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Ko te Whare Whakamana:
Māori Language Revitalisation

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ABSTRACT

Efforts to revitalise the Māori language began in earnest with the establishment in 1981 of the first Kōhanga Reo (Māori language pre-school). Since this time, the growth of Māori medium education has been significant, and has also been complemented with language initiatives in broadcasting and the public sector, including government departments. Some iwi (tribes), most notably Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga have also implemented long term strategic plans to secure the health of the language within the tribe. Theories of language revitalisation, however, highlight the importance of re-establishing the inter-generational transmission of the language within homes, something which until recently has received little attention with regard to Māori language.

This thesis backgrounds the position of the Māori language, its linguistic, social, political and economic context for development into the third millenium, and presents a framework for its maintenance and revitalisation. The framework arises from data collected from 1577 participants in the Te Hoe Nuku Roa Baseline Study of Māori households, and interviews conducted with a sub-sample of participants who had identified as having either medium or high fluency in the language. The framework is based on the principles of Mana Māori (Māori control and responsibility), Mana Tangata (personal empowerment), and Tūhonotanga (interconnectedness). The various agents for Māori language revitalisation are identified in the framework, and it is argued that while each agent should focus on revitalisation activities most appropriate to themselves, it is important that activity is linked in some tangible way to the strengthening of Māori language in Māori homes.

PREFACE

The topic in context

The dawning of the third millenium has seen the continued acceleration of two seemingly opposing trends. On the one hand a decline in the diversity of the people, along with the flora and fauna of our planet - the trend toward uniformity and sameness across nations and cultures. Opposing this is the unprecedented interest and struggle, in particular amongst indigenous peoples, to retain their uniqueness. Some of the more enlightened nations are responding in a positive light and have moved to celebrate the diversity and difference exhibited amongst their peoples. In other nations, continual strife and warfare has resulted, with the majority unwilling to share power and resources with minorities, and recognise cultural difference as a nation-strengthening phenomenon. The maintenance of the languages of the world's indigenous and minority peoples is located within this wider struggle. Of the 6000 languages at present spoken throughout the world, it is estimated that only half will still be spoken one hundred years hence (Swerdlow 1999). The process of deliberately planning to revitalise or maintain a language in decline or a language spoken by a minority is a relatively new area of human endeavour, and there can be no doubt, that left to the vicissitudes of time, and the impact of global telecommunications, mass media, and economic imperatives, minority languages will cease to be spoken. Planning is essential, along with the prioritising of goals and resources; however success is ultimately dependant upon the enthusiasm, support, and dedication of the people to whom the particular language belongs. Theory and action go hand in hand. Theories of reversing language shift will be to no avail if they do not inform action, if they do not take account of the human circumstances

surrounding each language. Action will also be wasted if it is not subject to consideration, study, and critical reflection.

While this thesis is a contribution to the academic field of reversing language shift, more importantly it aims to inform the particular struggle in Aotearoa New Zealand to ensure that the language and culture that belong to these shores continues well into the next millenium. The ideas presented are informed by the experiences of people in communities struggling in this generation to ensure that the Māori language returns to a natural state of existence where it is self reproducing. The struggle to retain the Māori language is part of the wider context of Māori development and endeavour toward self determination.

The name for the thesis 'Ko te Whare Whakamana' comes from a waiata (song) composed by one of the author's teachers and mentors, the late John Tapiata. As the Head of Māori Studies at Palmerston North College of Education in the 1970's, John was responsible for lifting the status, use, and proficiency levels of Māori within the college and wider community. The song was composed in anticipation of establishing a Meeting House on the college campus. Using the phrase as the title for this thesis likens the language to the house. Literally, it is a place of prestige, status and authority, however, beyond the literal meaning, the house is a place of human interaction, a place where the human values of caring and hospitality are uppermost. It is vibrant, and has energy, it is a place for the expression of all human emotions. It is a place of wisdom, of learning, nurturing and knowledge. The fact that the song was composed in anticipation (about

five years before the house was actually built), is an indication of John's optimism for the future, his ability to look ahead, to plan strategically, and above all his dedication, enthusiasm and hard work to achieve his goals. While the song is short, it welcomes people to the house, and asks that they also look after and cherish the house as a treasure.

