



Negotiating Discourses: A Pākehā Teacher Educator's Exploration of Bicultural Teaching Practice

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ALISON WARREN

Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa/ New Zealand Childcare Association

ABSTRACT

Bicultural teaching practice in Aotearoa New Zealand is based on commitment to partnerships reflecting Te Tiriti o Waitangi/ The Treaty of Waitangi between Māori and non-Māori cultures, and is governed by professional standards and documents. I am a Pākehā (European ethnicity) early childhood teacher educator concerned about how effectively I engage in bicultural teaching practice. According to Michel Foucault's theories, individuals' self-understandings are shaped within discourses that frame their values and beliefs, and their thoughts and actions. This article reports on poststructural self-study research into my negotiations within three discourses of bicultural teacher education practice, as well as discourses of colonisation that continue to pervade Aotearoa New Zealand.

INTRODUCTION

Bicultural teaching practice in Aotearoa New Zealand reflects commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi/ The Treaty of Waitangi as a partnership agreement between Māori and non-Māori. Early childhood teachers are expected to include te reo Māori (language), tikanga Māori (cultural values) and ako Māori (reciprocity between teacher and learner) in their interactions with children (Williams, with Broadley, & Lawson Te-Aho, 2012), and develop culturally responsive relationships with Māori children and whānau in early childhood education (ECE) settings. Professional expectations of bicultural teaching practice are reflected in documents such as the ECE curriculum *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996), *Tātaiako*, which is a set of competencies for bicultural teaching practice (Ministry of Education & New Zealand Teachers Council, 2011), and the *Registered Teacher Criteria* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009). The *Graduating Teacher Standards* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2007) requires student teachers in initial teacher education (ITE) programmes to develop 'knowledge of tikanga and te reo Māori to work effectively within the bicultural contexts of Aotearoa New Zealand' (n.p.).

The history of education in Aotearoa New Zealand is framed by European colonisation and cultural dominance, and historical exclusion of Māori language, culture and worldviews from the mainstream education system. Discourses of

colonisation position Pākehā (New Zealand European) as 'normal' and Māori as 'other', 'having culture' (Davis, 2009; Gibson, 2006; Hogg, 2009). Māori people and their culture are marginalised and invisibilised in Eurocentric 'one people' discourses (Rau & Ritchie, 2011; Ritchie, 2008). Colonisation led to language and culture loss for Māori, and to contemporary issues of Māori recolonisation and marginalisation (Rau & Ritchie, 2005; Ritchie, 2008; Williams et al., 2012). Although the aim of bicultural teaching practice is to reflect the Treaty partnership between Māori and non-Māori, mainstream (not Māori-immersion) early childhood settings are dominated by Pākehā traditions and worldviews. Many Pākehā ECE teachers feel challenged by their lack of knowledge of Māori language and culture, sensitivity about their cultural competencies, fear of giving offence, and recolonising and universalist thinking (Williams et al., 2012).

I am a female early childhood teacher educator of Pākehā ethnicity concerned about how effectively I engage in bicultural teaching practice. I teach in a field-based three-year Bachelor of Teaching (ECE) programme, where student teachers work or volunteer in ECE services and attend a classroom tutorial each week. I am a fully-registered teacher with a Master of Education degree. This article describes findings from self-study research within a poststructural research paradigm which explores how discourses shape some ways I understand myself (Warren, 2013). A review of some literature regarding ECE bicultural teaching practice will be followed by interwoven discussion of discourses and my negotiations within them.

Research into ECE bicultural teaching practice has shown how Māori tikanga values and language can be effectively incorporated into mainstream Pākehā-dominated ECE (Rau & Ritchie, 2011). Educators who listen to children's and their families' voices can enact Māori cultural values underpinning respectful and responsive relationships through whanaungatanga (relationships), manaakitanga (hospitality and caring) and ako (reciprocal teaching and learning) (Ritchie, 2013; Ritchie & Rau, 2008). Māori children have rights to their culture in education settings (Rau & Ritchie, 2011) which can be reflected in learning assessment that is embedded in Māori cultural values (Rameka, 2009, 2012). Two appreciative inquiry research studies set in tertiary education settings linked success of Māori students to bicultural vision, whanaungatanga (relationships) and culturally responsive pedagogy, content and delivery (Greenwood & Te Aka, 2009; Meade, Kirikiri, Paratene, & Allan, 2011).

