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ANYÁK ÉS TANÁROK EGYÜTT A TANTEREMBEN

When Mothers and Teachers Share the Classroom

A tanulmány egy olyan ausztrál kísérletet mutat be, amelynek célja, hogy – az általános iskolai tanulók szüleit aktívan belevonva gyermekeik nyelvoktatásába – a gyerekek két-nyelvűségét fejlessze. A világ minden táján előfordul – de különösen Európában, a gyakran változtatott határok mentén, illetve Ausztráliában és Kanadában, ahol nagyszámú különböző nyelvet beszélő bevándorló él –, hogy a szülők nem tudják eldönteni, vajon gyermekeiket az ország hivatalos nyelvén taníttassák és térjenek át otthonukban is a másik nyelv használatára, vagy erősítsék és fejlesszék tovább idegen közegben is az anyanyelvet. Sok szülő abban a tévhitben él, hogy az anyanyelv fenntartása és ápolása lelassítja a hivatalos nyelv elsajátítását, és ezzel csökkennek a gyermekek esélyei a sikeres karrierépítésben. A tudományos kutatások (Genesee 1987, Birch 2003) azonban ennek ellenkezőjéről győznek meg bennünket. A korai, bármilyen nyelven szerzett pozitív nyelvi tapasztalatok átvettődnek a másik nyelvre és annak tanulására. Azok a gyerekek, akik az anyanyelvükön magas szintű nyelvi készségekre tettek szert, általában a másik nyelven is magas szintű nyelvtudást érnek el.

Kulcsszavak: Queensland, szamoai nyelv és csoport, ausztrál csoport, az anyanyelv fenntartása, bilingvizmus, kísérleti nyelvoktatás

Queensland Ausztrália egyik legsoknyelvűbb állama; statisztikai adatok szerint 162 nyelven beszélnek lakosai. Megtörténhet, hogy valamely iskolában a gyerekek 70 százaléka nem angol származású, és otthonában egy másik nyelven beszél. Annak ellenére, hogy a queenslandi kormány anyagilag is támogatja és bátorítja a különböző etnikai csoportok kultúra- és anyanyelvápolását, a kutatások (Tiatia 1998, Yupsols 2004 és Birch 2003) azt mutatják, hogy a kisebbségi családok sokszor inkább tört angol nyelven beszélnek otthonukban, mintsem anyanyelvükön. A családokkal folytatott beszélgetések során kiderült, hogy egyesek az angolt „előkelőbb és fontosabb” nyelvnek tartják, mint a saját nyelvüket, mások meg attól tartanak, hogy a gyerekek szókincse és ezzel a tanulási esélye, eredménye csökken, ha megterhelik a másik nyelvvel.

A tanulmány színhelye egy általános iskola Brisbane-ben, mely évente megünnepli az úgynevezett Harmónia Napját, amikor minden népcsoport bemutatja saját kultúráját, táncait, muzsikáját, és kölcsönösen megvendégelik egymást. Az iskola ezzel nemcsak érzékeltetni akarja, hogy minden kultúra egyformán megbecsülendő és fontos, hanem ilyen módon is hozzájárul a szociális harmónia és tolerancia ápolásához, oktatásához. Egy ilyen ünnep alkalmával a kutató

egy szamoai csoport verbális interakcióit tanulmányozta. Arra a következtetésre jutott, hogy a szamoai gyerekek azért nélkülözik a megfelelő beszélt nyelvi alapokat az első osztályba kerüléskor (vagyis sem szamoai, sem angol nyelven nincs koruknak megfelelő beszédképességük), mert a nyelv, melyet a tanulmányozott csoport használt, egyfajta hibrid nyelv volt. Ez a nyelvi kódok állandó változtatásával járt: hol szamoai, hol egy eltorzított angol nyelvre kapcsoltak át; s ez nem képezhetett elfogadható alapot sem az angol, sem a szamoai nyelv magas szintű elsajátításához. Másodszor közrejátszott az is, hogy a szamoai kultúra normarendje előírja a gyerekek hallgatását szüleik beszéde közben – a szülők viszont sokat beszélnek. A gyerekektől megkövetelik, hogy szófogadók legyenek, segédkezzenek a ház körül, vigyázzanak a kistestvéreikre, jól sportoljanak, rendszeresen járjanak istentiszteletre, énekeljenek a templomban, a családi vagy más etnikai jellegű összejöveteleken táncoljanak. A queenslandi állami nyelv-teszt, amelyre az általános iskola második osztályában kerül sor, világosan megmutatja, hogy a szamoai gyerekek jelentős lemaradással küszködnek mind a négy fontos területen: a beszédben, az írásban, az olvasásban és a hallott szöveg megértésében. Ez volt az egyik legfontosabb ok, amiért figyelmünket a szamoai gyerekekre összpontosítottuk.

A projektum a következő alapelvekből indult ki:

1. Bilingvizmus esetén a gyerekek pozitív nyelvi tapasztalataikat egyik nyelvről átviszik a másikba (Genesee 1987; Cummins 2002; Cairney 2003).

2. Szorgalmazni kell a bilingvális nyelvi fejlődést, és a családokat bátorítani kell arra, hogy az anyanyelvet és az anyanyelvi írást tanítsák, fejlesszék gyermekeik képzsében, nevelésében.

A szülők komolyan hozzájárulhatnak ahhoz, hogy gyerekük jól elsajátítsa a környezet nyelvét, ha kitűnően megtanítják gyerekeiket az anyanyelvükre.

