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Rescuing Māori: The last 40 years

Bernard Spolsky

1. Introduction¹

The public recognition of language endangerment (Hale 1991, Krauss 1991) has led to the establishment of a impressive number of centers and foundations² devoted to documentary work in the hope of recording the diversity of languages before the threatened rapid death of so many (Crystal 2000, Nettle and Romaine 2000). The most dramatic cases are those where only a handful of native speakers remain.³ In these instances, where it is necessary to reconstruct the grammar and lexicon of a usually unwritten variety, the task is not unlike that of the linguistic anthropologists and descriptive linguists who for many years concentrated on a language rather than on its speakers, at the same time developing warm personal relationships with those that they once labeled informants. But the anxiety over language loss and death (Dorian 1981) goes back even further, at least to the major study of language loyalty in the United States carried out by Joshua Fishman (Fishman 1966; Fishman et al. 1964) to try to understand if what was happening to his own native Yiddish was a more general phenomenon.

¹ This paper was written for the 2009 Annual Public Lecture of the Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. I am grateful for comments on a draft from Ruakere Hond, Peter Keegan, Tipene Chrisp.

² There are a number of centres working in this field: two of the most recently established are *The Minority Languages and Cultures Program* at Indiana University Bloomington and *The Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages* associated with the National Geographic Society. Others include *SIL International* (previously the Summer Institute of Linguistics), *Language and Ecology Research Forum*, *Terralingua*, *Linguapax*, *World Language Documentation Centre*, *Cultural Survival*, *Foundation for Endangered Languages*, *DiversCité Langues*, *Endangered Language Fund*, *International Clearing House for Endangered Languages*, *Gesellschaft für bedrohte Sprachen e.V.*, *Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project*, *Fondation Chirac Sorosoro*, *DoBeS Project of the Volkswagen Foundation*, to list only those that deal with endangered languages as a whole.

³ The last native speaker of Eyak died in January 2008, leaving Michael Krauss, the linguist who had worked with her since 1962, as the remaining guardian of the language.

It was Fishman too who later cast sociolinguistic light on the ethnic revival of the 1960s and 1970s (Fishman et al. 1985) which led to a growing number of efforts to prevent language loss, soon to be labeled *Reversing Language Shift* (Fishman 1990, 1991, 2001). For Fishman, this term covers a wide range of language management activities ranging from official and national cases like Ireland and the post-Soviet states through regionally autonomous governments of Quebec and Spain and the United Kingdom to the indigenous language movements of North and South America, Africa, Asia and the Pacific.

As well as naming the concept, Fishman (1991:87-110) proposed a typology of the status of threatened languages, the *Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale*, which assessed the likelihood of language maintenance or death. The lowest point on the scale referred to situations where there were only “vestigial users” of the variety who were old and socially isolated, with the result that the variety had to be “re-assembled”, the task that Michael Krauss undertook for Eyak with Marie Smith Jones and her sister while they were still alive. The next point on the scale is where speakers and users of the variety are “socially integrated and ethnolinguistically active” but beyond the age of child-bearing. This, we will note later, was a reasonable depiction of the state of the Māori language (and of Hawaiian) in the 1970s that was tackled by the innovative development of *kōhanga reo* or language nests in which grandparents were recruited to teach the language in pre-school programmes. The highest point on the scale is where a language is used in higher-level education, the workplace, government, and media but not directly supported by political independence: it refers to the status of languages of autonomous regions such as in Spain or Canada, but perhaps not to the stage attained in independent states. A decade later, Fishman 2001 daringly invited a number of scholars to comment on and update his scale and case descriptions; while many found the scale to need qualification, all agreed it was a useful selection of significant features and an approximation of the order in which they commonly occur.

To illustrate the process of language rescue, I have chosen to describe and analyze the progress of the Māori language in Aotearoa (New Zealand) over the last forty years or so as it moved from a probable Stage 2 to a reasonable approximation of the highest pre-independence Stage 8. In essence, this will show us the possibilities and limitations⁴ of a grass roots community-based

⁴ Chapter 1 of Fishman 2001 has the title “Why is it so hard to save a threatened language?”

movement gradually achieving public and government support to regenerate⁵ a threatened indigenous language.

2. Equality 1820-1860

Brought to New Zealand about a thousand years ago, Māori⁶ is one of some 1,200 Austronesian languages spoken in an area ranging from Madagascar off the coast of Africa to Easter Island (Rapanui) some 3,600km west of Chile. It is a member of the Polynesian subgroup. Over the years, regional variation in New Zealand Māori developed with a clearly recognisable South Island dialect and other minor variations which, according to Harlow (2007:44) do not prevent mutual intelligibility, but serve as shibboleths marking regional and tribal distinctions. It came into contact with English with the arrival of missionaries and traders in the early part of the 19th century, a contact that increased with the beginning of English settlement and even more rapidly after the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840. Some of the missionaries had been invited to New Zealand by the chiefs of Māori tribes;⁷ traders and settlers were also commonly invited and provided with land by tribal leaders who saw the value of modernisation. One aspect of the adoption of modern culture was literacy; during the 19th century, the Māori people developed a high standard of literacy in their language. Another was the availability of firearms which raised the stakes in inter-tribal warfare.

With the growing white settlement after the chiefs ceded sovereignty to Queen Victoria in 1840, there was a great increase in disputes over land ownership culminating in the New Zealand wars of 1845-72 (Belich 1986). In these early years, New Zealand appears to have been reasonably bilingual, with Māori and Pākehā⁸ each learning the other's language when in contact situations. Māori education was in the hands of missionaries to start with: the first mission school was set up by Kendall at Rangihoua in 1816, and others were soon established by Anglican, Wesleyan, and Catholic missions. The Bible was translated into Māori in 1827: the schools that the missionaries

⁵ I take this term from Hohepa 2000.