My concern about how effectively I engage in bicultural teaching practice led me to this research journey. I feel committed to biculturalism as a citizen of Aotearoa New Zealand and I understand my professional responsibilities to incorporate Māori language and cultural values into my teaching. Like many Pākehā teachers, however, I feel dissatisfied with my competence (Williams et al., 2012). Taking goal-setting approaches seems to me to result in temporary solutions focused on individual deficits. I decided that a poststructural framework would help me to explore how discourses shaped my thoughts and actions in this aspect of my teaching practice. Using a poststructural research approach that framed identities as multiple, complex, changing and shaped within power relations responds to Jones' (2004) challenge to think creatively into the future through research programmes that seek surprising and uncomfortable insights.

METHODOLOGY

Self-study methodology suited my research intention to investigate my teaching practice in critically reflective ways (Pithouse, Mitchell, & Weber, 2009). A poststructural approach to self-study focused on multiple ways I understand myself rather than a 'one true self'. In postmodern thought, discourses are socially negotiated frameworks associated with particular ways of thinking, communicating and behaving (Gee, 1990). According to Michel Foucault's theories, discourses shape perceptions of truth and knowledge through power relations (Foucault, 1980) so that individuals acting in acceptable and 'normal' ways are viewed positively by others and gain credibility, status and power.

Teachers and teacher educators are disciplined within discourses by regulations, professional standards and appraisal processes. They govern themselves to act and think in particular ways that are regarded as morally and ethically right, and seek ways of being that give them pleasure. They negotiate conflicting perceptions of 'normal' behaviour and attitudes within multiple discourses. Individuals can use deconstruction and critical reflection to resist repressive power within discourses, negotiate their positioning, and even change discourses (MacNaughton, 2005).

Participants

I invited five colleagues to be my co-participants. We share the ITE setting so we might be shaped by the same discourses. Having data from multiple sources provided triangulation and increased research credibility. Annette, Pauline, Rose and I are Pākehā lecturers; Tina and Kerry are Māori pouako (who hold Māori cultural knowledge) with dual Māori and Pākehā heritage. Although I used pseudonyms, anonymity was difficult to ensure as I am identifiable as the participant-researcher. Participants agreed to observe confidentiality and had power to member check their data and quotes. I made draft findings and a draft final report available for feedback. Ethical procedures were followed to gain students' informed consent for me to videorecord excerpts of my teaching which I used to prompt discussion with co-participants about my bicultural teaching practice. Our ITE organisation gave ethical approval.

Methods

Data generating methods consisted of my reflective writing, analysis of newspaper writing, and discussions with co-participants. I wrote reflectively about research literature, government and institutional documents, a professional development course, and conversations with three knowledgeable informants (two Māori and one Pākehā). I posted my reflective writing on an online forum and sought colleagues' responses. Thematic analysis of some material about bicultural issues in a local newspaper showed a universalist theme focused on democracy, being 'all one people' and majority rights. In a country colonised and dominated by Pākehā, a system of majority rule can mean injustice for Māori. The universalist theme positioned Māori culture as invisible or valueless. A diversity theme was also evident, which valued Māori voices as enriching society and showed awareness of injustices to Māori. Both themes were embedded in Pākehā perspectives; neither acknowledged the Treaty partnership between Māori and non-Māori.

Our understandings of ‘bicultural teacher educator’ within our ITE setting formed the focus topic of one-on-one reflective conversations with coparticipants, a focus group discussion with four participants, and a final reflective conversation with one colleague. I used a 12-minute video excerpt of my ITE classroom teaching to prompt the focus group discussion and final conversation.

