A review of research on the attitudes of non-Māori New Zealanders towards the Māori language.

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Abstract

2010 marked ten years of the New Zealand government monitoring the attitudes of New Zealanders, both Māori and non-Māori, towards the Māori language. Academic researchers have been undertaking similar research for a much longer period. This article reviews the main findings of research on attitudes towards the Māori language among non-Māori in particular since the 1980s, and considers to what extent recent government surveys show evidence of change in the attitudes of New Zealand’s non-indigenous population towards the country’s indigenous language. The article concludes that work undertaken to date provides us with many insights into attitudes towards the Māori language, but further research is required to determine whether and how such attitudes are changing.

**Key words**: Māori language, language attitudes, non-Māori, language regeneration

Introduction: the attitudes of non-Māori towards the Māori language

It is often claimed that language attitudes1 play an important role in minority language regeneration and, furthermore, that it is not only the attitudes of a minority language community that count, but also those of the wider community of which they are part (Boyce, 2005, p. 86; Grenoble & Whaley, 2006, p. 11). The attitudes of majority language speakers can impact on minority languages in various ways, including contributing to a language becoming ‘minoritised’ in the first place through institutional measures, negative reactions to use of the language in public, influencing the language attitudes of minority language speakers themselves, and resistance to contemporary language regeneration efforts (de Bres, 2008a). May (2003, p. 335) terms such opposition from majority language speakers towards minority languages “the problem of tolerability”, and claims that the long-term success of minority language policy initiatives may only be achievable if some degree of favourable opinion, or ‘tolerability’, of these initiatives is secured among majority language speakers (May, 2000a)2.

One minority language situation where the impact of majority language speaker attitudes can be identified is that of the Māori language, the indigenous language of New Zealand. The Māori language underwent rapid language shift in favour of English after the colonisation of New Zealand in the nineteenth century. Much of this shift is attributable to restrictive language policies reflecting negative attitudes towards the Māori language on the part of the colonial government. Examples include the policy of using English as the sole medium of instruction in schools for Māori (Native Schools Act 1867), which restricted children’s Māori language use to the home, and the post-war urban housing policy of ‘pepper-potting’ Māori migrants to the city within predominantly non-Māori neighbourhoods, thereby further reducing opportunities for the use of the Māori language in social settings (TPK, 2002a, p. 3). King (2003, pp. 359-60) dates the beginning of the sharp decline in the number of speakers of Māori to the mid-1930s, claiming that at this time “Māori parents and grandparents were discouraging children from learning the Māori language” due to “the widespread belief […] that proficiency in English would make upward social mobility for Māori more likely and better prepare youngsters for a world in which Māori culture was going to be a diminishing influence”3. By the 1950s, Te Puni Kōkiri (henceforth TPK) claims, the earlier ambivalence of Māori had changed to outright negative attitudes towards the Māori language (TPK, 2004, p. 15) and, within this environment, “Māori parents throughout the country seem to have made a collective decision (albeit unconsciously) to use English rather than Māori in bringing up their children” (Biggs, cited in Benton, 1987, p. 66). The long-term result was the massive language shift of Māori from the Māori language to English. This took its most dizzying course in the cities, and later spread to rural communities where the Māori language had initially remained stronger (Chrisp, 2005, p. 153).

Significant language regeneration activity has occurred since the 1970s, led by Māori communities and later supported by government Māori language planning. This has included initiatives in education (Māori medium pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary education), broadcasting (funding for Māori medium radio stations and the establishment of a Māori television channel), and the legal status of Māori. The Māori Language Act 1987 established Māori as an official language of New Zealand and created Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori (the Māori Language Commission, henceforth TTWRM) to promote the language. Despite this activity, the Māori language remains in a precarious position. The 2006 census identified 157,110 speakers of Māori, 131,613 of whom were Māori. This amounts to 23.7% of the Māori population in New Zealand, but as Māori represent only 14.6% of the national population, the proportion of speakers countrywide is very low. In a context where Māori are a demographic minority and English remains the dominant language of public life, the attitudes of non-Māori New Zealanders are likely to be one factor influencing the future of the Māori language. As stated in the Government’s current Māori Language Strategy (TPK, 2003a, p. 27):

Māori language use is affected by the overall social environment in New Zealand. People who use the Māori language interact with others on a regular basis and encounter the language attitudes of the non-Māori majority through these interactions. To revitalise the language it is necessary for wider New Zealand society to value the language and support a positive linguistic environment.