⁶ Or more precisely, the dialect or dialects of Eastern Polynesian from which Māori developed.

⁷ Marsden, an early missionary, came to New Zealand in 1814 under the patronage of a chief, Ruatara, who insisted the mission be located at Rangihoua where his tribe could protect it. Many other chiefs visited Sydney and other overseas in order to obtain guns and settlers (Belich 1996):142-144.

⁸ New Zealander of European descent.

conducted generally taught in Māori. In this period, too, many Māori set up their own schools.

3. Decline 1860-1920

The shift to English came later. Under the Education Ordinance of 1847, mission schools received government support if they would provide religious and industrial training and teach English. This provision was continued in the 1858 Native Schools Act. A new act in 1867 set up a national government system of village primary schools for Māori under the control of the Native Department, to be established at the request of Māori communities who supplied the land and paid half the cost of the building and a quarter of the salary of the teacher. English was to be the medium of instruction. The transition is signaled by the title of a textbook by Colenso 1972: "*Willie's first English book, written for young Māoris who can read their own Māori tongue, and who wish to learn the English language.*" In 1880, a year after the Native Schools had been transferred to the new Department of Education responsible for a national, free, secular, state-funded system of primary schools, Māori was permitted in the primers only to assist with the teaching of English. In 1894, primary school attendance was made compulsory for Māori as well as Pākehā; a decade later, all Native schools were required to use the Direct Method for teaching English and the use of Māori was to be discouraged (Simon 1998).

This shift to English was greatly bolstered by the influence of the Young Māori Party whose main leaders – Apirana Ngata, Maui Pomare, and Te Rangi Hiroa/Peter Buck, all of whom in time were knighted and became cabinet ministers (Belich 2001):200. The party worked for the goals of cultural assimilation, the maintenance of land ownership and some measure of self-government. Its acceptance of bilingualism did however support the school-dominated shift to English, and combined with growing urbanisation which removed Māori from their villages and tribal organisations, led by the 1930s to growing erosion of the language (Benton 1991).

4. Endangerment 1920-1960

Over the next forty years, the effect of these developments was rising loss of natural intergenerational transmission of language: as parents started to speak to their children in English, the number of fluent native speakers decreased and their age rose. Service in the army and job opportunities during the Second World War played an important role in raising knowledge and use of English. Urbanisation also had a major effect. In 1945, just over 20% of Māori still lived in the villages; by 1960, the split was fifty-fifty; and by 1990, 80%

of the Māori population was urban. There was some encouragement of Māori arts and crafts in the schools and Māori was taught as a high school subject. Another positive development was the opening of courses in Māori in the universities: Bruce Biggs, who was later to teach most of the leading figures in tertiary Māori Studies, taught the first class in Māori I in 1951 at Auckland University College. However the speaking of the language continued to decline, and the post-war early childhood programmes (the Play Centre movement) with their insistence that parents speak English to the children could well have been the final blow (Benton 1981:18).

The severity of the loss was revealed by a language survey started in 1973 by Richard Benton at the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (Benton and Smith 1982). Inspired by methods used by Joshua Fishman in his study of bilingualism in Jersey City (Fishman et al. 1971), and with strong support from the Council, Benton and his wife carried out a major survey which revealed that in only two small communities was it still general practice for Māori parents to speak to their children in the language.⁹ The results of the survey were quickly leaked in newspaper accounts and in radio interviews which Benton was giving regularly as part of his advocacy for Bilingual Education. Thus, Māori came to know that there was research evidence supporting their sense of language loss.

In the 1970s, Benton (1981:14) estimated that there were still about 70,000 native speakers of Māori, most elderly, and altogether 115,000 who could understand Māori. By then, even though many adults could speak and understand the language, children were commonly speakers of English only. The detailed reports as they appeared (e.g. (Benton and Smith 1982)), showed the geographical spread of the language, and Benton reported that only a few communities in Northland and Whakatane County had children speaking the language natively. The survey showed that in 222 of the 275 North Island geographical units studied, fluency in Māori was found mainly in adults over the age of 45; south of Taupo, the language had virtually disappeared except among Māoris who had come from other regions (Benton and Benton 2001:425).

5. Recognizing the problem – grassroots beginnings

The Māori language regeneration movement which started in the 1970s paralleled other ethnic political activities. Major demographic changes had

⁹ That it was the custom for grandparents often to be responsible for their grandchildren accounts for the existence of native speakers in many other communities.

taken place – a continued high birthrate, a significant reduction in the death rate as the result of improved health, and a reversal in the proportion of rural and urban residence (Belich 2001:476). An early activist group was Ngā Tamatoa, organised in 1970 at a conference at the University of Auckland, and prominent for its protests at celebrations of Waitangi Day and its participation in the Land March of 1975. Ngā Tamatoa and the Wellington-based Te Reo Māori Society presented a petition with 30,000 signatures to Parliament on 14 September 1972. It called for “courses in Māori language and aspects of Māori culture be offered in ALL those schools with large Māori rolls and that these same courses be offered, as a gift to the Pākehā from the Māori, in all other New Zealand schools as a positive effort to promote a more meaningful concept of Integration.”¹⁰

In 1977, the appointment of Kara Puketapu as the first secretary of the Department of Māori Affairs led to the establishment of Tū Tangata, a movement active in revival of Māori culture and arts. Puketapu recruited Ngoingoi Pewhairangi, at the time a teacher of Māori at Gisborne Girls High School, to develop programmes across the country (Ka'ai 2008:52). These programmes sent young Māori to the villages to help restore the *marae* (meeting house) and at the same time to learn Māori language and customs that they had lost in the cities where they lived (Ka'ai 2008:54). It was this programme that gave promise of support for the grassroots movements for teaching the language at the pre-school level. But it was preceded by an adult education initiative that has remained a grassroots movement.