Data analysis

I initially used coding and thematic data analysis to engage with and become familiar with data, by grouping words and phrases that seemed to have similarities into codes, and aggregating codes into themes. I started to form first impressions of possible discourses. Subsequently, I used discourse analysis based on Foucault’s theoretical ideas to closely examine data for evidence of values, beliefs and assumptions of discourses, and networks of power relations. I took an iterative approach exploring data and literature, and gradually identified frameworks of values and beliefs, and knowledge and assumptions regarded as ‘true’ that were evident in data. These frameworks formed three discourses of bicultural teacher education: teacher education professionalism, Te Tiriti social justice and cultural identities discourses. There was also evidence of colonisation discourses that pervade society, including our ITE setting. The remainder of this article will interweave description of the discourses and discussion of ways I understand myself within them.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The ways I understand myself as a Pākehā teacher educator engaging in bicultural practice are shaped by my negotiations of constraints and opportunities within three discourses of bicultural teacher education and within colonisation discourses. The *teacher education professionalism* discourse values professionalism framed by professional standards and official documents supporting bicultural education. *Te Tiriti social justice* discourse is framed by social justice values of Te Tiriti o Waitangi/ The Treaty of Waitangi. The *cultural identities* discourse recognises people as culturally located and valued teachers’ cultural competence. Evidence of each discourse of bicultural teacher education is present in each participant’s data. Some participants are more strongly aligned with one discourse than others. For example, much of Rose’s data reflects values and beliefs of Te Tiriti social justice discourse while Tina tends to position herself within the cultural identities discourse.

Two findings that arose from data analysis are especially significant for me. I position myself strongly within the teacher education professionalism discourse, and show concern about how literature and official documents could guide and frame my bicultural teaching practice. A significant and shocking finding for me is how colonisation discourses shape my thinking. Evidence of dominant Pākehā cultural assumptions pervades my data, often becoming visible through my surprise on becoming aware of what I have taken for granted. Influences of colonisation discourses will be discussed alongside each of the other three discourses.

Teacher education professionalism discourse

I position myself within the teacher education professionalism discourse as a teacher educator who values being a skilled and knowledgeable professional. This discourse values professionalism as competence, accountability, moral responsibility and relational skills. Professional standards integrate Eurocentric views of professionalism based on qualifications, teaching skills, accountability, relationships and critical awareness, with bicultural professionalism reflecting expertise in Māori cultural values and knowledges, and commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi/ The Treaty of Waitangi. The *Registered Teacher Criteria* (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009) requires teachers to 'demonstrate commitment to bicultural partnership in Aotearoa New Zealand' (p. 2); and, 'work effectively within the bicultural context of Aotearoa New Zealand' (p. 4).

Professional standards, teaching resources, and processes of compliance and accountability provide important guidance to me about expectations of bicultural teaching practice. Much of my reflective writing focuses on professional standards, official documents and research literature. I describe myself as a competent professional who plans and makes teaching decisions:

I think if I look through my plans for that class, there was something that related to te ao Māori [Māori worldview] in each one, and for instance, one week we were talking about identity and I found a YouTube clip from Rose Pere [prominent Māori educationalist] about her identity, so I think it was part of a strategy. (focus group)

My co-participants express professional responsibility for effective planning, collaboration and teaching strategies. Annette describes her responsibility to Pākehā students: 'How as a teacher educator are you, so that it will support Pākehā students to be sufficiently open to want to continue with their journey because ... you don't want them to give up' (reflective conversation). Tina relates professional relationships to the Māori concept of mana (strength):

So we all have our own mana in the way we conduct ourselves, as teachers, as lecturers, how we conduct ourselves again with the forming of relationships with one another, with our students, and so some people will be drawn towards others, because of this radiance. This knowing of ...whether it's just someone that you want to talk to, or someone you can confide in, or someone who will do something to support you. (reflective conversation)

I value relational professionalism as much as technical competence: 'So it's as much about relationships in fact, as it is about the actual behaviours, or what you plan, or what you say' (focus group). However, I express uncertainty about my relational skills: 'I'm feeling my way and I'm not sure that I have particular sensitivity to students ... I think I can be oblivious' (reflective conversation with Annette).