On this basis, researchers have long been interested in monitoring the attitudes of not only Māori but also non-Māori New Zealanders towards the Māori language. Academics have undertaken research in this area since the 1980s, and the New Zealand government has followed suit, notably with four large-scale attitude surveys of both Māori and non-Māori since 2000. 2010 marked 10 years of the Government surveying attitudes towards the Māori language, raising the question of what can be said at this point regarding change or otherwise in these attitudes. With this in mind, this article starts by reviewing the main findings of research on the attitudes of non-Māori New Zealanders towards the Māori language from the 1980s to the present, before examining the results of the more recent government language surveys to consider evidence of change4.

Methods used to investigate attitudes towards the Māori language

There have been only two instances of research focusing solely on the attitudes of non-Māori New Zealanders towards the Māori language (de Bres, 2008; Thompson, 1990). There has however been a range of research since the 1980s on the attitudes of both Māori and non-Māori, which tells us much about non-Māori attitudes towards the Māori language. This research is situated within the field of language attitudes, in which three main categories of methods can be identified (Garrett, Coupland, & Williams, 2003, p. 15-16). All three have been used to investigate the attitudes of non-Māori towards the Māori language.

Direct methods

Direct methods involve asking participants questions about their attitudes to a language variety, usually through questionnaires or interviews. Larger-scale studies have included a mail survey of 225 Māori and non-Māori New Zealanders investigating attitudes towards the place of the Māori language in New Zealand society (Nicholson & Garland, 1991), a face-to-face survey assessing attitudes towards Māori language education among 500 Māori and 500 non-Māori caregivers (AGB McNair, 1992), questionnaire and interview research with 80 non-Māori New Zealanders at Wellington workplaces examining responses to government language planning targeting non-Māori (de Bres, 2008b), questionnaire and interview research with 769 teacher education students (92% non-Māori) at the University of Auckland exploring attitudes towards Māori language, culture and history (Keegan, Jones, & Brown, 2010), and four telephone surveys of around 1,500 Māori and non-Māori New Zealanders investigating attitudes towards the Māori people, culture and language (TPK, 2002b, 2003b, 2006, 2010). Smaller-scale studies have included a questionnaire survey of parents at an Otaki school assessing the demand for bilingual education (Benton, 1981), studies undertaken by university students in Auckland, Dunedin, Gisborne and Wellington (Campbell, 1988, 1990; Sherwood, 1989; Leek, 1990; Thompson, 1990) and a telephone survey conducted during ‘Māori Language Year’ in 1995 (TTWRM, 1996).

Indirect methods

Like direct methods, indirect methods involve the use of instruments to collect data on attitudes. Indirect methods employ more subtle experimental techniques than direct questions, however, principally in this context the ‘matched-guise technique’ (Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner, & Fillenbaum, 1960), whereby participants listen to recordings of different language varieties and rate the speakers on characteristics such as social class, intelligence and likeability, without knowing they are listening to the same speaker. Although no matched guise studies have been undertaken of speakers speaking Māori (Boyce, 2005, p. 96), in several studies participants have been asked to identify whether speakers of recorded passages of English were Māori or Pākehā, and to note down their attitudes towards those speakers (e.g. Bayard, 1990; Vaughan & Huygens, 1990; Robertson, 1994). A similar study (Holmes, 1999) added speaker appearance, so listeners were in no doubt about ethnicity when making their judgments. A further example of indirect methods is Thompson (1990), who asked participants to complete two cloze passages with words that could be in English or Māori.