6. Te Ataarangi

Collaboration between Ngoingoi Pewhairangi and Katerina Mataira led to the establishment of *Te Ataarangi*. Mataira, teaching Māori in the late 1970s at the University of Waikato, had been impressed by the Silent Way method of language teaching developed by Caleb Gattegno. Born in Alexandria in 1911 and with a doctorate in Mathematics, Gattegno invented Cuisenaire rods for the teaching of mathematics, and later (Gattegno 1972) showed how they could be used for teaching a foreign language. Mataira, already becoming known as a prolific writer of books in Māori, found the method suitable for teaching adults (Mataira 1980) and demonstrated it to Ngoi, who joined her in training tutors to start classes (Ka'ai 2008). The first annual *hui* (gathering, meeting) of *Te Ataarangi* was held at Mangatu, a *marae* not far from Gisborne. This location was selected because of its association with the Ringatu faith, a religious group founded in 1867 by Te Kooti Rikirangi after

¹⁰ http://www.tki.org.nz/r/maori/trotm_e.php#Petition.

his study of the Old Testament while he was detained without trial in the Chatham Islands after disturbances among East Coast communities. The Ringatu Church particularly strong in Bay of Plenty and some East Coast communities (Metge 1967:145) has been particularly supportive of the Māori language (Ka'ai 2008:66). Hond (pers. comm.) has not been aware of the Ringatu basis in his twenty years with *Te Ataarangi*, and suspects it is an East Coast perspective.

The five basic rules established for *Te Ataarangi* are “Don’t speak English; don’t act inappropriately; don’t push people or belittle them; when it is your turn then you can respond; maintain a kindly disposition toward others” Classes are open to non-Māori. *Te Ataarangi* philosophy stresses spirituality. (Browne 2005) sees *wairua* as an essential element in the teaching approach of *Te Ataarangi*. *Wairua* is defined in the Maori dictionary as “spirit, soul, quintessence – spirit of a person which exists beyond death. To some, the *wairua* resides in the heart or mind of someone while others believe it is part of the whole person and is not located at any particular part of the body. The *wairua* begins its existence when the eyes form in the foetus and is immortal”(Moorfield 2005). There is variation in the meaning of the term: Keegan (pers. comm.) says there are more than likely a wide variety of interpretations, some Christian-based. Hond (pers. comm.) suggests the *Te Ataarangi* interpretation: “In the broader sense the *wairua* *Te Ataarangi* seeks to develop is that connection with language, to a person’s *whakapapa* (ancestry) and to their culture. Some *kaiako* (tutors) treat the lessons as an almost religious experience ... others seek to create a traditional *wānanga* (Maori school of learning) atmosphere to help students leave the day to day pressures and personal fears behind.”

Since its beginning in 1979, the *Te Ataarangi* programme¹¹ claims to have taught the language to 30,000 learners. It is organised into ten regions, with varying numbers of branches, within which there are varying numbers of teachers and members; each region collects membership fees of NZ\$20, “but in the spirit of inclusiveness, people are not ‘shut out’ and the membership in a general sense includes all who choose to associate with *Te Ataarangi* through family and friends.”¹² There is therefore no estimate of the number of members. For a decade after 1985, it was associated with the Waikato Polytechnic, since 2003 established with government support as a tertiary education institution called *Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi*. Jointly starting in 2000, they offer a bachelor’s degree and a number of certificate

¹¹ It became an incorporated society in 1981 to handle the occasional funds it has been granted, but since 1999 has been controlled by the *Te Ataarangi* educational trust.

¹² <http://www.teataarangi.org.nz/about-te-ataarangi.html>.

programmes. There was disagreement between *Te Ataarangi*, a highly informal organisation, and the university with its set courses and regulations. The close association was broken when the university claimed ownership of the programmes. In the meantime, *Te Ataarangi* had developed connection with other institutions: Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology and The Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki (*Te Wānanga Māori*), Auckland University of Technology and Auckland Teachers College.

Te Ataarangi is an important component of Māori language regeneration, aiming to fill the gap between the elderly native speakers and the young children being taught in pre-school and school programmes described in the next sections. It has remained a grassroots movement, with limited external support, functioning more like an extended family than an organised educational institution. As students learn, Browne (2005:32) reports, they start to bond with their fellow students and “this bond then extends further to the wide *whānau* of Te Ataarangi.” At the highest stage, they reach “*te taha whānau*” or collective consciousness, when they seek to pass what they have learned to others (Browne 2005:35). *Te Ataarangi* stresses the maintenance of Māori customs and traditions, the teaching of traditional crafts like weaving, the composition and performance of songs, all in a spiritual atmosphere that echoes its religious associations. Its leaders have been and are Māori activists, but concentrate on language and culture and not political activity¹³ and developing economic power of tribes as they fought for and received settlements under the Waitangi Tribunal.

7. Kōhanga reo

More widely known than *Te Ataarangi*, *kōhanga reo* (language nests) were proposed at a meeting of Māori leaders and educators in 1981, who suggested that the quickest way to restore the language was to have grand-parents who were still fluent speakers work with pre-school children (King 2001:121). The first two were opened in Wellington suburbs in March 1982, meeting in church halls. I was in Wellington later that year and was taken out to see them. Two strong memories remain – a grandfather sitting a two-year-old down in front of a blackboard, and English-speaking older children arriving after school to pick up their brothers and sisters. The movement spread rapidly: by 1983, there were a hundred centers, by 1987 five hundred, and by 1994, over eight hundred. This was the peak, and numbers of centers declined to the current level of 467 in 2008, the number of children being served

¹³ Hund (pers. comm.) recalls that when he started in *Te Ataarangi*, most members opposed the desires of younger activists to take part in demonstrations and marches.

having dropped from a high of 14,000 to just over 9,000. By 1991, *kōhanga reo* were providing 20% of all early childhood services; at the high point, nearly half of Māori children were attending centers.