Discourses of colonisation pervading an education system dominated by Pākehā perspectives are evident when I describe tensions between being an accountable academic in the Eurocentric tradition and developing competence in bicultural teaching practice:

My challenge is to integrate the academic Western [expectations] ... all the paperwork, all the ticking, all the boxes, marking, all that sort of stuff with the [Māori] cultural values, and not ... keep the [Māori] cultural values for some occasions, and the other, accountability and efficiency, for other occasions. (reflective conversation with Tina)

I recognise my Eurocentric view of knowledge when I rely on written information and lack awareness of more complex layers of cultural knowledge:

This got me thinking about how I had confused a view of knowledge as information presented in books, with a view of knowledge embedded in cultures with layers, complexities, and different possible and debatable interpretations. (reflective journal)

My view of myself as a competent professional in Eurocentric academic terms conflicts with awareness of gaps in my knowledge and skills in te reo and tikanga Māori: 'The thing that did strike me when I watched [the video of my teaching] again, was how much more work I need to do on te reo ... the pronunciation is very much a work in progress' (focus group). I had used goal-setting to work on my bicultural teaching competence: 'I've found in the past that when I've set goals, that I'll do this and this and this, that it's happened, but as soon as it falls off the radar, it falls away, the practice falls away' (focus group). I feel time-pressured to manage my responsibilities: 'What takes the time is the time for reflection and for discussion, and for things like visiting each others' lectures and teaching practice ... visits. ... well, there probably is time' (reflective conversation with Rose).

I am motivated within the teacher education professionalism discourse to integrate Eurocentric professionalism with bicultural professionalism. I claim moral responsibility to engage effectively in bicultural teaching practice:

The better informed I am, or the more I'm aware of resources that I can use, then the better equipped I am ... [in] my practice to be more bicultural It's not a compliance thing or a ritual thing but something I want to do I want [students] to be able to reflect in their behaviours some values that I think are really important, that I'm trying to communicate to them and grow in them. (focus group)

I feel tensions within the teacher education professionalism discourse between understanding myself as competent and professional through planning, accessing resources and goal-setting, and feeling less competent in knowledge and skills linked with te ao Māori and less confident about my relational skills.

Te Tiriti social justice discourse

Te Tiriti social justice discourse is underpinned by social justice principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi/ The Treaty of Waitangi, and challenges colonisation discourses of Pākehā cultural privilege and marginalisation of Māori. Data shows my growing awareness during the research process of my responsibilities as teacher educator within this discourse. Rose summarises the knowledges or truths of this discourse: that Pākehā enjoy privilege and Māori suffer marginalisation; that this constitutes social injustice; and, that teacher educators have responsibilities to work for social change:

One thing is about constantly checking with myself, am I making assumptions and am I conscious of my privilege? The second thing I suppose is really supporting and encouraging tauiwi students to not be afraid to ask that question and realise that things are better for us if we do that. We're not losing something. It's better. And for Māori students, especially for those who have been, are still living in a colonised world, to find ways of being able to support each other, and know that this is a safe place to say this is not OK. 'Cause there's not too many places where it's OK to say that. And probably the third thing, which ... I think in this area it's hard to do, is making ourselves completely accountable to manawhenua [local Māori]. (reflective conversation)

The *Registered Teacher Criteria* links Te Tiriti to teaching practice: 'The Treaty of Waitangi extends equal status and rights to Maori and Pakeha. This places a particular responsibility on all teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand to promote equitable learning outcomes' (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009, p. 1). My co-participants and I are critically aware of how colonisation discourses have negatively impacted on Māori historically and in present times: 'It's about social justice to me, being the bicultural practitioner. It's about ... being aware of colonialism and imperialism' (Pauline, reflective conversation). Annette identifies the beginning point of bicultural teaching practice as 'an incredibly 'true to yourself' belief in the Treaty' (reflective conversation). She aligns herself with Te Tiriti social justice discursive values when she describes biculturalism in Aotearoa New Zealand as 'the political project for sharing this land that starts [with a] stake in the ground through the Treaty'; 'first and foremost it's a political project around self-determination' (reflective conversation). Within this discourse, I view early childhood teacher educators as advocates and agents of social change:

We are ... in a unique position in that we are educating student teachers who work with young children and their families. So ... [social justice issues] seem big and they seem insurmountable. But if it's going to change anywhere, [early childhood teacher education] is a jolly good place. (reflective conversation with Rose)

The research journey has stimulated my growing critical awareness of colonisation discourses: 'My growing understandings of privilege and disadvantage based on race in our society'; 'The way Whiteness and its associated

privilege is invisible to white people' (reflective journal). I discuss the 'dangerous safety' of being Pākehā 'that you can carry on in your own [Pākehā] way and not have any consequences' (reflective conversation with Annette). I am aware of the power of dominant discourses to shape thinking:

And even when you get a glimpse of [your assumptions], then there's the thing, so what do you do? How do you step outside that, because ... it's not just like water, it's like glue, isn't it? You can't move. (final reflective conversation with Rose)

I identify 'a challenge I need to face ... about acknowledging the Tiriti partnership of two equal [Māori and Pākehā] voices and [I need to] raise the profile of te ao Māori so that is integrated more fully into my teaching' (reflective journal). I summarise my growing awareness of negotiating tensions between my positioning as Pākehā in colonisation discourses, and as responsible and critically aware teacher educator in Te Tiriti social justice discourse:

I think my awareness of bicultural practice has been growing slowly over several years. For much of that time, my understanding has been superficial and focused on learning some te reo. Over the past year, there have been three significant changes. Firstly, the appreciation of some meanings and the depth of Māori tikanga values Secondly, my growing understanding of privilege and disadvantage based on race in our society. Thirdly, my most recent reading about Whiteness, especially the way Whiteness and its associated privilege is invisible to white people. (reflective journal)

Cultural identities discourse

The cultural identities discourse values culturally competent teacher educators: aware of their own cultural identities and responsive to others' cultural ways of being. The cultural identities discourse differs from Te Tiriti social justice discourse as it does not address issues of power or social justice. Pākehā teachers' positions within the cultural identities discourse are influenced by colonisation discourses when they recognise Māori as having culture but overlook their own cultural identities. I position myself within the cultural identities discourse as someone who is working to learn about te ao Māori and to reflect about complexities of cultural identities while struggling to recognise my own Pākehā culture.

The *Registered Teacher Criteria* regulates bicultural teaching practice within the cultural identities discourse: 'demonstrate respect for the heritages, languages and cultures of both parties to the Treaty of Waitangi' (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009, p. 2). The knowledge underpinning the cultural identities discourse is that we all have cultural identities which we need to be open to as teacher educators. However, cultural identities are complex, multiple and changing. For example, Tina and Kerry both claim dual Māori and Pākehā heritages; as Kerry explains, 'we are always negotiating culture' (reflective conversation). Tina is aware of 'border crossing' between cultures:

Depending on the environment, who I'm with, I will select which language or which ahuatanga, which is ... a description of being in te ao Māori or te ao Pākehā. But is there a difference? Am I two different people? ... I'm just me actually. (reflective conversation)

Cultural competence could be described in terms of familiarity with Pākehā and Māori cultures: 'so actually having a degree of comfort in two cultures may be something that's quite important to be effectively bicultural in your teaching' (reflective conversation with Tina). Annette describes her engagement with te ao Māori in terms of relationships with friends: 'I live in [my Māori friends'] worlds from time to time, and I think I have been influenced by a look into their world, and their ways of being and thinking' (reflective conversation). Tina and Pauline link cultural competence in bicultural teaching practice with acting appropriately in Māori cultural settings:

How bedded do I have to be within ... a culture ... [before] I can say I am bicultural? I suppose ... some of those answers are, in terms of te ao Māori ... being able to be an active participant on the marae maybe. ... You can say you are bicultural because you've been taught the knowledge and practices of how to conduct yourself on a marae. (Tina, reflective conversation)

I reflect on my own cultural competence as Pākehā in bicultural teaching practice:

It's always going to be getting glimpses into another [Māori] world, and seeing it through a particular lens, and perhaps that's all I can do, is to keep on watching, listening and reflecting that journey to my students and to my colleagues. (reflective conversation with Annette)

I link culturally responsive teaching approaches with multiple perspectives: 'So the learning isn't about finding *the* answer and teaching *this* knowledge, it's about allowing people to explore their knowledge and their worlds' (focus group). I reflect on being culturally responsive to students with non-Pākehā cultural identities: 'What's appropriate? How much do you want me to do this [refer to their cultural worldviews and experiences]? Or do you want me not to refer? Do I ask you for personal information or do I not?' (reflective conversation with Annette).