Societal treatment methods

Societal treatment methods involve a “content analysis of the ‘treatment’ given to languages and language varieties and to their speakers within society” by means of techniques such as observation, ethnographic studies and analysing sources in the public domain (Garrett et al., 2003, p. 15). These methods are fundamentally different from direct and indirect methods, in that the data pre-dates the data collection process. Societal treatment methods are qualitative in nature, compared to the generally more quantitative methods described above, and the relative value of these different approaches relates to a profound difference in views on how best to access and analyse language attitudes (see Garrett et al., 2003, Potter & Wetherell, 1987, for discussion). Examples of the societal treatment approach include Lane (2003), who used discourse analysis to analyse 63 letters to the editor of New Zealand newspapers expressing opposition to, or support for, the use of Māori, and Bayard (1998), who analysed letters to the editor combining linguistic and non-linguistic themes.

Findings of research on non-Māori attitudes towards the Māori language

The results of the above research reveal some common patterns in the attitudes of non-Māori towards the Māori language. Indeed, as Boyce (2005, p. 89) notes, although this research has been undertaken in a range of different ways, “the overall pattern of results has been remarkably similar” over time. The main findings are summarised below by theme.

Non-Māori have less positive attitudes than Māori

The research consistently shows that the non-Māori attitudes towards the Māori language, while not entirely negative, are generally less positive than those of Māori (Leek, 1990; Sherwood, 1989; Campbell, 1988, 1990; Nicholson & Garland, 1991; TPK, 2002b, 2003b, 2006, 2010; AGB McNair, 1992). As just one example, AGB McNair (1992, p. 29) found that only 29% of non-Māori respondents agreed with the statement ‘I would like my children to speak Māori’, compared to 92% of the Māori sample. This consistent result of weaker support for the Māori language among non-Māori provides suggestive evidence of the ‘problem of tolerability’ in relation to the Māori language (May, 2000a).

The general and the specific of it

The research also shows that non-Māori express positive attitudes towards the Māori language at a general level but less positive attitudes towards specific language regeneration initiatives. For example, although two thirds of Nicholson and Garland’s (1991) overall sample agreed that the Māori language had a place in contemporary New Zealand society, only 20% of non-Māori were in favour of bilingual public services, compared to 61% of Māori; only 22% of non-Māori were in favour of bilingual information signs, compared to 73% of Māori; and only 20% of non-Māori were in favour of more Māori language television programmes, compared to 72% of Māori. This is where the more negative attitudes of non-Māori start to have bite, showing potential resistance to policy initiatives aimed at regenerating the Māori language. Nicholson and Garland (1991, p. 405) allude to this issue in noting that “without the explicit support of the wider, European dominated community, the revitalisation of the Māori language will be even more difficult due to the lack of support from majority group policymakers, who control most of the financial resources.”

Not in my backyard

There is some evidence among non-Māori of ‘not in my backyard’ attitudes towards the Māori language. TPK (2002b), for example, found that while 90% of non-Māori agreed that “it is a good thing that Māori people speak Māori on the marae and at home”, only 40% agreed that “it is a good thing that Māori people speak Māori in public places or at work.” Christensen (2001, p. 209) discusses the potential impact of such attitudes in referring to “external negativity” as a barrier to Māori language use in contexts not specific to Māori, and claims that “there is enough anecdotal evidence to confirm that [this] continues to be an inhibiting factor to Māori language use.”

Māori is for Māori

Research undertaken for Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori in 1995 showed that only 40% of non-Māori interviewees thought the Māori language was important for New Zealand as a whole, compared to 84% of Māori interviewees (TTWRM, 1996, p. 10). Benton (1981, p. 13) found that Māori families rated the Māori language as most important for New Zealand in general (at 77%), followed by for Māori in particular (71%), whereas non-Māori families rated the language as most important for Māori (85% Pākehā, 100% other ethnicities) and less important for New Zealand in general (54% Pākehā, 62% other ethnicities). These results could reflect awareness among non-Māori of the connection between Māori language and Māori culture, but could also indicate a view that responsibility for Māori language regeneration rests solely with Māori. There is some suggestion of this in the AGB McNair (1992) results showing that Māori participants were most likely to believe that the Government or the Ministry of Education should fund Māori language education (61% and 38% respectively), whereas non-Māori were most likely to believe that parents or whānau should pay (44%). More controversially, such results could reflect a stance that the Māori language is for Māori only and should not be imposed on non-Māori (see e.g. TPK, 2002b).