A 2004-ES PROJEKTUM

A fent említett iskola a 2004-es tanévben egy szamoai anyanyelvű segédtanítót alkalmazott, és egy kétnyelvű kísérleti első osztályt szervezett (5 éves gyerekeknek). Az osztályban öt szamoai gyerek volt, és húsz vegyes háttérű (2 ausztrál, 1 horvát, 3 boszniai, 1 cseh, 2 német, 4 tongai, 3 újzélandi, 2 arab és 2 salamon szigeteki). Az osztályban történő aktivitásokat a következő táblázat mutatja be:

Heti két óra párhuzamos kétnyelvű tanítás (írás – betűelsajátítás)

Szamoai csoport	A többi gyerek csoportja
Szamoai tanító tanítja szamoai nyelven ugyanazokat a betűket, mint az ausztrál tanító ugyanabban az osztályban, csak az egyik sarokban az 5 gyereket egy kerek asztal köré ülteti. Az osztályban két tábla van.	Ausztrál tanító tanítja angolul a betűket a többi gyerekeknek.
Szamoai anyák segítenek anyanyelvi magyarázatokkal gyerekeiknek a ceruzát tartani, írni a betűket stb.	
Közös foglalkozás – a két csoport együtt van – egy foglalkozási órán és a déli szünet ideje alatt. Szamoai anyukák kulturális aktivitása – Az egyik anya szamoai mesét mond angolul, hogy az összes gyerek megértse, a másik ábrázolja a táblán a mesét, vagy mutogatja az illusztrációkat, bábokat; táncolnak, tanítják a gyerekeket szamoaiul énekelni, táncolni; együtt uzsonnáznak, és az egész osztály tanulja szamoai nyelven megnevezni az ételeket, a különböző gyümölcsöket; játékokat játszanak stb.	
Iskola utáni aktivitás az anyáknak (két óra hetente). Mindkét tanító és az anyák megvitatják az osztályban történeteket – a tanítók magyarázzák az anyáknak, miért alkalmaztak különböző stratégiákat, és mit akartak velük elérni. Egy egyetemi oktató (angol nyelven) tanítja az anyákat, hogyan fejlesszék gyerekeik anyanyelvi készségeit különböző interakciós technikákkal, pl. esti mese közben hogyan stimulálják a gyerekeket, hogy hosszabb dialógust folytassanak, hogyan bátorítsák érzelmeik és gondolataik verbális kifejezésére, s hogyan motiválják őket írásra (pl. írjanak vásárlási listákat, jegyezzenek fel telefonszámokat stb.).	

A következő pedagógiai intenciók irányították az aktivitásokat:

Szamoai csoport	A többi gyerek csoportja
A szamoai anyanyelvápolás követi az ausztrál curriuculumot. Az anyákban tudatosítja, mi történik az osztályban, hogyan tanítja az ausztrál tanító az írást, olvasást, hogyan beszél a gyerekekkel, hogyan ösztönzi őket verbális interakcióra.	Interkulturális tudás és szenzibilitás elsajátítása és fejlesztése a közös foglalkozások révén, nemcsak a nem szamoai gyerekek, de az ausztrál tanító számára is. A nem szamoai gyerekek érzékelik, milyen is az, ha valaki nem beszél jól egy nyelvet, ha új nyelvet tanul (szamoai szavakat és dalokat sajátítanak el stb.).
A saját kultúra megbecsülésére és öntudatos vállalására való ösztönzés	Mások kultúrájának megbecsülése és értékelése

Sajnos ez a kétnyelvű modell különböző okokból nem volt az elvárásoknak megfelelően sikeres. Elsősorban azért, mert a kutatócsoport nem rendelkezett elegendő kultúraspecifikus tudással, és nem tudta megérteni, miért jönnek az anyák rendszeresen az iskolai órákra, de csak elvétve a gyűlésekre. A szamoai segédtanító magyarázata szerint, ha az iskola hivatalosan hívhatja be a szülőket, ezt a szamoai közösség úgy magyarázza, hogy a behívott szülők biztosan nem tesznek eleget szülői feladataiknak megfelelő módon, ezért szeretné az iskola őket külön oktatásban részesíteni. Ezért a kiválasztott anyáknak kellemetlen volt a hivatalos tanítói és egyetemi előadói találkozókra jönni. Amellett

a szamoai anyák sokgyermekesek, és sokszor nem tudták kire hagyni apróbb gyermekeiket. Persze, az is kétséges, hogy mit lehet heti néhány óra révén elérni. De a néhány iskolában töltött óra után a lényegesebb nyelvfejlesztés és -tanítás otthon folytatódna. Csakhogy ilyen módon tudatosabban, mint azelőtt, mert az anyák megtanulják, vagyis ellesik a tanítótól, hogyan is történik az írás, olvasás stb. oktatása az iskolában. Ahhoz kétség nem fér, hogy a modell jól funkcionálhatott volna, ha nem képződnek a leírt kulturális korlátok; elképzelhető, hogy előnyösen alkalmazható olyan kisebb településeken, ahol nincs kisebbségi nyelven működő iskola, és ahol kicsi a más nyelvű (pl. a magyar ajkú) gyerekek létszáma. (Ilyen közegben az anyák közreműködése a tanításban a fent leírt módon, és az anyák oktatása, hogyan fejlesszék gyerekek nyelv-készségét otthon, előnyös lehetne nemcsak a magyar gyerekek anyanyelv-ápolása szempontjából, hanem a közös aktivitások révén a kölcsönös megbecsülés és interkulturális megértés szempontjából is.)