The goal of the centers was to raise Māori children speaking Māori in a *whānau* (family) environment. Parents are expected to try to provide a Māori-speaking situation at home too. Each center is controlled by the *whānau* – teachers, parents, and local elders. All stress traditional Māori culture and practices. About half are based in a single *marae*, with about 10-20 children. Most accept babies at one year old, and expect pupils to move on at five. The government funds *kōhanga reo* though the Kōhanga Reo National Trust, a registered charitable trust the relations of which with local *kōhanga reo* has varied. Government support for the pre-school movement seems to have replaced its earlier interest in the adult education programme, which was largely left alone. Perhaps this was an advantage, as *Te Ataurangi* remained by choice a grassroots movement, while *kōhanga reo* became a government supported institution. Some of the recent decline in number of pre-school programmes is accounted for by dissatisfaction with this institutionalisation, and there have been a growing number (25 in 1995, perhaps 32 in 1997) of total-immersion early childhood programmes not associated with the Trust (King 2001). These non-Trust related early childhood centers are sometimes privately operated and sometimes have their own trusts. While they receive funding directly from the government, they are freer to follow local policies, whether to drop 100% immersion (King, pers. comm.) or to insist on it (Hond, pers. comm.). But the drop in numbers is also because other *kōhanga reo* have closed as a result of low enrolment or staffing issues.

The nature and training of staff has been a long-term problem. The older native speakers, like the grandfather I noticed, had to learn that they do not need to teach the language formally; most have grown too old to keep up with young children. Younger adults have therefore been brought in, but most have been second language speakers, lacking the proficiency to provide the fluent language needed. From the beginning, training schemes of various kinds were introduced, and in 1991 a three-year training course was set up that leads to formal New Zealand Qualification Authority recognition. In 1996, there were seven hundred teachers in training (King 2001).

The *kōhanga reo* has played an vital role not just in teaching the language, but, as Metge 1995 has argued, in encouraging increasing participation in the *whānau*,¹⁴ defined not as a kinship group but as a group who accept the

¹⁴ This kind of informal organisation is a mark, Hond (pers. comm.) suggests, of other institutions such as Maori Women's Welfare League (Croker 1966) or the Maori Wardens (Hill 2004).

principle of speaking Māori at all times and places. For many years, this also involved finding time and energy to battle various government departments. Participation led to increased self-esteem for parents as well as children. Many parents were sufficiently satisfied with the pre-school experience to wish to extend it. The major result was the development of independent Māori immersion primary schools.

8. Kura Kaupapa Māori

There was one independent Māori school already in existence when I visited New Zealand in 1987 to look at Māori bilingual education in state schools (Spolsky 1987). Hoani Waititi had been started by Pita Sharples in 1985, with help from Katerina Mataira, among others. During my visit to Auckland, I was invited to attend the meeting of the *whānau* of an Auckland *kōhanga reo* who were looking for a primary school that would keep up their children's Māori. Unsuccessful in their search, they started their own independent school on the Hoani Waititi model, calling it a *kura kaupapa Māori* (school of Māori philosophy). The fundamental approach echoed the *kōhanga reo*: the school was to be taught only in Māori (English was banned inside the school grounds for many years), and control was to be in the hands of the *whānau*. In 1987, a working party consisting of Katerina Mataira, Pita Sharples, Graham Hingangaroa Smith, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Cathy Dewes, Tuki Nepe, Rahera Shortland, Pem Bird and Toni Waho, adopted a set of basic philosophical principles (*Te Aho Matua*) for the movement and in 1993 a governing body was established. Seventy-one separate *kura kaupapa* were established up to 2006, more than twenty classified as "composite" which means they have the right to continue beyond the primary level. In 2008, there were 68 *kura kaupapa*, with 6,104 students.

A significant revolution in the organisation of education in New Zealand in 1988 had a major effect on the development of *kōhanga reo* and *kura kaupapa Māori*. In that year, a taskforce chaired by businessman Brian Picot recommended that every school in New Zealand become an independent educational unit with its own board of trustees. In a subsequent development, each school was to negotiate a charter with the Minister of Education setting out its goals and responsibility. The implementation of the charter was to be audited by a newly-created Education Review Office (Peters 1995). The new Māori schools also came under this governance plan, except that funding for *kōhanga reo* went through the Trust and the responsibility for setting goals for *kura kaupapa Māori* was granted to its governing council.¹⁵ This change

¹⁵ According to Graham Smith, the charter "provides the guidelines for excellence in Maori, that is, what a good Maori education should entail. It also acknowledges

removed Regional Educational Boards as intermediaries through which pre-school centers and primary schools had to work, and although there continued to be bureaucratic hassles, Māori education was granted much greater freedom at the local community level than indigenous minority groups can expect in most other countries.

In the early days, there were strains as individual schools struggled to handle responsibility for logistical and administrative as well as educational tasks: early reports of the Educational Review Office tended to focus on playground safety and building maintenance and to ignore the nature and effects of Māori immersion. In time, as the *whānau* gained experience, most schools survived the vicissitudes of learning the arts of educational administration and developed their own philosophy. Academically, immersion education seems to be working (Te Puni Kokiri 2008c:5):

“Achievement data from 2004 indicated that Māori students attending schools where teaching was conducted in Māori for at least 51% of the time had a higher rate of attaining NCEA (National Certificates of Educational Achievement) than Māori in English-speaking schools. Furthermore, a high proportion of candidates at these schools achieved NCEA qualifications above the level typical for their year of schooling.”

While the proportion of Māori children in *kura kaupapa Māori* is still small, Bishop 2003 sees them as a powerful mechanism for addressing the imbalances that have discriminated against Māori. They support self-determination, Māori cultural aspirations, and present a collective vision that promotes home-school relations and *whānau* values. Bishop believes these positive features may be developed in the mainstream schools in which most Māori children are educated. But there are some who believe that the institutionalisation of the school programmes has weakened the grassroots basis, allowing many parents to leave activism to others. Indeed, there has been a strong trend to work for government intervention and provision of Māori programmes.