Retaining the status quo

Nicholson and Garland (1991) found that despite two thirds of all respondents believing the Māori language had a place in New Zealand society, only one quarter thought it should be used to a greater extent than currently. The letters to the editor analysed by Lane (2003, p. 245) were mainly triggered by issues concerning domains of Māori language use, and “it [was] particularly the use of Māori in domains which [had] previously been the preserve of English which [raised] the ire of anti-Māori letter writers.” TPK (2002) found that non-Māori support for government involvement in Māori language regeneration was strongest in areas where the Government had a longstanding presence, e.g. official welcomes and education, but weaker regarding potential future language regeneration activities, including provision of bilingual services and support for Māori language transmission in the home. Such results echo May’s (2000b, p. 366) discussion of the interest of majority language speakers in maintaining the linguistic status quo.

Less is more

Research also reflects a preference among non-Māori for minimal use of the Māori language. When asked in the AGB McNair survey what forms of Māori language education they would most likely choose for their children at primary school, with six options ranging from English only to Māori only, Māori participants were most likely to choose a form of bilingual education using both Māori and English (57%), whereas non-Māori were most likely to favour their child attending a school where Māori songs, greetings and phrases were taught (47%) (1992, p. 67). As well as demonstrating a preference for minimal Māori language use, these results again reflect support for the status quo. Whereas the Māori participants continued to prefer a form of bilingual education for their children at secondary school (61%), non-Māori participants switched their preference to Māori being provided as a subject (51%), reflecting the existing model at most schools (1992, p. 69).

Don’t force it on me

Research suggests some resistance among non-Māori to compulsory forms of Māori language planning. “Learning Māori should not be compulsory” was a recurrent reason stated by AGB McNair’s non-Māori participants for their preference for minimal Māori language education (1992, p. 72-77). When Benton’s (1981) participants were asked how they thought Māori should be taught at school, the 9% of participants who wanted it confined to a club or after-school activity were all non-Māori, one commenting “we feel Māori should be available to those who are interested but taught in voluntary classes *outside school hours*” (emphasis in original). These results echo May’s interviews with majority and minority language speakers in Wales, where majority language speakers invoked a “discourse of choice” as a means of opting out of Welsh language requirements, and asserted the rights of monolingual English speakers to remain monolingual if they so chose (2000a, p. 119).

As long as I don’t have to do anything

Nicholson and Garland (1991) found that non-Māori were considerably less committed than Māori to participating personally in Māori language regeneration, only 25% saying they would be willing to make a personal effort to ensure the survival of the Māori language, compared to 84% of Māori. TPK (2002b) classified 39% of their non-Māori respondents as ‘uninterested’, these people being “tolerant of the Māori language and culture as long as it does not impinge on their lives.” Boyce (1992, p. 108-109) comments on the basis of previous research that “while a large proportion of people may have ‘warm-fuzzy’ feelings about the [Māori] language, their support dwindles dramatically at the suggestion of any measures which may affect them directly: the possibility of their passively seeing or hearing Māori more frequently in the community, or more extremely, any active requirement for them to gain (or increase) their own competence in the language.”

Passive not active support

Research suggests that even non-Māori with positive attitudes towards the Māori language tend to show passive rather than active support. TPK (2002b) classified 49% of non-Māori respondents as ‘passive supporters’, these people reporting a positive disposition towards the Māori language and culture but not being actively engaged in these matters. Such non-Māori may not have a directly negative impact on the Māori language, but it can be questioned whether their ‘passive support’ will contribute positively to language regeneration. As Smith (2004, p. 47) notes, however, none of TPK’s attitude categories contemplates the possibility of active support among non-Māori. This issue is addressed by de Bres (2008b), who prefers the term ‘supporters’ to acknowledge that non-Māori can support the Māori language actively in a range of ways, even if not making extensive use of the Māori language or participating in Māori cultural activities.