A szamoai segéd-tanító ösztönzésére, aki különben egy magas rangú és a szamoai közösségben nagy befolyású főnök (a szamoaiaknál nők is lehetnek főnökök), öt szülő önkéntesen jelentkezett, hogy részt vegyen a projektum folytatásában. Erre némileg módosított formában 2005-ben került sor.

A 2005-ÖS PROJEKTUM

- Nem csak egy osztályra szorítkozott, és a résztvevők önkéntesek, nem pedig az iskola által kijelölt személyek voltak, mint az előbbi projektumban.
- Az anyák nem csak saját gyermekükkel foglalkoztak, hanem segítettek más szamoai gyerekeknek is.

Öt önkéntes anya	Rendszeresen hospitáltak különböző órákon, és tanítósegédként működtek. Pontosan megismerték a követelményeket, elvárásokat a házi feladatokkal kapcsolatban, tanúi voltak, hogyan fejleszti a tanító a szókincset, tanít írni és olvasni. Segítettek szamoai tanulóknak feladatokat teljesíteni, rajzolni, klasszifikálni, felsorolni dolgokat, listákat készíteni stb.
Közös aktivitás	Az összes diák együtt játszott szamoai játékokat, megtanulta egymást köszönteni, énekeltek mindkét nyelven stb.
Az anyák kritikai észrevételei és a szerzett tapasztalatok reflexív elemzése	Két 2 órás találkozó a szemeszter alatt, ezek során az anyák elemzik a múltban és jelenben szerzett iskolai tapasztalataikat.
Az anyák és tanárok/tanítók vitája	Dialógus, amelyben az anyák saját benyomásaikat és megfigyeléseiket magyarázzák, a tanárokkal verifikálják.

Pedagógiai intenciók:

Az anyák megtanulják, hogyan fejlesszék hatékonyabban a gyerekek anyanyelvét az otthoni környezetben.
Az anyák kulturális közvetítő szerepet töltenek be, és segítenek áthidalni a kulturális különbözőséget az otthon és a környezet kultúrája között.
Az anyák alkalmazzák a szamoai kultúrában előnyben részesített stratégiát: ezek szerint tanulj csinálva dolgokat, imitálva másokat és mutatva, hogyan csinálod.
Az anyák különböző osztályokban különböző tantárgyakban szereznek oktatási tapasztalatokat, és ezzel jobban tudnak segíteni gyerekeiknek a házi feladatok megoldásában.
Az anyák segítenek a szamoai diákok számára elmagyarázni az új kifejezéseket és fogalmakat az anyanyelvükön.
Segítséget nyújtva különböző képességyű gyerekeknek, az anyák világosabban látják saját gyerekeik képességeit és szükségleteit.
Az anyák megismerkednek az ausztrál pedagógiával és iskolával.
Az anyák megértik, melyek az iskola elvárásai.
Az anyák együttműködnek a tanítóval.
Az anyák közreműködnek az interkulturális szenzitivitás és mások kultúrája megbecsülésének fejlesztésében.

A projektum hatékonysága a következő módon vált értelmezhetővé:

- kérdésekkel stimulált és szalagon rögzített interjú az 5 anyával
- a kutató jegyzetei a tanárok és szülők vitájáról

KUTATÁSI EREDMÉNYEK

1. Az interjúk megmutatták, hogy a szülők számára fontos anyanyelvük ápolása és a nemzeti identitásuk. Az öt szülő különböző időpontokban érkezett Ausztráliába. Volt köztük olyan is, aki Új-Zélandon született, és onnan települt át nagyon szerény szamoai nyelvtudással. Habár különböző földrajzi térségekből érkeztek Ausztráliába, közös volt magatartásukban tudatos „szamoaiságuk”. Ez magatartásuk, világnézetük, vallásgyakorlásuk, ételeik és kommunikációs módszereik révén jutott erősen kifejezésre. Érdekes, hogy a szamoaiak Kramsch (1998) és Brown (2002) elméletével ellentétben, akik a nyelvet a kultúrától elválaszthatatlannak tekintik, a nyelvet kevésbé tartják fontosnak a kultúrájuknál. Sokszor a szülők szamoai nyelven beszélnek gyerekeikhez, de a gyerekek csak angolul válaszolnak, és a szülők ezt természetesen veszik, nem igyekeznek változtatni rajta.

2. A szülők nem tudják, hogyan ápolják az anyanyelvüket, mivel Ausztráliában nincs szamoai iskola vagy tévéműsor. Az egyedüli hely, ahol rendszeresen találkoznak és ápolják nyelvüket, az a templom. A kutatás világosan utal egy megszervezett, szakszerű nyelvápolás szükségességére.
3. A szamoai anyák sokra értékelték, hogy az iskola megengedte nekik a tanítók tanítási technikájának megfigyelését. Különösen azért, mert az valóban különbözik attól, ahogy a szamoaiak tanulnak és tanítanak. Az ókori görögök óta a nyugati kultúrákban a tanítás konceptualizáció, vagyis fogalmak elsajátítása révén történik inkább, mint empirikus tapasztalatok alapján. Ezzel ellentétben a csendes-óceáni szigetlakók deduktív logikát alkalmaznak, és tapasztalatok alapján tanulnak.
4. A szülők véleménye megváltozott a tanítók munkájáról. Az egyik anya ezt szóba is foglalta, mondván, hogy csak most látta, milyen nagy munka kicsiket tanítani.
5. Pozitív hatással volt a szamoai szülők jelenléte a szamoai diákok identitástudata szempontjából is. Az egyik diák büszkén mondta, hogy az iskola „a mamámat tanítóvá tette”.
6. A szamoai közösség az iskolai ügyeletességet megtiszteltetésként fogta fel. Az iskola tekintélye is megnőtt azáltal, hogy valóban igyekezett megtalálni annak módját, hogyan segítsen a szamoai gyerekek nyelvi problémáin.
7. Az anyák tudatosan elemezték a pedagógiai eltéréseket a saját iskolai tapasztalataik és a mostani iskolák között, és ezáltal jobban megértették, melyek a követelmények és az oktatási elvárások a gyerekek iskolájában.
8. Megváltozott az otthoni kommunikáció és interakció. A szülők beszélgetnek a gyerekekkel az iskolai gondokról, segítenek a házi feladat elkészítésében, gyerekeiket belevonják a felnőttek beszélgetésébe stb.
9. Büszkék a nemzeti hovatartozásukra – nemzeti öntudatuk és önmegbecsülésük a környezet megbecsülésével egyetemben arányosan megnőtt.

