creates space where “the two streams of knowledge are able to blend and interact”.<sup>1</sup>

### Kaupapa Māori approaches and oral language

Te reo Māori is a language that uses huahuatau/metaphor, kupu whakarite/simile, kīrehu/idioms, kīwaha/colloquialisms and reo whakaahua/descriptive language in everyday speech.

There are traditional ways of being, ways of knowing and ways of doing<sup>3</sup> that can be drawn upon in Kaupapa Māori to teach, model and learn language within everyday activities and through play. These include whakapapa, waiata ā-ringa, karakia, haka, pao, pātere, kōrero tāwhito, pūrakau, pakiwaitara and tuakana-teina relationships.<sup>4</sup>

Users of te reo Māori are encouraged to use these language features to engage with their environment and their listeners. Rich oral language can be caught as much as taught. This can be described as the difference between deliberately teaching te reo Māori and the modelling of te reo Māori.

### Western science and oral language

The Western science tradition has examined relationships between oracy (oral language capabilities) and literacy (reading and writing). It promotes literacy as essential for social, cultural and economic wellbeing. It recognises that both oracy and literacy are essential for communication, future learning and positive life outcomes.

Recent studies on brain development and learning link early oral language, particularly breadth of vocabulary and phonological awareness, to literacy success far into the school years.<sup>5,6</sup>





### Creating a braided river

There are many opportunities for kaiako to be intentional in their use of approaches and strategies from Māori and non-Māori knowledge bases as they support children's oral language. For the early learning service an example is integrating te reo Māori and tikanga within all daily care rituals. For kaiako an example is correct pronunciation of names and modelling the use of phrases in te reo Māori, such as «e noho» / "sit down" or "hoake tātou" / "let's go".

Another simple and effective strategy that creates a braided river is the 3 R's plus actions in daily activities and play - repetition, rhythm, rhyme, and actions (non verbal communication).

By braiding the Kaupapa Māori approaches with those of Western science, we add richness to oral language teaching and learning and to the curriculum overall. Weaving approaches equitably avoids assimilating te ao Māori to suit Western constructs.

### References

1. Durie M., (2006) The Treaty of Waitangi: domestic relations, global impacts and a New Zealand agenda. Seminar delivered at the Treaty Debate Series 2010. Wellington: Te Papa Tongarewa.
2. Macfarlane, S., Macfarlane, A., Gillon, G., (2015) Sharing the food baskets of knowledge: creating space for a blending of streams. Sociocultural realities: Exploring new horizons. Christchurch: Canterbury University Press.
3. Ministry of Education, (2009) [Te whatu pōkeka. Kaupapa Māori assessment for learning: Early Childhood exemplars](#). Wellington: Ministry of Education.
4. Hemara, W., (2000) [Māori pedagogies: A view from the literature](#). Wellington: NZCER.
5. McNaughton, S., (2020) [The literacy landscape in Aotearoa New Zealand: What we know, what needs fixing and what we should prioritise](#). Auckland: Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor Kaitohutohu Mātanga Pūtaiao Matua ki te Pirimia.
6. Center on the Developing Child. Retrieved September 2020. [Brain architecture](#). MA, United States of America: Harvard University.

# Partnering with whānau for language development

## *Te mahi tahi me ngā whānau ki te whakawhanake i te reo ā-waha*

**Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi engari he toa takitini.**

*I come not with my own strengths but bring with me the gifts, talents and strengths of my family, tribe and ancestors.*



“Children learn and develop best when their culture, knowledge and community are affirmed and when people in their lives help them make connections across settings.” (*Te Whāriki*, page 20)  
Whakawhanauangatanga – building respectful and reciprocal relationships – is the key to making such connections with whānau.<sup>1</sup>

Whakawhanaungatanga and the whakataukī on this page are useful touchstones (guiding principles) for a partnership model with whānau for oral language. It is a reminder that language is a taonga within each whānau that deserves kaiako attention and respect.

## Conversations

When kaiako regularly have conversations with whānau, about new and fun things happening at home, they can be revisited in conversations kaiako have with tamariki. This way, tamariki are often more motivated to talk because they are the expert in a conversation.