Highly negative attitudes

Based on the above, it would be exaggerating to say that research to date has shown uniformly negative attitudes towards the Māori language among non-Māori. Indeed, an innovation of more recent research (de Bres, 2008b; TPK, 2002b, 2003b, 2006, 2010) has been to show a range of attitudes exist among non-Māori, some of whom are very positively disposed towards the Māori language, rather than treating all non-Māori as a uniform group5. There is, however, evidence that the attitudes of some non-Māori are very negative indeed. Illustrative examples of highly negative attitudes are found in Lane’s (2003) analysis of letters to the editor and in the first TPK attitudes survey (TPK, 2002b), which placed 12% of non-Māori respondents in the attitude category ‘English only’, these participants believing English should be the only language used in New Zealand public life and demonstrating a particularly negative outlook towards the Māori culture and people in general (TPK, 2002b, p. 15). Noting that support for bilingual education programmes in Otaki was generally high among respondents, including non-Māori, Benton (1981, p. 39) commented that “the only unqualified opposition to the idea has come from a minority of those parents who regard their children as ‘Pākehā’ [and] although this group comprises less than one-tenth of all parents, they have expressed their views quite forcefully in public and in private, and could be a highly disruptive element if their support for the project is not obtained prior to its implementation.” Although the number of non-Māori who hold strongly negative attitudes towards the Māori language is generally estimated to be quite low, these people are certainly those from whom the greatest resistance to Māori language regeneration is likely to come.

Are non-Māori attitudes towards the Māori language changing?

The research described above, taken as a whole, provides evidence over time of negative attitudes among non-Māori New Zealanders towards the Māori language, a finding that aligns with research on the attitudes of majority language speakers towards minority languages in other contexts (de Bres, 2008a). Most research on the Māori language has been undertaken at one particular point only, offering snapshots of attitudes at specific time periods. Since 2000, however, the New Zealand government has undertaken repeat surveys of attitudes towards the Māori language every three years (in 2000, 2003, 2006 and 2009), with the aim of monitoring change over time6. 2010 marked 10 years of the government undertaking this research activity. This section examines the survey results to consider evidence or otherwise of change in non-Māori attitudes towards the Māori language.

Attitude categories

As noted above, the TPK attitude surveys divide non-Māori into three categories: ‘passive supporters’, who have positive attitudes towards the Māori language, ‘uninterested’ participants, who are uninterested in the Māori language, and ‘English only’ participants, who have negative attitudes towards the Māori language (see TPK 2002b for more detail). As Figure 1 below indicates, the later TPK attitude surveys have shown the percentage of participants in each attitude category changing over time as follows7:

1. passive supporters rose from 49% in 2000 to 60% in 2003, 65% in 2006 and 71% in 2009;
2. uninterested participants fell from 39% in 2000 to 28% in 2003, 27% in 2006 and 22% in 2009; and
3. English Only participants remained stable at 12% in 2000 and 2003, and fell to 8% in 2006 and 2009.

Figure 1: Percentage of non-Māori participants in attitude categories over time

These changes suggest a general increase in positive attitudes towards the Māori language among non-Māori across the period of the surveys.

Key trends

As shown in Figure 2 below, particularly salient changes noted by TPK over the surveys include increased support for the following (TPK, 2006, 2010):

1. public use of the Māori language, the percentage of non-Māori agreeing that “it is a good thing that Māori people speak Māori in public places or at work’’ rising from 40% in 2000 to 73% in 2003, 80% in 2006 and 77% in 2009;
2. provision of Māori language education, the percentage of non-Māori agreeing that “some Māori language education should be compulsory in schools for all children’’ increasing from 54% in 2003 to 56% in 2006 and 64% in 20098;
3. government involvement in Māori language regeneration, the percentage of non-Māori agreeing that “the Government should encourage the use of Māori in everyday situations” increasing from 25% in 2000 to 61% in 2003, 59% in 2006 and 64% in 2009; and
4. specific language regeneration initiatives, the percentage of non-Māori agreeing that “the Government’s decision to establish a Māori Television Service is a good thing” increasing from 51% in 2003 to 70% in 20069.