Anei te rōpū ākonga
e mihi atu nei ki a koutou e te iwi nau mai.
Manaakitia mai
ko te taonga nui e
ko te Whare Whakamana i a tātou.

Welcome to Te Whare Whakamana: Māori language revitalisation.

Literary Style

This thesis has been written in both Māori and English. The nature of the topic dictated that it be written in Māori, in order that the language issues discussed be understood through the language itself. It is also able to contribute to a small but growing body of academic discourse written in Māori, and therefore further encourage the use of Māori in this domain. It was written in English in order that it be accessible to a wider number of people working locally in Māori language initiatives, and to the international community which has shown a growing interest in the progress being made with regard to Māori language. While the aim was to write in Māori first, and subsequently interpret into English, this proved to be rather difficult as the vast majority of articles and texts that were consulted, along with the majority of discussions held with colleagues were in

English – the writing therefore flowed more easily in English. Because of this difficulty, only one chapter was written in Māori first and subsequently interpreted in English. The Māori and English versions are not word for word translations, rather an attempt has been made to represent the ideas in both languages.

In the English version many Māori words are used with some frequency. These words are those which have achieved general acceptance within the context of discussing Māori issues in English. Indeed, it would be difficult to write a Māori Studies thesis in English without licence to use these words freely. The convention that has been followed is to translate the word (in brackets after the word) the first time it is used in the thesis. Thereafter it is not translated, however a full glossary of the Māori terms used is provided. When using a quote from a Māori language source, the original has been included, and is immediately followed by the author's interpretation.

In the Māori language version, quotes that have been taken from an English language source have been interpreted by the author, and written in Māori in the text of the thesis. The original English quote is reproduced as an endnote to each chapter. It is hoped that this will ensure an uninterrupted flow for the Māori language reader, as well as access to the original. Judgement will also be able to be made with regard to the author's interpretation of the original.

In both versions, a different font has been used when reproducing the voices of the informants and participants in the study. This allows an easy distinction to be made between this and the academic quotes taken from journals, texts and other sources.

The orthographic conventions published by the Māori Language Commission for written Māori have been followed, including the use of the macron to indicate vowel length.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to all those who have provided nurturing and encouragement in my involvement in kaupapa Māori (Māori initiatives). In particular, this thesis is dedicated to John Tapiata a teacher and mentor who sowed a seed in a young mind and heart, which has grown over a period of some 25 years, resulting in this work.

Secondly, acknowledgements are given to all the participants in the Te Hoe Nuku Roa study - your willingness to participate and share your stories has ensured that the ideas discussed in the thesis are grounded in the real experiences of the people. I hope that my ears, my heart, and my mind have been open to receive all that you have talked about, and that my analysis and presentation conveys the full importance of your stories.

To my colleagues in the School of Māori Studies at Massey University who have provided a sounding board for ideas, and have also asked the challenging questions that are necessary to ensure rigour. You have also kept my feet on the ground, and made sure

that I did not lose touch with the real world. In particular, I acknowledge the late Pare Richardson for her example, her counsel, and her wise, insightful comments. During the later part of the writing, Darryn Joseph has provided invaluable feedback and motivation. I am indebted to the Te Hoe Nuku Roa research team, and in particular Eljon Fitzgerald for the collegial approach taken to what has grown to become a very significant project in Māori social research. Thanks also to Margaret Forster for assistance with generating the data.

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Finally to my family, to Bud and our children, Rosie, Lisa and Tama, for your unending patience, love and continued support for a partner and father, even when he has been lost in his work, or tired and neglectful of other duties. You and our unborn grandchildren have provided the necessary inspiration when the going was tough.

To all those mentioned above and others too numerous to mention, I hope that my work does justice to the time and energy that you have given me. If there are aspects of benefit that arise from this thesis, they are yours. If there are faults, they are mine and mine alone.

Ian Christensen,

Matariki 2001.

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