Regular catch-ups with whānau give kaiako the opportunity to learn about languages spoken at home and plan together how they can incorporate key words into everyday interactions. In these conversations with whānau kaiako can promote the importance of fostering the learning of home languages by family members speaking their strongest language with their children.

## Sharing practice

Kaiako can share with whānau new and existing practices. These can be te reo Māori words and phrases, sound and vocabulary games and New Zealand Sign Language.

The idea that reading and writing “float on a sea of talk”<sup>2</sup> may be new to whānau. Guidance for whānau is often as simple as pointing out ways in which they can contribute to children’s expanding language and vocabulary through routines and events in everyday life.

See the [Talk tools](#) for strategies.

## Whānau aspirations

Whānau have aspirations for their tamariki. This includes having their language, culture and identity affirmed in the learning setting. Inviting whānau to share their aspirations helps to build a shared understanding of how adults can provide learning support across settings.

Two topics that may be of concern to whānau are language delay and learning English as an additional language. They are also topics where whānau and kaiako may have different expectations and desired outcomes.

Kaiako help to navigate these differences by:

- nurturing trusting relationships as a priority at all times
- listening carefully – being conscious that their own assumptions can get in the way of listening
- being conscious of the messages body language conveys, for example, possible messages of doubt or mistrust facial expressions may give to whānau
- finding common ground as a starting point, for example, kaiako and whānau often have the same goal but the expected process to get there can be different, understanding this can help lighten concerns for both whānau and kaiako
- having a sound knowledge base from which to support and offer reliable guidance when it is asked for, for example, how and when language develops.





## References

1. Bright, N., Barnes, A., & Hutchings, J. (2013). [Ka whānau mai te reo: Honouring whānau upholding reo Māori](#). Wellington: NZCER
2. Britten, J. (1970). *Language and learning*. Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press.

## Useful resources

### [Much more than words](#)

A Ministry of Education publication providing information about children's communication development. It includes how to make a referral to Learning Support when a whānau and early learning service have some concerns about a child's communication learning and development.

### [Kei roto i te whare: Māori language in the home](#)

Te Puni Kōkiri booklet kaiako can share with whānau to support their learning and speaking te reo Māori in the home.



# Kaiako responsibilities in oral language

## *Te wāhi ki ngā kaiako i te ako i te reo ā-waha*

**Ka mōmōu ki te takoto mātaotao ki te pukapuka. Whakahokia mai ki te arero, ka whakamahi ai.**

*Language is wasted, lying neglected within books. Return it to the tongue, and then use it!*



**Kaiako are the key resource in any early learning service. Their primary responsibility is to facilitate children's learning and development through thoughtful and intentional pedagogy.**

*Te Whāriki, page 59*



### Intentional teaching

Intentional pedagogy refers to “teachers’ planful, thoughtful, and purposeful use of knowledge, judgment and expertise to organise learning experiences for children” in everyday play activities, routines and transitions.<sup>2</sup> The quality of kaiako talk and interactions plays a key role in converting intentional pedagogy into actions.

Intentional teaching includes planning for tamariki to hear and participate in a range of oral language rituals. For example, formal mihi, greetings, karanga, talanoa, humour, debates, planning discussions and stories.

*Talking together, Te kōrerorero* supports kaiako to adopt intentional teaching practices. It provides information about how children [learn and progress](#) as they become increasingly capable of understanding and using oral language. Knowledge about how children learn and progress helps kaiako to identify teachable moments. It leads to tailored learning experiences that deepen and strengthen children's oral language learning.

## Cultural responsiveness



**Children are more likely to feel at home if they regularly see their own culture, languages and world views valued in the ECE setting.**

*Te Whāriki*, page 31



Cultural responsiveness requires kaiako to think about their own beliefs, values, biases and wellbeing, ensuring these support bilingual and multilingual language learning pathways.

As kaiako learn about the cultures and languages represented in their service, they can initiate and support changes to oral language and literacy practices. This includes promoting the [benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism](#).

Increasing kaiako proficiency in the use of te reo and tikanga Māori helps all children to learn and develop capabilities in te reo and tikanga Māori.<sup>3</sup>

## Inclusive practice

Inclusive practice recognises that each child is unique, and their development is responsive to a variety of sociocultural, ecological and biological influences. Reflecting on the connection between children's communication and the whole picture of a child's wellbeing and development is important. Making links between children's communication and behaviour can help kaiako consider appropriate ways to respond to and support oral language learning.