Colonisation discourses influence my positioning within the cultural identities discourse as I struggle to recognise my Pākehā cultural identity. I replicated a student assessment task to reflect on my own identity:

When I look at my 'verbal expression of who I am', I see that 'Pākehā-ness' is not stated but underlies all that I say about my life. Although unheard in the actual words, when I read the poem and recall the times, I know that my life was surrounded by white faces and white 'normal' assumptions about the world. (reflective writing)

This is a particularly significant reflection for me, as it exposes how I am positioned within colonisation discourses as privileged and normal. The insight

allows me to associate awareness of being Pākehā with becoming culturally competent and responsive:

I have to really strongly reflect on what being Pākehā means and what ... effect that has on, not only my own worldview, but my perception of others' worldview[s]. That there is always that temptation or drive to explain the other in terms of yourself. So ... to be bicultural ... [I think the important thing is] engaging with ... te ao Māori, and thinking about cultural values and seeing them as *being*, not always having to explain then in terms of Pākehā values. (reflective conversation with Tina)

CONCLUSION

This poststructural self-study research investigated how discourses of early childhood teacher education in Aotearoa New Zealand shape my identities as a Pākehā teacher educator engaging in bicultural teaching practice. I have reflected on my 'negotiated, open, shifting, ambiguous' identities (Sachs, 2001, p. 154) within three discourses of bicultural teacher education and within colonisation discourses that have positioned my Pākehā culture as privileged, normal and invisible. These realisations provided me with 'earth-shaking moments', like turning a kaleidoscope and seeing a whole new pattern.

The teacher education professionalism discourse shapes my desire to feel and be regarded as professional. Professional standards and official documents give me powerful support to develop my professional competence in this area. Te Tiriti social justice discourse challenges colonisation discourses through commitment to the partnership principle of Te Tiriti. I am positioned within this discourse as responsible for teaching practice that challenges pervasive influences and injustices of colonisation discourses. The cultural identities discourse challenges me to consider my Pākehā cultural identity, and to become more culturally competent.

My negotiations within discourses of teacher education and discourses of colonisation are complex and on-going. I am shaped by my own life history, cultural identity, and personal and professional experiences. My own explorations are not transferable to other teacher educators or generalisable to the early childhood teacher education profession. I am privileged to work in the company of thoughtful, reflective and challenging colleagues who shape each others' thoughts and actions. I am more aware of my negotiated, shifting, complex identities, and of possibilities presented through deconstruction of discourses and how they work:

That's when being a bicultural teacher educator ... starts to have some meaning beyond just being performed. And it's that complexity you talked about that you're learning all the time. I'm changing my perceptions all the time and growing in knowledge, and then being challenged to shift my thinking, and it's ... those earth-shaking moments when suddenly you realise ... what you took for granted. (reflective conversation with Kerry)

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ALISON WARREN

Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa/ New Zealand Childcare Association



I am the Leader Education Delivery and lecturer at the Nelson base of Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa/ New Zealand Childcare Association, teaching in the B.Tch and Upgrade programmes.

I completed a Masters thesis in 2012 on the topic of early childhood teacher identities and I am at present engaged in doctoral study on the topic of early childhood teacher emotions with University of Canterbury.

My early childhood education experience started with involvement in Playcentre with my own children. Later I worked as a visiting teacher in home-based ECE with Barnardos and Home Grown Kids. I have also worked in education and care centres, and joined Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa in 2008. I am interested in teacher identities and perspectives on professionalism, and enjoy exploring poststructural and posthumanist theories.

Contact: alison.warren@nzca.ac.nz