

Visibility of language diversity

in the educational settings of 4 to 6-year-old multilingual children

Introduction Kupu whakataki Fa'atomuaga

An important way to value and support language diversity and multilingualism is to include children's languages and related cultural artefacts in their linguistic landscapes. Languages visible in both the physical and digital environments can reflect the formal and informal policies and practices and can influence how languages are perceived and used. This research describes the linguistic landscapes of seven early childhood centres and five primary schools across a year to understand the language and digital technology policies and practices in the physical and digital environments of multilingual children, with a focus on educational services and their links with whānau

Method Tukanga Auala e Su'esu'e ai

Data collection for this research involved capturing the visible language in the physical and digital environments of the educational settings of four to six-year-olds (2017 – 2019). Then, in most cases, the head teacher, two teachers and where possible two whānau members were interviewed. This was repeated one year later in a return visit. It included seven early childhood centres (one of which was a Samoan immersion centre) and five primary school Y0/1 classrooms. A total of 1,271 photos were taken of all the displays with visible language in the physical environment. Research questions included how linguistic landscapes interact to support social engagement and language development of multilingual children?

Findings Ngā kitenga Mea na maua

Languages seen on the walls and online were the languages used and welcomed within the educational settings. Over the year the linguistic landscapes of these young multilingual children had become richer in te reo Māori and less dominated by English. All educational settings were working towards enhancing the linguistic landscapes to reflect their bicultural and multicultural commitment and practices as set out in curriculum documents. Support and use of children's heritage languages were enhanced by working in partnership with the children's whānau to increase the value and authenticity of their languages. The majority of teachers expressed some challenges engaging whānau, particularly with adults with first languages other than English. No formal language policies relating to diverse language speakers were in place. Language practices, such as the use of greetings in children's home languages in their learning stories, were strengthening. The majority of settings recorded children's ethnicities but no setting had language assessments or records of children's linguistic repertoires.