ÖSSZEFOGLALÁS

Ez a projektum módot adott arra, hogy egy szamoai szülői csoportot aktívan belevonjon a nyelvtanításba, és ösztönözzön a csoport anyanyelvének megtartására és ápolására. Érdemes megismételni: a projektumban részt vevő anyák megtanulták, hogy többet kell foglalkozni a gyerekekkel és beszélgetni velük. Megértették, hogy mekkora értéknek számít egy országban a kettős kulturális identitású és kétnyelvű polgár, hogy egy második nyelv és kultúra elsajátítása nem történik egyik kultúra rovására sem.

Az ausztrál tanító is kifejtette meggyőződését, hogy nemcsak a többi gyerek, de ő is sokat tanult a szamoai nyelvről és kultúrájáról, és most jobban megérti a szamoai gyerekek viselkedését az osztályban. Tehát egy magasabb szintű interkulturális érzékenységre és tudásra tett szert a projektumnak köszönhetően.

Az iskola is eredményesnek ítélte meg a projektumot, mert általa áthidalódott az a légüres sáv, amely a két kultúra között fennállt iskolai berkekben. A két kultúra közelebb került egymáshoz, ami a multikulturális harmóniát és kölcsönös megértést, megbecsülést erősíti.

When Mothers and Teachers Share the Classroom

This paper reports on an Australian primary school bilingual literacy development project. The main objective of this project was to assist Australian Samoan primary students in improving their English literacy by enhancing their native language literacy. In order to achieve this goal, parental involvement was essential. This paper concentrates on the following two research questions: how to engage the students' parents in bilingual literacy development, and how to inform and instruct them about effective literacy teaching strategies. There were five volunteer Samoan-background mothers involved in the project who participated in classroom activities as bilingual teacher helpers. It was predicted that the mothers' involvement in working with children and their observations of the Australian teachers' strategies in teaching literacy would not only assist them in understanding what and how the children learn at school but also model for them how to work on the literacy development of their children at home. Their experiences with the project provide valuable information for curriculum designers, teachers of multicultural classrooms, and parents who educate their children in a second language.

Keywords: Queensland, Samoan language and group, Australian group, maintainance of native language, bilingualism, experimental language teaching

BACKGROUND

In many parts of the world minority groups are losing their native language. Parents in these areas (e.g. along the changed state borders in many countries in Europe and also the large migrant groups in Australia, Canada and the USA) are confronted with the dilemma of whether to maintain their native language or not. At the same time, many minority language schools are in the process of losing their student population (e.g. Hungarian schools in the Province Vojvodina in Serbia, in the Ukraine and in Slovakia). There are multiple reasons for the loss of minority languages. The most commonly quoted are parental beliefs that their children would improve their employment chances if they focus on the acquisition of the mainstream language of the country only, and the parental concern that the first language maintenance might slow down their child's second language development (Dobrenov-Major, Kearney, Birch, & Cowley, 2004). Yet much research (Kostogriz, 2002; Luke, 1993) shows the opposite, well-developed cultural and linguistic identity and literacy skills gained in the native language are easily transferable into the second language. A person with well-developed native language proficiency and literacy habits will probably achieve a high level of second language proficiency (Genesee, 1987), because of the language experiences and structural awareness already gained in the first language.

The bilingual literacy development project described in this paper was implemented in a primary school in Queensland, Australia that has multicultural classes where their language skills are low in both languages. The Sun Screener Speech and Language Screener for Year 1 Students literacy test (developed by Education Queensland in 2003) undertaken in the school that participated in this project revealed in 2004 that a significant number of Samoan students underperformed in English. At the same time parental interviews undertaken about primary students home language use reported about Samoan families that experience difficulties in sustaining conversation in their native language with their children.

The ethnographic study reported here was guided by three basic ideas:

- bilingual children transfer worthwhile language experiences from one language to the other (Cairney, 2003; Cummins, 2002; Genesee, 1987); therefore
- families should be encouraged to maintain their native language and literacy and provide students with good language experiences; and
- parents can significantly contribute to their child's success in second language literacy if they implement effective literacy practices in their first language at home.