Pākehā culture and skills required by Maori children to participate fully and at every level in modern New Zealand society (Smith 2003):10.”

9. From grassroots to government

Māori activism and a developing Pākehā sense of responsibility in the 1970s started to make inroads on government policy, culminating in the establishment in 1975 of the Waitangi Tribunal. The Tribunal was charged to hear claims of failures by government over the years to implement provisions of the Treaty of Waitangi negotiated in 1840 and establishing British sovereignty. Most of the claims involved land confiscated illegally, but other important issues concern fishing, mineral and intellectual rights. In 1986, the Tribunal accepted a claim by Ngā Kaiwhakapūmau i te Reo Māori that the Treaty had included a promise to help preserve the Māori language. The Tribunal recommended that:

- “legislation be introduced enabling any person who wishes to do so to use the Māori language in all courts of law and in any dealings with Government departments, local authorities and other public bodies;
- “legislation be introduced enabling any person who wishes to do so to use the Māori language in all courts of law and in any dealings with Government departments, local authorities and other public bodies;
- a supervising body be established by statute to supervise and foster the use of the Māori language;
- an inquiry be instituted into the way Māori children are educated to ensure that all children who wish to learn Māori be able to do so from an early age and with financial support from the State;
- broadcasting policy be formulated in regard to the obligation of the Crown to recognise and protect the Māori language;
- and amendments be made to make provision for bilingualism in Māori and in English as a prerequisite for any positions of employment deemed necessary by the State Services Commission.”¹⁶

¹⁶ Report of the Waitangi Tribunal on the Te Reo Maori Claim, <http://www.waitangi-tribunal.govt.nz/reports/summary.asp?reportid={6113B0B0-13B5-400A-AFC7-76F76D3DDD92}>.

The Report was accepted by government, and in 1987, the Māori Language Act was passed, declaring Māori an official language of New Zealand and establishing the Māori Language Commission.

In education, some steps had been taken by the government earlier. The first bilingual school was established at Ruatoki in 1977, a last-ditch effort in one of the few schools where most children were still speaking Māori (Spolsky 1989). Modeled on US bilingual maintenance programmes, it was minimally funded (there were no funds to bus children from nearby Whakatane), started teaching in Māori and became dual medium by Standard 2, and changed its status to *Kura Kaupapa Māori* in 1992. After Ruatoki, the New Zealand Department of Education started to make provision for Māori bilingual education in some regular primary schools.

Spolsky (1987) described the characteristics of the programmes that developed. There were no curriculum materials available, and the Māori-speaking inspectors and advisers were too busy helping mainstream schools with the new Taha Māori programmes intended to teach Māori culture to Pākehā to give much help to the immersion classes. The teachers tended to be highly experienced early childhood experts who had never used their native Māori in a school context. Assisted sometimes by Māori-speaking aides and often by elderly relatives, they made their classrooms closed Māori space in which only Māori was spoken. Though officially called “bilingual” programmes, many of them were in fact immersion programmes. Among those I visited in 1987, Masterton East (Rawhiti) Primary school in 1987 was fed by two strong *kōhanga reo*; its two teachers were not yet fluent in Māori, but were assisted by a native-speaking assistant, and the use of Māori was increasing. In the 1990s, it became a full-time Māori immersion school and merged with *Kura Kaupapa Māori o Wairarapa* in 1992. Another school I visited in 1987 was Rakaumanga, originally a ‘Native School’ opened in 1896, and integrated into the State system in 1969. A bilingual pre-school was established at Rakaumanga in 1979; the school was redesignated as primary bilingual in 1984 and in 1993, a secondary unit was added. In 1994, Rakaumanga became a *kura kaupapa Māori* and was authorised to offer programmes from year 1 to year 13 in 1996. All subjects are now taught in Māori.

There has been a steady growth of Māori education since 1979. In 2006, 421 New Zealand schools (out of 2,573) offered some Māori medium instruction. There were 83 full immersion schools (including *kura kaupapa Māori*), 78 bilingual schools, another 43 with immersion classes, and 215 with immersion or bilingual classes. This provided for 26,340 Māori students, 16% of the total number of Māori students in school. The largest proportion (7%) was in the highest level of immersion (81-100%). According to official figures (Te Puni Kokiri 2008c), there were more total immersion schools

(including *kura kaupapa Māori*), but overall 17 fewer schools with bilingual or immersion classes in 2006 than in 2001; they provided for a slightly higher number of students in 2006 than in 2001, but the percentage in Māori-medium programmes had dropped from 17% to 16%.

10. Other government action

In 1987, in compliance with the Waitangi Tribunal's decision on the Māori language, the Māori Language Act 1987 became law. The purpose of the act was "to declare the Māori language to be an official language of New Zealand." This was defined in two substantive sections. The first recognised a right for anyone to speak Māori in legal proceedings, calling for interpreters to be available whenever reasonable notice had been given. The second established a Māori Language Commission, which was to be named *Te Komihana Mōte Reo Māori*. The name of the Commission was subsequently changed to *Te Taura Whiri i Te Reo Māori*, in order to avoid the borrowed English word *komihana* (commission). It was to advise on the implementation of policies and practices to give effect to official status, to promote the Māori language "and, in particular, its use as a living language and as an ordinary means of communication," to issue certificates of competency in the Māori language, and to advise the minister on any matter related to the Māori language. The Commission has five board members and a chief executive officer. Its operations cover lexicology (developing a lexical data base and preparing the first monolingual Māori dictionary), language standards and proficiency testing, and policy development and promotion. It states its goal as the re-establishment of the Māori language as a "living national *taonga* (treasured thing) for all New Zealanders."