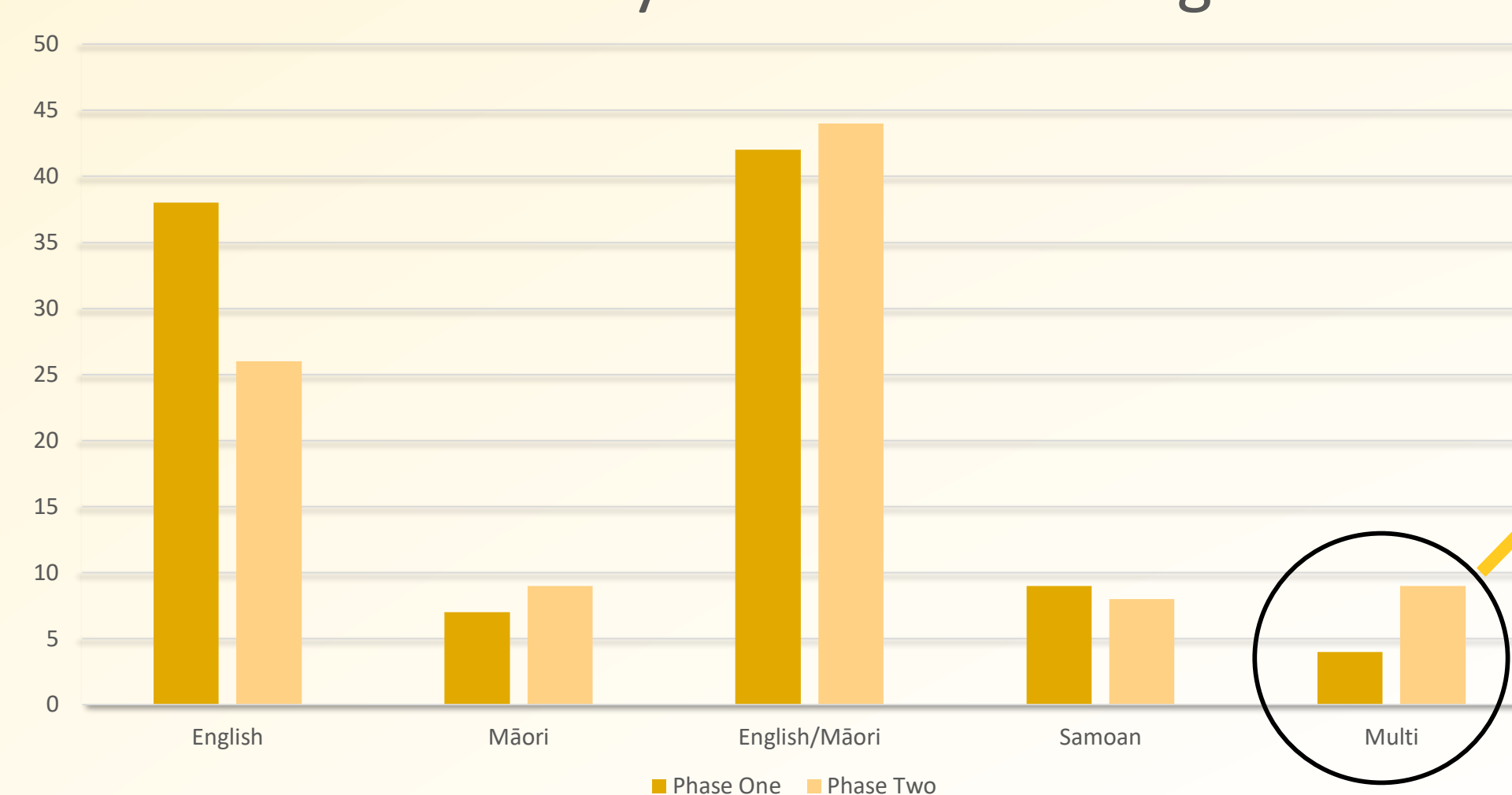
Conclusion Ko te mutunga Le iuga

Drawing attention to linguistic landscapes, both physical and digital, in educational settings facilitates language awareness, which can support the needs of the individuals as well as groups, leading to enriched language environments (Harris et al., 2018). These connections between environments and the people who inhabit them support the relationships and language development of multilingual children and their whānau (Harris, Davis & Cunningham, 2018). **An important way in which educators can value and support multilingual children's use of their languages is to include their languages and related cultural artefacts in their linguistic landscapes.**

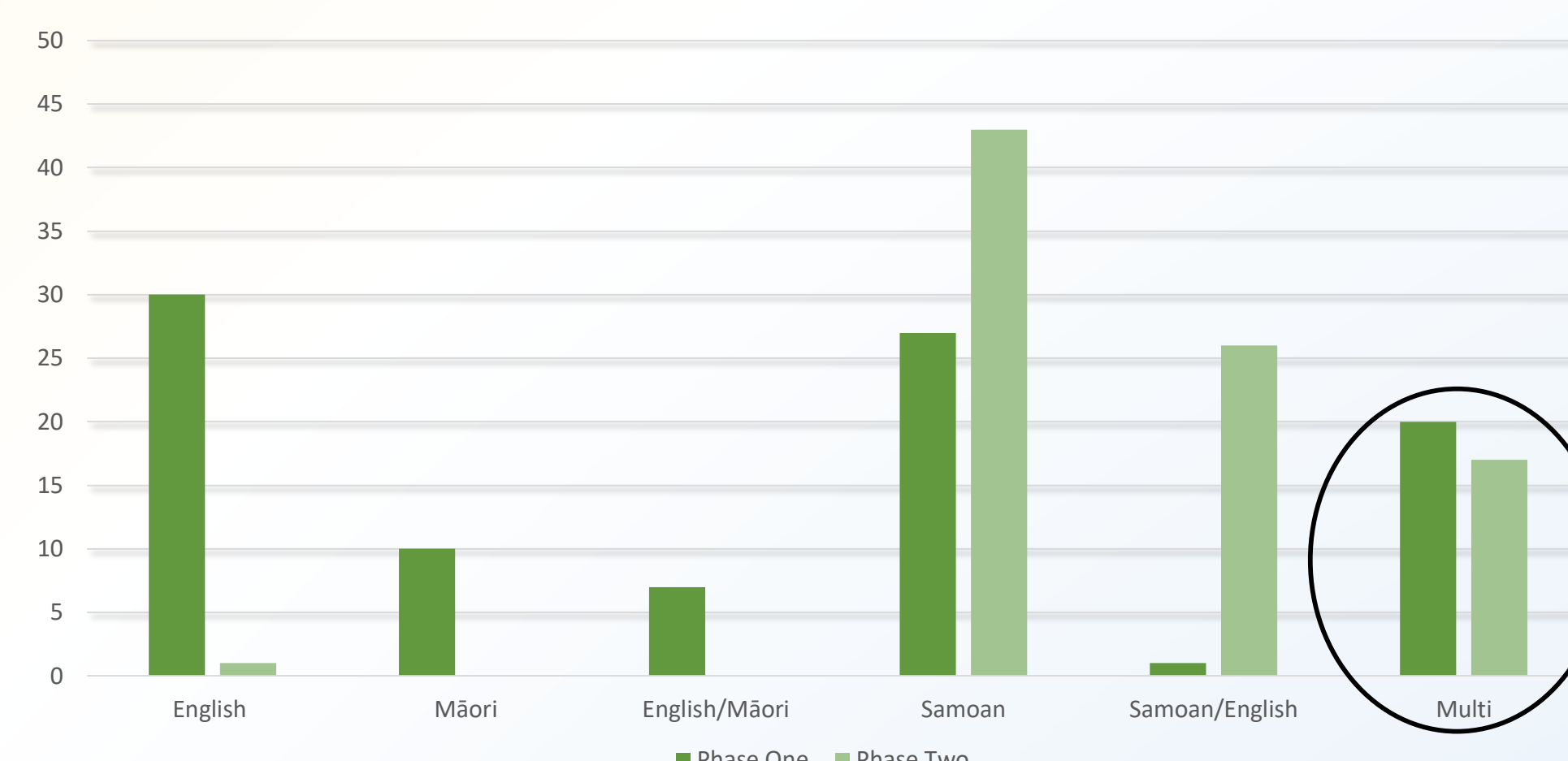
Leona Harris, PhD Student, University of Canterbury. Supervised by Distinguished Professor Niki Davis & Dr Lia de Vocht