Some children may require more focused or intentional support for their oral language learning. *Talking together, Te kōrerorero* will help kaiako plan for and support every child to progress. Kaiako have a role in learning how to effectively use a range of technologies with tamariki who have augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices. In some cases, kaiako may need to draw on external services of a speech and language therapist or other specialist help. The approaches and practices discussed in *Talking together, Te kōrerorero* will help support children's progress towards any individual plan goals related to oral language.

The Ministry of Education resource [Much more than words](#), provides information on typical communication development and how to make a referral to Learning Support when a whānau and early learning service have some concerns about a child's communication learning and development.

## References

1. Milroy, W., & Kāretu, T. (2018). *He kupu tuku iho: Ko te reo Māori te tatau ki te ao*. Auckland: Auckland University Press.
2. McLaughlin, T., & Cherrington, S. (2018). Creating a rich curriculum through intentional teaching. *Early Childhood Folio*, 22, 33-38.
3. Ministry of Education, [Ka hikitia: Actions for early learning](#). Wellington: Ministry of Education.

# Assessment in oral language and communication

## *Te āhua o te aromatawai i te reo ā-waha me te whakawhitiwhiti*

Kaiako use formative assessment (assessment that strengthens learning) to find out:

- what children already know and can do (across their languages)
- what interests children
- how children's languages and a language rich environment is currently supported by kaiako, including the integration of te reo Māori
- how children's learning is progressing
- what might be the next step
- areas in which children may need additional support.

Māori ways of knowing, being and doing in formative assessment take account of:

- educational aspirations of whānau for mokopuna
- the inherent strengths, traditions, history, whānau and whakapapa of mokopuna
- te mita o te reo Māori, the sounds, words and use of te reo Māori that are distinctive for each hapū and iwi.



Assessment information should inform conversations on learning with families and whānau.

Formative assessment may be in the moment or documented. In the moment assessments inform our ability to tailor responses and interactions for the benefit of children's thinking and learning. They are at the heart of intentional teaching.

Documented assessments can take a variety of forms including narratives (learning stories), running records, time sampling, anecdotal observations and audio and video recordings.

From time to time, assessments may inform expert advice. For example, specialist services may make use of your assessment of a child's language development and communication skills.

## Effective use of assessment data

Kaiako making effective use of assessment to foster oral language growth will regularly:

- consider children's capabilities in languages across all their environments, for example, in English, home languages and community languages
- engage with whānau as experts on their child's interests and their language capabilities at home and in other settings
- use assessment information to help select effective teaching strategies that match the needs and interests of a child, group of children, or the service as a whole
- use assessment for informing conversations about language learning with children whānau and families, other kaiako and external support agencies
- consider what assessments tell you about progression over time and how you can support children to get to the next step.

## Observing oral language and communication

In [Stepping stones in oral language](#) you will find lists of the broad progressions seen in the development of language and communication for infants, toddlers and young children in English. Use the descriptors within each of these to inform your observations and gather evidence about progression over time. Descriptors are grouped under the following topics.

- sounds – order of speech sound development and developing phonemic awareness
- words – expected word bank and types of words used at different stages
- sentences – word order, word endings and sentence structure
- stories – enjoyment and participation through to creating their own stories
- social Interaction – attention, responses and conversational strategies.

## Receptive or expressive language?

All language and communication relies on skill development in:

- receptive language – the ability to hear, process and understand information
- expressive language – the ability to respond and express meaning with sounds, words, gestures or signing.

Children's receptive language is usually ahead of their ability to express and respond. This is the reason why it is important to address both aspects within assessments. For example, a child described as "having no English" may not speak but still have a good understanding of the language.

When observing language and communication progressions consider:

- How well do they understand what is being expressed to them? How do you know that?
- Does a bilingual or multilingual child demonstrate receptive language capabilities in their home language/s?
- Can they follow one or two simple directions – an indication of their receptive language capabilities?
- If they are not using words, do they use gestures to respond and express themselves?
- In what situations and with which people do they use or not use expressive language?