By passing the Māori Language Act, New Zealand had adopted a two-part Māori language policy. The first part allowed for the symbolic use of the language in law courts, and the other established a government institution to encourage the use of the language. Implementation of these first two steps was slow but steady. The *Inventory of Māori Language Services* (Te Puni Kōkiri 2000) describes five activities undertaken by the Department for Courts in the Ministry of Justice. The first was the issue of 54 court publications in Māori by the Waitangi Tribunal. The second was the provision of a court translation service whenever 14 days' notice is given. Special allowances are paid to staff with strong capabilities in Māori. Māori training is available for those who wish to learn the language. Some court offices have bilingual signs.

In the beginning, the Māori Language Commission seems to have envisaged its role as something like that of language academies in countries with a strong national standard language, such as France or Spain. It wanted to defend the purity of standard Māori, dealing with issues of terminological

innovation and grammatical correctness. It later moved to a more activist role. Towards the end of its first decade, the Commission drafted a Māori Language Strategic Plan (Matthews 1999). This document started with a vision statement:

“By the year 2011, the Māori language will have been significantly revitalised as a dynamic feature of everyday life. This will involve sustained increases in both the number of people who speak Māori, and its level of use.”

Four key outcomes were envisioned: Māori was to be the principal language of a significant number of people in Māori domains; it would be spoken by different generations in Māori homes and communities in everyday life; it would be accepted also in non-Māori domains; and the general public would have positive attitudes toward it.

Like an earlier New Zealand language policy report (Waite 1992), though, it was a somewhat academic document concerned with goals rather than implementation. *Te Puni Kōkiri* subsequently took the next step towards a Māori language strategy, preparing a series of short policy papers for Cabinet starting in June 1997. The first set out the legal obligations of the government toward the Māori language, showing the basis in the Treaty of Waitangi, in subsequent decisions of the Waitangi Tribunal and other courts, and in other legislation with implications for language policy, such as the Māori Language Act of 1989, the Education Act of 1989, the Broadcasting Act of 1989, and the Bill of Rights Act of 1990. It also cited two international documents, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.¹⁷ Two other policy papers described language planning. These papers and other lobbying paid off, and on 8th September 1997, Cabinet agreed “that the Crown and Māori are under a duty derived from the Treaty of Waitangi to take all reasonable steps to actively enable the survival of Māori as a living language” (Matthews 1999:7). In December 1997, the New Zealand government accepted five Māori language policy objectives:

- to increase the number of Māori speakers by increasing opportunities to learn the language;
- to improve the level of Māori proficiency;
- to increase opportunities to use Māori;

¹⁷ Ironically, when this Declaration was finally passed in 2008, New Zealand was one of a tiny minority who voted against it.

- to develop the Māori language for the full range of modern activities; and
- to foster positive attitudes so that Māori/English bilingualism “becomes a valued part of New Zealand society.”¹⁸

Te Puni Kōkiri was designated by Cabinet to lead an ‘officials group’ with representatives from other government departments to implement the policy. A series of internal policy papers was prepared over the next year. One such paper summarised a study written for the New Zealand Treasury (Grin and Vaillancourt 1998) that described language management for Basque and Welsh. Other position papers described a Galway (Ireland) federation of state and non-state organisations working for the promotion of Irish, discussed evaluation, described the work of language academies and the issue of certifying language competence, set out objectives for the public and private sectors in providing services in Māori, and laid down the tasks for modernizing Māori. The final paper in the series, appropriately titled *Te Reo Māori*, provided a historical review of the loss of Māori and a description of revitalisation efforts up the 1990s.

In 1999 the strategy went public, with the publication of guidelines addressed to Public Service departments and to non-governmental organisations. Government departments were instructed and non-governmental organisations were encouraged to assist with the revitalisation of the Māori language. Each publication listed general objectives and methods of implementation:

- a Māori Language Education Plan;
- Māori language broadcast media;
- guidelines to assist public service departments (or, in the appropriate version, organisations) to develop their own policies and plans;
- Māori language corpus activities; and
- “mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating Māori language activities.”

The guidelines encouraged each department to develop its own Māori language policy statement. The implementation of these policies was expected to take three or four years. A further position paper described the management efforts for French in Québec and for Frisian in Friesland, noting that the

¹⁸ De Bres (2008) describes the fluctuations in this last policy, but shows a growing tolerance on the part of non-Maori to the language.

Québec linguistic organisation had a staff of more than 230 to handle a much larger population, and the Frisian (with approximately the same number of speakers as Māori) managed with about 64, while New Zealand had only 9 people staffing *Te Taura Whiri*, the Māori Language Commission.

The 1999 national budget allocated funds to *Te Puni Kōkiri* to contract with Statistics New Zealand to conduct a survey of the health of the Māori language by interviewing in depth a sample of Māori. In June 2000 *Te Puni Kōkiri* published its inventory of Māori language services in 35 government agencies. By the end of the 1990s, then, a handful of professionally sophisticated policy-makers, with a good understanding of language planning processes, had begun a bureaucratic campaign to shape the design, implementation, and evaluation of New Zealand's Māori language policy. The twenty-first century opened with the government moving in directions not dissimilar from the grassroots movement. The policy for Māori that has been adopted is well in line with the various language rights movements in Europe. Indeed, in both individual and collective rights in education and public service, the Māori language in New Zealand is in a much better position than minority languages under European Union policies.

This is true of a third important area of activity, radio and TV broadcasting. Many nineteenth-century language revival and standardisation movements focused their efforts around newspapers. Led as they often were by highly literate city-dwellers, these newspapers became both a place to carry on debates about the revived language and symbols of the revival. The first Māori language newspaper, *Te Karere o Nui Tirenī*, appeared in Auckland in 1842; by the end of the century there were a number publishing news of international, national, and local importance. In the 1930s most ceased to publish entirely in Māori, and the Māori newspapers and magazines that continue have only a proportion of Māori language content.