Graphs and Examples

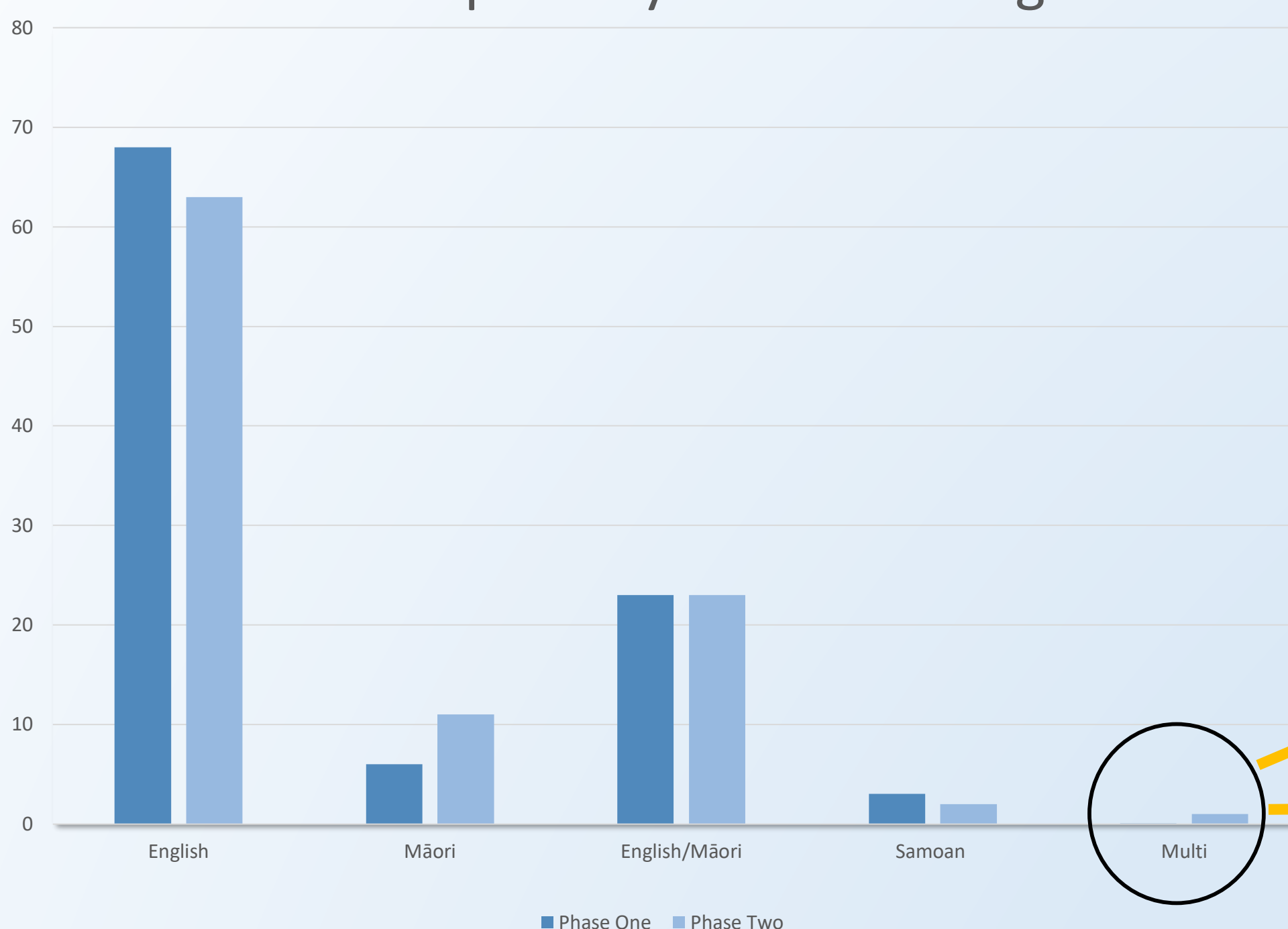
Percentage of languages visible in the six early education settings



Percentage of languages visible in the one Samoan immersion ECE



Percentage of languages visible in the five primary school settings



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