Figure 2: Percentage of non-Māori participants agreeing with attitude statements over time

These results suggest an increase in positive attitudes relating to several of the themes of previous research discussed above. TPK (2010) claims the results demonstrate that “non-Māori attitudes towards the Māori language have improved significantly between 2000 and 2009.”

Limitations

Despite such claims, whether the results actually reflect a change in attitudes is uncertain, due to methodological issues relating to the surveys. One is the differing composition of the survey samples. The 2000 survey included 1,340 participants (615 Māori and 725 non-Māori), randomly selected from the electoral rolls and phone book and stratified by age, gender, ethnicity, and location. This composition was changed for the 2003 survey, which incorporated 1/3 Māori speakers of Māori, 1/3 Māori non-speakers of Māori, and 1/3 non-Māori. This practice was continued for the later surveys, with 1,500 participants in 2006 (1,005 Māori, 495 non-Māori) and 1,531 in 2009 (1,031 Māori, 500 non-Māori)10. The varying number of non-Māori participants across the surveys reduces their claimed comparability.

A further issue is the low response rate for the surveys. The 2000 survey had a somewhat low response rate of 35% from total telephone contacts with 3,776 potential participants. The 2003 survey had an extremely low response rate of 16%, with 9,258 households contacted to obtain the final 1,534 participants11. The 2006 survey again had a low response rate of 24% (24% for Māori and 22% for non-Māori), as did the 2009 survey, at 30% (33% Māori, 25% non-Māori) 12. Response rates are often low for such surveys13, but these are especially low, as TPK (2006) acknowledges. This should give us pause in generalising the results to the non-Māori population as a whole.

Another concern is that some attitude statements upon which TPK bases its claims have changed across the surveys. One example relates to Māori language education. The 2006 survey report provides figures across the first three surveys for the statement “Māori should be a compulsory school subject for Māori children”, whereas the 2009 survey report provides figures across all four surveys for the statement “some Māori language education should be compulsory in school for Māori children.” As the latter statement can be interpreted as involving a weaker form of Māori language provision, it is not surprising that the approval rate among non-Māori was 58% in 2009, compared to 21% in the first survey. As the later survey reports do not include results for all attitude statements, it is not clear how widespread such changes are, but if different statements were used this cannot be taken as evidence of attitude change.

Finally, the usual caveats of direct methods need to be taken into account. Direct methods allow the researcher to access a large number of participants, potentially increasing representativeness. They also present several weaknesses, however, including the unreliability of self-reported data (do participants’ responses represent their genuine attitudes?), social-desirability bias (tendency to give ‘socially appropriate’ responses), acquiescence bias (tendency to agree to gain the researcher’s approval), and that characteristics of the researcher (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity) may influence the participants’ responses (Garrett et al., 2003, pp. 16, 28-29). Although some such weaknesses may be limited by the surveys being administered by telephone rather than face-to-face, they are still likely to have had some influence on the results.

While it may seem petty to pick on methodological issues in this way, it is vital to hold this research to high scrutiny, given that the results are being used to monitor progress towards Māori language regeneration and are the basis for government claims of success in this area. Similar issues apply to other government research on the health of the Māori language (Bauer, 2008). Given the above limitations, the surveys undertaken by TPK can at best be seen to provide only suggestive evidence of change. Moreover, the results of the later surveys still show less positive attitudes towards the Māori language among non-Māori than Māori, and TPK (2010) highlights a continued need for non-Māori with positive attitudes towards the Māori language to convert these attitudes into behaviours to support the language14.