During the year 2003 a pilot dual language program was implemented in the participating school. The main concerns of this project were cultural maintenance and bridging the gap between the school and the students' homes. A selected group of Samoan students in a Year 1 class attended specially organized dual language literacy sessions. A bilingual Samoan native speaker teacher teamed and worked in parallel sessions with the Australian teacher. They both followed the same curriculum in two different languages. The parents of these students were invited to instruction sessions on how to improve their literacy practices at home. Unfortunately, deficiencies in

the research team's intercultural knowledge led to their inability to predict parental responses to the initiatives. The parents' low engagement led to the research team's initial disappointment. However, this changed as soon as the Samoan teacher approached the parents independently of the research team. As she is a cultural insider with a high social status within her ethnic group, she managed to persuade the students' parents, in the first instance the students' mothers, to take a more active role in their children's education (Birch et al., 2003). The project continued in a somewhat modified form that will be described in more detail below.

THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Literacy is a socially defined goal. It is constructed through education. In this project it is understood as an ability that goes beyond reading and writing. In agreement with Delgado-Gaitan (1990) it involves the socio-political environment as well as the participants' awareness of their position in this environment. In other words, literacy building is one of the most important and recognised goals of schooling, and it is monitored through standardized and informal tests (e.g., The Sun Screener Speech and Language Screener for Year 1 students). However, it must be pointed out that building literacy is a process of transmission of knowledge and attitudes that is not limited just to teacher-student interactions but also involves parent-child relationships and parental involvement in the education of their children.

Leichter (1984) suggests that three categories influence parents' acting as educators: parent educational attainment, aspirations, and parent-child interaction. The first category refers to educational and family background, educational attainment, and cognitive resources. The second category assumes that there is a direct relationship between the education of the parents and their aspirations for their children: the more educated the parents, the higher their aspirations for their children. The third category assumes that children bring well-developed oral skills to school based on early childhood language experiences and parent-child interactions in the home. However, in the case of the participating group of Samoan children, the latter was not the case, firstly because of the already mentioned inconsistency in home language use and secondly because of reasons related to culture-specific communication behaviour. Namely, Samoan children are expected to listen and to do things at home rather than to talk (Parental interview data).

We do not support the quite discriminatory research findings from Dunn (1987), Coser (1967), and Hess and Shipman (1965) who found that working-class, lower socio-economic and ethnic families failed to provide their children with middle-class language and values that were preferred and valorised by schools as a base for success in social identity building and social positioning. Our findings showed that independent of their socio-economic status, the investigated Samoan families highly valued education and did their best to support their children. They were just unsure how to do it.

It is an inevitable fact, that the home is the primary learning environment in early childhood. Accordingly, this project assumed that involving the home in school activities would provide a smooth transition for children to become more responsible learners and would assist them in overcoming their language deficiencies. The South Australian

ECLIPSE project (early childhood literacy includes parents, staff and education) (South Australia Dept. for Education and Children’s Services, (1997), identified the following partnership strategies for working with families: sharing information through newsletters and parent fliers, interviews, parent workshops, discussions, home-visiting program, team journals, information displays, and take-home literacy kits. We used the following activities in this project: home visiting, parental meetings with teachers and researchers, story reading sessions, book borrowing, making of booklets, developing literacy kits (flash cards), telling or sharing stories and interacting in two languages.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project emerged as a continuation of the bilingual program project conducted in 2003 – 2004 in which the Samoan parental involvement was erratic and disappointing. In 2005, thanks to the Samoan teacher aide, five volunteer mothers were attracted to the program. Their learning and experiences provided valuable data for a better understanding of the existing nonalignment between the Samoan parents’ home literacy practices, educational views and expectations, and those of the school. In order to provide a clear picture about the link between the two projects, the following Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the structure of both.

Initial project in 2003 – 2004. Classroom context: Year 1, mixed multicultural class

The mothers assisted their own children and the whole program ran in the same class.

Weekly parallel sessions	
Group 1	Group 2
Samoan students only Samoan literacy teaching by a Samoan teacher aide Same curriculum as in group 2	All the other students Australian teacher, English literacy teaching
Samoan mothers observe, co-teach, help	
Common time, all students and mothers	
Samoan mothers guide cultural activities in art or music class (e.g., telling Samoan stories in English for cultural awareness raising, drawing culture-specific story illustrations, singing, dancing) or in the breaks sharing lunch, learning Samoan by labelling fruit and food in both languages, playing games etc.	
After school sessions (1 session weekly)	
Samoan mothers and both teachers share perceptions of classroom events and parental session on literacy practices with some theoretical information – offered by a literacy lecturer	

Pedagogic intentions:

Group 1 (Samoan students)	Group 2 (all the other students)
Samoan students L1 development (following the Australian Curriculum in Samoan language)	Literacy development in English
Mothers' familiarization with Australian classrooms and literacy pedagogy	Development of intercultural sensitivity and mutual appreciation
Pride in ethnic language and origin	Provision of a foreign language learning experience (Australian students learning Samoan)

Figure 1: Pilot project 2003-2004

The project continued in a slightly revised form in 2005. It was not restricted to one class only and the mothers assisted other Samoan children as well as their own. This is shown in the following Figure 2.