## Useful resources

The links in this section go to useful frameworks for narrative assessment that are consistent with the vision of *Te Whāriki*.

### [The Education Hub](#)

Examples of practical ways to document and respond to children's progress in communication capabilities.

### [Kei Tua o te Pae, books 1-20](#)

#### [Book 17 reflective questions](#)

These best practice guides provide reflective questions on assessment practices in dual literacy, te reo Māori and English.

### [Much more than words](#)

This PDF provides information about children's communication development so you can think how a child is talking and support them, using their skills and interests.

### [Te Whatu Pōkeka](#)

Philosophies and practices related to assessment based on kaupapa Māori.

### *Learning stories*

Carr, M., & Lee, W. (2012). *Learning stories: Constructing learner identities in early education*. London, England: Sage Publications Ltd.

### *Research article: Bilingual considerations for learning te reo Māori in the context of English*

Reese, E., Keegan, P., McNaughton, S., Kingi, T. K., Ataoa Carr, P., Schmidt, J., Mohal, J., Grant, C., and Morton, S. (2017). *Te Reo Māori: indigenous language acquisition in the context of New Zealand English*. *Journal of Child Language*, 1-28. Oxford University Press.

# Reflection and inquiry about oral language

## *Te huritao me te pakirehua i te ako i te reo ā-waha*

Reflection and inquiry both support kaiako professional learning and contribute to improved learning outcomes for tamariki. *Te Whāriki* describes the key responsibilities of kaiako. One of these is for kaiako to be “thoughtful and reflective about what they do, using evidence, critical inquiry and problem solving to shape their practice” (*Te Whāriki*, page 59).

Reflective kaiako critically examine their thinking, attitudes, values and practices, and they learn from experience. Through inquiry, they use multiple sources of evidence to inform changes to their practice aimed at improvement.

Bringing a reflective, inquiring frame of mind to assessment, internal evaluation and curriculum planning is vital. It allows you to draw together evidence, experience, critical thinking and knowledge about effective, inclusive pedagogies to develop and trial approaches and evaluate progress.



### Whole-team inquiry

Here are some questions to consider in regards to the progression of oral language learning:

- What are our intentional teaching strategies to support children’s oral language progress?
- What do recent assessments tell us about the progress of individuals and groups of children in our service?
- What further information do we need to seek to better understand the different language needs of infants, toddlers and young children? Refer to [Stepping stones in oral language](#) and [Understanding bilingual and multilingual language learning pathways](#).

- What are we doing for those children who need additional support in communication?
- What opportunities are there for us to develop and articulate a shared understanding about children's progress in language and communication?
- How can we better make use of relevant [Talk tools](#) as a teaching team? Which strategies will we focus on? When and with which groups of children or individuals?

Further reflective questions on communication are on page 45 in *Te Whāriki*.

## Planning professional learning

Planning ongoing professional learning is critical for kaiako to develop their capability to support the cultural and linguistic diversity of all children in an inclusive environment.

Kaiako, leaders and teaching teams will identify priority areas for growing their knowledge base, skills and experiences.

Consider learning more about:

- how language and communication develops
- ways to incorporate playfully phonological awareness (recognising and working with the sounds of spoken language) playfully into the curriculum
- kaiako interactions and practices that encourage language learning
- bilingualism, biliteracy, multilingualism and multiliteracy
- supporting home languages
- languages and cultures represented within your service and community.

Cultural capability frameworks to help identify learning goals and track progress:

- [Tātaiako: Cultural capabilities for teachers of Māori ākongā](#)
- [Tapasā: Cultural capabilities for teachers of Pacific children](#)

## Support networks

Good leadership establishes networks based on respectful, reciprocal partnerships beyond the service. Such networks create new and existing relationships to draw on when you need professional advice.

These could include:

- networks connected to your service, for example, families, community groups and mana whenua
- refugee and new migrant services, for example, translation services
- specialist support services, for example, deaf community networks.

## References

*He Māpuna te Tamaiti: Supporting social and emotional competence in early learning*, pages 93-95. A downloadable PDF is located on the [Self management and regulation page](#).

Ball, C. E. (2012) Masters Thesis. [The richness diversity brings: Diverse languages and literacies in early childhood education](#). Auckland: Auckland University of Technology.