Recent developments in Māori have been stronger with the spoken than the written language. Benton (1981) described the first steps taken to improve the position of the Māori language in public broadcasting. In 1986, the Broadcasting Corporation of New Zealand set up the Māori Radio Board to broadcast in Māori nationally. The Broadcasting Act of 1989 included "promoting Māori language and culture" in the functions of the Broadcasting Commission. In the same year, the government reserved a number of radio frequencies for Māori use. In 1993, there were 20 *iwi*-based radio stations in the North Island, and one in the South Island. These radio stations were required to devote most of their time to promoting Māori language and culture, although a survey in 1991 by the Māori Language Commission found that the percentage of Māori language content varied from 20% to 85%.

In 1993, *Te Māngai Paho*, the Māori Broadcasting Funding Agency, was set up with a statutory role of promoting Māori language and culture by

distributing funds, responding to a high court decision¹⁹ supporting the Waitangi Tribunal's views of the importance of broadcasting. There was dissatisfaction with the speed of development, and after review, the strengthening of *Te Māngai Paho* was announced in May 1998. A Māori television trust was to be established to operate a separate Māori television channel.

Reporting on the situation in 2006, Te Puni Kokiri (2008b) noted that 75% of Māori adults had access to radio stations broadcasting in Māori; 70% of them used this access.²⁰ The same proportion watched Māori language programmes on mainstream television. Over half have seen the growing Māori television service, which now broadcasts several hours a day. It is perhaps too early to assess the effects of a developing system.

11. Māori at the tertiary level

Under the leadership of Bruce Biggs, Māori started to be taught in the Anthropology Department at Auckland University College in 1951. A second-year course was added in 1954, and the name Māori Studies adopted (Keegan 2003:10). At Victoria University College, it was also a part of the Anthropology Department, becoming a separate department on the appointment of Hirini Moko Mead as first professor in 1978. Victoria and Waikato started postgraduate programmes in 1978, and Auckland in 1979. By the end of the 1970s, all the North Island Universities were teaching Māori language. The language was taught at Teachers Training Colleges from the 1960s, and the first bilingual teachers programme was started in the 1980s. The university programmes were particularly influential, Keegan (2003:10) in that many of the leaders of the Māori medium movement were graduates. Since 2001, Earle (2007) reports, there has been a rapid expansion in tertiary level teaching of the language, involving over 100,000 learners in courses offered at over 50 different tertiary institutions. Over half, it appears, study the language for only one year, which is not enough to establish conversational proficiency. Besides the universities, numbers of other tertiary institutes offered courses in Māori language – institutes of technology and polytechnics and specifically Māori *wānanga* (defined in Wikipedia as “a type of publicly owned tertiary institution that provides education in a Māori cultural context”). Like the *kōhanga reo* and the *kura kaupapa Māori*, they adopt a philosophy of education different from the standard Western model of the

¹⁹ Broadcasting Assets Case – New Zealand Māori Council versus Attorney-General – 1992, 2, NZLR 576.

²⁰ de Bres (2008) reports that many Pākehā report watching Māori TV.

New Zealand education system (Penetito 2002). In 1981 *Te Wānanga o Raukawa* was established at Otaki, near Wellington. This was the first modern *iwi*-based university, which amongst other activities, devoted a lot of time to the teaching of Māori language to adults through courses and week-long immersion *hui* ‘gatherings.’ There has been rapid growth in the student enrolment in the three official institutions *Te Wānanga o Aotearoa*, *Te Wānanga o Raukawa*, and *Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi*: officially recognised in 1994, they were approaching 26,000 students in 2002. About half of the students studying Māori, especially in non-formal community education programmes but also in formal programmes, take only one year and many do not complete the course or fail. The students tend to be women: Hond (pers. comm.) suggests that women are more likely to be seeking conversational skill, while the men are often more interested in developing formal language skills for *marae* events. The number of students enrolled is closely correlated to the number of Māori speakers in the region.

12. Levels and domains

Not unnaturally, the main emphasis in this paper has been on education and its interplay with government. I have already made the point however that the grassroots school movements developed a special sense of family, especially extended family or *whānau*. The extended family is important in Māori tradition and culture, with the awareness of *whakapapa* (lineage or genealogical connections) as a critical feature of identity. But I have also noted that the *whānau* running a school commonly goes beyond normal lineage, especially in urban settings where individual members may come from various parts of the country and belong to different *iwi*. This means that it may be difficult for an individual *kōhanga reo* or *kura kaupapa Māori* to find a staff member or parent with the right of *tangata whenua*, a locally-born person with the local accent and local knowledge, to conduct a *powhiri* or formal welcome on the *marae* (I was impressed in 1987 to be welcomed at Hiruharama Primary school by the local police sergeant). I have also suggested that one of the features of *Te Ataarangi* appears to be forming an even larger *whānau* grouping, at the same time respecting local tradition and practices.

The pan-tribal nature of many of the institutions and of *Te Ataarangi* intersects with traditional Māori organisation into a number of *iwi* “tribes” some now grouped into *waka*, larger units claiming descent from one of the canoes traditionally believed to have brought the Māori to New Zealand, and some in turn divided into *hapū* “clans” or “subtribes.” Traditionally, it is a *hapū* that has one or more *marae*, depending on the density of Maori population, although it has become customary for schools and universities to

have a *marae* as well. The move to the cities in the 20th century greatly weakened traditional tribal bonds, but an identifying Māori still defines himself by the *iwi* he claims in his lineage. However, because Māori land ownership was traditionally collective (one of the techniques used to dispossess Māori of their land was to persuade them to break up the collective into individual parcels which were too small for use and so easily sold to settlers and land developers), the Waitangi Tribunal conducted its negotiations and made its settlement with traditional *iwi*. The obvious result was a restoration of some power to the *iwi*, in spite of the fact that about 80% of Māori live outside their home regions, and many younger people have little if any involvement with their tradition *marae* activities.