Continuation of the project in 2005

Five volunteer Samoan mothers	Regularly attend classes in diverse content areas in diverse classrooms, act as teacher helpers, learn about homework expectations, concept development techniques, work on vocabulary development, teaching writing and reading. Assist Samoan students in completing tasks, producing story booklets, drawing illustrations, labelling things, sorting and listing things etc.
Common time	All students learn culture-specific games, dances, greetings in Samoan, songs in both languages etc.
Mothers' reflection time	Two sessions – reflection on previous and current experiences in educational contexts
Mothers + teacher + lecturer discussions on	mothers' perceptions and understanding of classroom events
<p>Pedagogic intentions</p> <p>Mothers learn how to work on the native language literacy development at home.</p> <p>Mothers act as cultural mediators, cultural insiders who assist in bridging the cultural gap.</p> <p>Mothers utilize the students' culturally preferred learning strategy which is learning by doing things, by modelling and showing how to do things.</p> <p>Mothers see all curriculum areas at all levels.</p> <p>Mothers assist students with clarification of task instructions or terminology and concepts in Samoan (which enhances the Samoan students' native vocabulary).</p> <p>Through assisting children with diverse abilities in literacy learning, mothers gain a clearer picture about the abilities and possible needs of their own children.</p> <p>Mothers gain insight into the Australian pedagogic approaches and school context at diverse levels.</p> <p>Mothers become aware of school expectations.</p> <p>Mothers establish a working relationship and collaboration with the teacher.</p> <p>Mothers act as a human resource for developing intercultural sensitivity and appreciation of cultural diversity in all children.</p>	

Figure 2: The revised project structure

PARTICIPANTS

The project in 2003-2004 aroused quite widespread interest in the Samoan community. At the beginning of 2005, other year levels at the selected primary school called for Samoan helpers as well. The school sought volunteer parents who would spend one whole day weekly in the school and assist the Samoan students in their language needs and activities. Five mothers who had children enrolled in diverse grades volunteered to do so. Two of them had prior experience with the dual program. In the previous project, we had encouraged the mothers to observe the teachers' literacy teaching strategies and in the after-school group discussion sessions to reflect on their classroom experiences. The main reasons for this strategy were firstly, to empower parents in assisting more effectively in their children's literacy development, and secondly, to familiarize parents with Australian educational approaches, pedagogy and expectations. These newly gained insights were then used as a base for comparison with the parents' already given, often preconceived ideas about education based on their own culturally specific experiences. In other words, in the continuation of the project, the mothers' roles were to act as "teacher helpers" and cultural awareness raisers but also as learners who would share the classroom and the facilitation of the learning process with the teachers.

DATA COLLECTION

A specifically designed semi-structured interview was organized and audiotaped. The interview questions related to the following domains: attitudes toward cultural maintenance, classroom perceptions, differences between parental educational experiences and the educational experiences of their children, and opinions about the mother's and the teacher's role in the education of their children. The interviews were conducted in Samoan and the taped responses were translated and summarized in English. Further data were collected via field notes taken during teacher and parental sessions and discussions.

FINDINGS

1. Maintenance of language and culture is important

The pilot project had raised some questions that warranted further research. One was to find out to what extent Samoan parents were committed to the maintenance of Samoan, or if they would prefer to see their children skilled in the use of English.

The parents had come to Australia at different periods of their life and from different countries. Accordingly, they had diverse national identity perceptions. Some saw themselves as Australians, some as New Zealanders, and those who came recently from Samoa as "real" Samoans. In all the interviewed families there was a consciousness of "Samoanness" identifiable, independent of the time and place of their arrival or their self-perceived sense of national belonging. This was demonstrated through their use of traditional food, religious practices, behavioural norms, values, belief systems, and ways of communication with members of their ethnic or religious community and extended family.

The pilot project demonstrated that Samoans view cultural and linguistic identity as separate categories. This is in contradiction to the findings of Kramsch (1998) and

Brown (2000) who claimed that language and culture are inseparable. The participants in the project declared themselves as Samoans (Australian Samoan, New Zealand Samoan, etc.), but their language behaviour did not consistently reflect their ethnic identity perception of Samoanness. Oral discussion data revealed that many families in the Samoan Church group to which the investigated mothers belonged (Mormons and Seventh Day Adventists), use English instead of Samoan at home, independent of the parents' proficiency level and their mastery of English. There were also cases described in which parents could not conduct interactions in Samoan with their children as the children refused to respond in Samoan. The strategies that were applied for maintaining or further developing their children's Samoan skills were often restricted to listening to Samoan adults' talk in social gatherings or at ethnic community meetings and church services. According to one of the mothers (from information gained in an informal talk prior to the implementation of the dual program), many Samoan parents believe that the exposure of their children to Samoan oral language and singing are sufficient to maintain their native language skills.

All of these aspects led the researchers to believe that language maintenance might not be important for being and feeling Samoan. Therefore the first interview question posed to the five mothers was related to native language and cultural maintenance. Surprisingly, all the responses demonstrated a strong interest in native language maintenance. The following two responses are representative of the univocal parental attitude towards this issue:

Question: Are you interested in the maintenance of Samoan? Is Samoan important for you?

Mother 1

Yes, definitely. I don't speak English to my children at all. I want them to keep up not just Samoan but Tokeloan as well that they speak. I wish them to be fluent in all these languages. But it is very important to be fluent in English.

Mother 3

Yes, We really want our family to continue...ah... communicating in our mother tongue because sometimes English is too hard but when we talk in our Samoan our communication is understood by everyone in the family.

During the interviews, the mothers reinforced that the Samoan culture is still the most significant component of their identity, independent of the length of exposure to English and the respondents' English proficiency level (some had excellent English as they were born and educated in New Zealand). Much research (Iredale, Mitchell, Pe-Pua, & Pittaway, 1996; Jupp, 1998; Mayadas & Segal, 2000) has shown evidence of trauma caused by changes of environment and culture. Culture cannot be simply transported to the new place of settlement: It functions best in its own context. More precisely, culture needs the community in which it can function. People who change culture often find themselves in a vacuum. This is clearly evident in the following responses that are related to Samoan children's native language maintenance.