Conclusion

This article has reviewed research since the 1980s on non-Māori attitudes towards the Māori language. This research provides us with a range of insights into the attitudes of New Zealand’s majority population towards the country’s indigenous minority language. Anecdotally, there may be a general perception that attitudes towards the Māori language are becoming more positive among some sectors of the non-Māori population, and a recent rise in use of the language in high profile domains may well reflect such a change. Examples include increased Māori language use in the mainstream media and in commercial marketing, growing support for Māori Language Week promotional campaigns, use of the Māori version of the national anthem at official and sporting events, and use of Māori greetings and closings by government officials at functions. Nevertheless, the extent to which existing research provides evidence of widespread change in attitudes over time is open for debate.

Given that strengths and weaknesses apply to all methods of investigating language attitudes (Garrett et al., 2003), the best way to monitor attitude change seems to be to approach the topic from as many methodological angles as possible, so that the strengths of one method can compensate for the weaknesses of another, and each can provide us with different perspectives on the multifaceted nature of attitudes. As much of the research on attitudes to the Māori language to date has been quantitative in nature, with a reliance on direct methods, this signals a particular need for more qualitative research, in the vein of the societal treatment approach. One thing is certain: as long as the Māori language continues to be in a fragile state, the rationale for paying heed to the language attitudes of non-Māori remains clear. In this regard, Richard Benton’s words ring as true now as they did thirty years ago (1981, p.83):

The Māori language cannot be imported from abroad. What happens to it in New Zealand now determines its fate absolutely. Ironically, that fate is dependent not only on the will of those who claim to value the language, but also ultimately on the will of those for whom it may be of no concern; it is New Zealand as a nation, not merely the Māori people, which will decide whether the language prospers or declines.

Only further high quality research can tell us whether the attitudes of non-Māori New Zealanders towards the Māori language are changing over time, with all that this implies for the future of the Māori language.

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Notes

**1** Following established definitions in social psychology, attitude is defined here as “a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor” (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 1). A ‘language attitude’ is an attitude towards language, whether a language as a whole, language features, language use, or a language as a group marker (Cooper & Fishman, 1974, p. 6), among other possible attitude objects.

**2** See also Grenoble and Whaley (2006, p. 30), who state that “the attitudes of the larger, more dominant population are critical in language revitalization efforts” and “if macro-level variables such as […] national beliefs and attitudes that promote monolingualism are aligned in such a way as to thwart local initiatives […] then planning a revitalization effort will necessarily include a strategy for overcoming the effect of these factors” (2006, p. 22).

**3** Peter J. Keegan notes that such estimates involve speculation, given a lack of available data on that time period (personal correspondence).

**4** This article complements a review of research on attitudes towards the Māori language in the book *Languages of New Zealand* (Boyce, 2005). The current article extends Boyce’s review by covering research since 2002, incorporating further earlier sources and, most significantly, targeting the attitudes of non-Māori in particular.

**5** A notable earlier example is Thompson (1990), whose research design is constructed around hypothesised differences in attitudes among non-Māori.

**6** This is done as part of monitoring progress in achieving the goals of the Māori Language Strategy, one of which relates to ‘increasing positive attitudes towards the Māori language’ (TPK, 2010).

**7** 2006 and 2009 figures obtained on request from TPK, 24 March 2011.

**8** This statement was not included in the 2000 survey.

**9** This statement not included in the 2000 survey and is not discussed in the 2010 survey report.

**10** 2006 and 2009 figures obtained on request from TPK, 24 March 2011.

**11** The report notes this was mainly due to only 8% of proficient Māori speakers agreeing to participate, so the rate may have been higher for non-Māori.

**12** 2006 and 2009 figures obtained on request from TPK, 24 March 2011.

**13** Nicholson and Garland (1991) report a response rate of 59%, for example, although the AGB McNair (1992) rate was higher, at 76% for non-Māori.

**14** See de Bres (2009), however, for a critical discussion of the Government’s approach to ‘desired behaviours’ for non-Māori in relation to the Māori language.

Abbreviations used

TPK Te Puni Kōkiri

TTWRM Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori

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