This obviously sets up a conflict, but when it comes to language. As Harow (2005:61) points out: “despite the relatively small differences between Māori dialects, however, there is considerable dialectal loyalty... The conscious loyalty to one’s own dialect is symptomatic of the significance and situation of Māori in New Zealand”. Hond (pers. comm.) says that advanced students are particularly concerned with developing their tribal *mita* (accent or dialect); a speaker who presents his tribal identity is expected to have the appropriate accent.

There has been an increase in language regeneration efforts associated with individual *iwi*, some of which date back to the beginning of the movement. (Nicholson 1990) describes the efforts of *Ngāti Raukawa ki te Au-o-te Tonga*, a Māori tribe situated in the southwest of the North Island, who about 1980 started a series of ten-day immersion courses for teaching Māori language to adults. *Te Wānanga o Raukawa*, a Māori tertiary institute, is a continuation of this *Ngāti Raukawa* initiative and emphasises Māori language in its programmes. One tribe whose treaty settlement has been completed and that is putting strong emphasis on language activities is *Ngāi Tahu*, the South Island *iwi* where language loss was most advanced. A manager for the language project was appointed, a goal has been established to have a thousand *Ngāi Tahu* homes speaking the local variety of Māori (the dialect is distinct) by 2025, and immersion courses are being offered. Dialectal forms are being collected. An activist in Taranaki, believed to be second only to the South Island in low level of Māori proficiency, reports that “I firmly believe that we are seeing a resurgence of the Taranaki variation not because we are teaching it any better ... but because we are now making a far stronger link between Taranaki identity and our *mita* (accent or dialect)” (Hond, pers. comm.). In the North Island, the chief executive officer of Tainui told me that now that they have successfully completed negotiation of a joint management scheme with government of the Waikato River, their next big project will be to develop a language strategy for the *iwi*.

Encouraged by the Ministry of Education, a Tūhoe Educational Agency has been set up to strengthen the schools that provide service to Tūhōe children. A similar initiative for five *Ngāti Porou* and East Coast schools is offering a method of dealing with the governance and educational problems of the small *kura kaupapa* and state schools in the area. In March 2000, the Māori Language Commission published a booklet with advice to *iwi* and *hapū* on developing long-term language planning and encouraging them to produce dialect dictionaries (Maori Language Commission 2000).

Dialect differences are often offered as excuses for not teaching in native languages; this has been particularly true in Africa, where one missionary response has been to build up new varieties based on a single dialect (Ranger 1989). A way around this has been found with Corsican language activism – the development of a theory of polynomic languages (like Corsican) that accept dialect variety without demanding standardisation (Jaffe 2008, Thiers 1999). The Māori Language Commission appears to be tolerant of dialect variation. But going even further, Māori language activism seems to be taking advantage of tribal solidarity to encourage it.

13. Evaluating the efforts

The field of language management (Spolsky 2009) has been regularly marked by a inability or unwillingness to attempt formal evaluation of management efforts. In language cultivation and terminological development, the only major study remains Rubin et al. (1977), conducted over 40 years ago. Aware of this, *Te Puni Kōkiri* attempted in 1995 a first national survey of the state of Māori, the results of which were found to be unreliable (Bauer 2008:34). Subsequently, there were surveys conducted in 2001 (Te Puni Kōkiri 2002) and 2006 (Te Puni Kōkiri 2008a). Because they were based on telephone interviews, it was hoped they would give more precise data than the census figures available until then. However, in a recent paper Bauer (2008) has raised a number of questions about their results and interpretability. She questions the sampling which produced serious margins of error, especially with the 2006 survey which had a smaller sample and was not random, and raises major questions about the ability to capture community differences. There are also questions about the self-report, where respondents reported their speaking, listening, reading and writing proficiency, each on a five-point scale. There were two versions, one in English and one in Māori, the second taking more than twice as long to complete. It is not easy to interpret self-reports. Scales of the kind used, calling for distinction between “well” and “fairly well” are useful mnemonics in training judges, but it is hard to have confidence in judgments made by the general public. I would be more confident with deeper interviews or situated questions. Perhaps the surveys

are better interpreted as statements of attitude, expressions of how well the respondent would like to speak or read or write, rather than accurate reports of proficiency. Nevertheless, Bauer (2008) used the figures to show signs of decline rather than improvement in the comparison between 2001 and 2006. We clearly need better studies²¹ before we can come up with an evaluation.

14. Conclusions

Overall, it is obvious that forty years of grassroots and government activities have succeeded in rescuing Māori from the seriously endangered state found in the 1960s. The number of speakers has been increased. More significantly, there are now younger speakers, and there are signs of renewed use in the home, and the beginning of parents speaking to their children in the language. There is government recognition and support, and a good deal of tolerance for the language among non-Māori. One suspects that the more ambitious goals of many activists to have all Māoris and most New Zealanders speaking the language – Hohepa (2000) set a goal of 2030 for this – is over-optimistic, and there are even signs of a plateau effect in the Māori immersion programmes. However, with continued strong community efforts, Māori looks like one of the few threatened languages that can be confident about its next hundred years.

There is good reason to believe that grassroots activities – the continuation of *Te Ataarangi*, the beginnings of the pre-school and school movements – have been even more influential than the institutionalised and government-conducted activities. Government support is of course significant, but it is the community activities that have the best chance of changing practices and beliefs in the home domain and restoring the natural intergenerational language transmission that is the main safeguard for language maintenance.

²¹ The limitation is of course financial as well as theoretical. Long deep interviewing is very expensive, and would probably not be supported by the various agencies.

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