2. Problems with native language maintenance

The mothers revealed that they do not know how to maintain their children's native language. They thought that exposure to children's TV programs in Samoan language would be beneficial.

Mother 2

Here in Australia, it is hard for my children, because TV is their main entertainment and there is no TV program in their mother tongue and so without programs like these, we don't know how to encourage our children to speak in our language.

Another key way of dealing with language maintenance problems mentioned by the mothers was sticking to their own group, possibly to a church group. The gap caused by the lack of the hierarchical chiefly system, the *matai*, that guided and advised Samoans in important events of their life in their home country, is filled now by the church. The church is where they speak to each other in Samoan, listen to bible readings, pray, sing and maintain their culture, beliefs, values and linguistic identity. The church is the place where possible feelings of otherness or disadvantage in comparison to mainstream Australians disappear. Although second language acquisition literature recognizes the importance of exposure to the language as one of the important conditions for language acquisition, it is not sufficient for gaining active communicative competence (Willis, 1996). The data gained in relation to the question of language maintenance clearly suggest that ethnic minority groups need professional assistance in developing a structured and strategic approach to keeping up their linguistic identity.

3. The participating Samoan mothers appreciated learning how children are being taught in school

Being able to observe how the Australian teacher was interacting with the students and implementing an inquiry-based approach to learning was a revelation to the Samoan mothers. In particular, this was because Pacific Islanders develop knowledge through utilizing experiential knowledge and deductive logic (Fotu Hutakau, 2002), in contrast to the western style of thinking that since the ancient Greeks has been based on conceptualization rather than on experiential learning.

Mother 3

I didn't understand how the children were taught. I help now my kids to read, there is a big difference.

One of the mothers expressed the impact of the school experience on her changed attitude towards teachers' work in the following way:

Mother 4

I am now more aware of how the kids are taught. I had never realised that so much went into their school work.

4. The presence of Samoan adults in the classroom had a positive impact on Samoan students' and Samoan community members' self-identity feelings

The presence of Samoan adults in the classroom was seen favourably by the Samoan students. They discovered that the school values their language and families and "makes even their mums to teachers" (Student B's statement). The strongly knitted ties within the Samoan community and the presence of a familiar face in the foreign language classroom made the learning environment more relaxing and pleasant for the Samoan students and generally more interesting to the other students as well. The following interview responses show that this was noticed by the participating parents.

Mother 4

The students are very happy, especially when they see Samoan people involved.

Mother 5 referred to the effects of her presence and activities in the classroom on students other than the Samoans:

Yes, because the children were so happy to see a Samoan in their classroom and it made me confident to be there helping them. I must say I didn't think they would know how to speak any Samoan words (this refers to the common time activities and to non-Samoan students' attempts to say a few Samoan words to her - author).

When asked what the mothers did on their "school service day" in the classrooms, they reported on observing the Australian teacher's teaching; explaining tasks, instructions, or concepts in Samoan when students asked for clarification; and assisting with writing practice and reading. On average there were 9 – 10 Samoan students in each class and they received a second explanation when needed or checked their comprehension in their native language.

5. The "school service" was favourably seen by Samoan community members

The pilot project showed evidence of initial difficulties in improving the links between the school and the Pacific Islander parents (Dobrenov-Major et al., 2004). The reason for this might lie in a different understanding of what education is and what the roles of school and teachers are. The allocation of a school service day to volunteer parents had a great and positive echo in the Samoan community. This initiative also enhanced the school's credibility as being genuinely interested in helping Samoan students in improving their literacy skills. In addition, the mothers became aware of the benefits of personalised and needs-tailored learning. They understood that individual learning does not mean just letting the students sit alone: It means shaping the teaching and instruction around the different ways they learn. It means supporting how they learn best and this applies not only to the school context, but also to the home context. The teaching in this school follows a task-based manner and the mothers had the opportunity to realize the importance of the tasks. The transfer of the same approach to the home also assisted the students in completing their homework more efficiently and quickly.

6. Mothers became aware of the changes in pedagogy and educational expectations

Independent of the level of education that was completed either in Samoa or in New Zealand, the mothers noticed significant differences between the educational practices that they themselves were exposed to and the pedagogy that their children are experiencing in Australia. The following responses clearly demonstrate that the mothers' own educational experiences had been gained in teacher-centred, traditional classrooms.

Mother 1

Yes, there is a big change. When I went to school, I was told in Samoa to go to school and that was it, but here is more care about how the children learn.

Mother 2

Very different, when I went to school the teacher was talking most of the time and all I had to do was to follow the teacher. But with my son's class every child is involved and asked to contribute.

Mother 3

There is a big difference because when I went to school you wouldn't dare make a mistake or the teacher will smack you, but now the children are communicating with the teacher at all times.

The mothers were surprised about and strongly impressed by the interactive nature of classroom communication. This has impacted on their own way of interacting with their children.

7. Change in student-parent interactions

Horsley (1999) identified the following problems with Samoan students in Australian schools: lack of backup from parents in education and career choices; suppression of children – families are adult dominated or chief, pastor dominated; children do not share school experiences and school life with parents. In Samoa “fat is beautiful”, but here the children utilize Australian norms and understandings and are often embarrassed because of their own size or the size of close family members. Parents are not familiar with the variety of learning strategies and study time needed to complete homework tasks. The expectation that children do small jobs around the home does not allow them sufficient time for study. Horsley also claimed that although all the interviewed Samoan students thought they should learn Samoan, only a few spoke it. Because the parental language refers mainly to everyday chores and issues such as giving commands and requesting services, the communication with parents is poor.

The following interview excerpts testify to a changed communicative behaviour of the participating parents towards their children:

Mother 1

A lot has changed. My parents had never done so much for us children as I am. I am interested in anything the children bring home from school and I help them. I haven't ever asked my parents to help and my parents made me do a lot of work around the house, so they didn't give me time to complete my homework. I give my children all the time they need.

Mother 2

I have changed a lot in teaching my children because before I thought as long as I see my child reading that was enough. I never before sat down and talked with them or even asked about what they read. My family has really changed, even my husband now finds time to talk with our children because of the influence of what was done at the classroom. Reading in our family is now a fun time because when dad reads to D. a book in Samoan, he will come and tell me in Samoan what the story was about and that is wonderful.

Mother 5

I need to create a lot of opportunities for my children to learn in our family and be able to talk with them more often.

A further testimony to the changed interactions in the home is related to the Samoan self-made booklets produced by the students. Previous to the pilot project there were no Samoan books available in the school library; the research team gained a small grant and imported some Samoan children's books from New Zealand. In addition the students, together with the Samoan teacher, developed self-made booklets. The books and booklets were taken home, exchanged and read. The following question refers to these resources and the mothers' home literacy teaching.

Question: How did you use the booklets?

Mother 1

We read them at bedtime and then we talked about everything in the book.

Mother 2

My son reads the books and when he has finished I close the book and write some captions from the book and cut them up. Then he will have to put the sentences together and read them back to me. I also ask him about his feelings about the story.

Mother 3

I read the book to my children and then I wrote up sentences from the book and let my son match and say the words back to me. I also reflect on the story when we are cooking or do other chores around the house. I tell it as a bedtime story in my own words.

8. Growth of national pride and valuing of the own culture

The initial doubts about whether to maintain Samoan or raise monolingual English speakers disappeared during the six months of the project and one of the significant points in the summary of the learning experiences was related to the clear growth of national pride in students and their families.

Mother 2

I have learned a lot since the program. Now because my mother is staying with us, I am indebted to the program and to the opportunity for my child to be able to access his language in an encouraging environment. I feel proud of my child when I hear him interact with my mother in his mother tongue. I can feel the happiness in my mother's heart to know that my son can understand her.

Mother 3

Yes he (the son) is more talkative now than before and he is more inquisitive about the Samoan words he does not understand.

Mother 4

Yes, he's very happy and he is more appreciative of who he is.

CONCLUSIONS

This project searched for ways of empowering Samoan families in their first language maintenance, believing that the better the native language knowledge the higher the chance of children developing better mainstream language skills and becoming bilingual and bicultural. Therefore a group of Samoan mothers was invited to participate in classroom activities and learn how to improve home literacy practices. They attended the classroom instruction sessions not only in their capacity as learners of school literacy practices but also as cultural mediators. Although the focus of this project was the mothers' learning experiences, additional benefits emerged that can be broadly classified as benefits for the Samoan community, benefits for the participating teachers, and benefits for the school.

BENEFITS FOR THE MOTHERS

The most important fact that the mothers learned from this project was that they have to interact more intensively with their children. In other words, they have to talk more to their children and listen more to their children. This sort of linguistic behaviour goes beyond the communication habits embedded in the Samoan culture, but it introduces techniques that children experience in classrooms and it will smoothen and

ease the transition from home to school. The mothers developed a clear understanding that cultural and ethnic language maintenance is desirable, important and valued by their new country. They understood that bicultural people are not impeded but enriched by two cultures. Their children will see the world through two different cultural value systems and they will appreciate and respect other cultures. Furthermore, the mothers also understood that it is not enough to be exposed to a language in order to develop good language skills. Language needs to be actively used for meaningful communication. They understood that they need to engage in diverse literacy practices such as elaborating on bedtime stories, conducting sustained dialogues, discussing things and asking children for their feelings and opinions, discussing with them homework tasks and so on. The school experience helped these mothers to realize how different education is today in comparison to what they experienced in their own schools.

BENEFITS FOR THE SAMOAN COMMUNITY

The Samoan community received a clear message about the importance of native language maintenance and its benefits for second language development. The establishment of the dual language program and the involvement of the mothers in the education of their children proved that the school and the Australian society genuinely care for good educational outcomes of all students. At the same time the school demonstrated its positive attitude towards multiculturalism and its efforts in establishing ethnic harmony.

BENEFITS FOR THE TEACHERS

The Australian teachers reported on the establishment of a changed and different rapport with the parents and students than the one they had before this project. They developed a better understanding of the Samoan culture and of their Samoan students' needs. Overall they developed a higher level of intercultural knowledge, sensitivity and communication skills.

BENEFITS FOR THE SCHOOL AND THE AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

This was the first time that members of an ethnic community were regularly and actively involved in the classroom activities in the investigated school to this extent. Mutual appreciation and getting to know each other were invaluable benefits of this initiative. The participants in this project developed a new semiotic space that is neither the cultural semiotic space of the Samoan mothers and students nor the cultural semiotic space of the Australian teachers, but a “Thirdspace” (Kostogriz, 2003), a mutual meeting space, where both parties exist in a changed form with modified values and beliefs. They can better communicate with each other. They understand each other, appreciate each other’s work and views, and work towards achieving the same goal, which is to raise happy and successful, educated Australians.

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