Promoting the Māori language to non-Māori: evaluating the New Zealand government’s approach

**Abstract**

New Zealand’s main government Māori language planning agencies, the Māori Language Commission and the Ministry of Māori Development, have engaged for some time in language planning targeting the attitudes and behaviours of non-Māori New Zealanders. This activity is based on the belief that the attitudes and behaviours of majority language speakers exert an important influence on the health of minority languages. To date, there has been little evaluation of the effectiveness of this approach. This article examines the official policy and practice of the two agencies in this regard and evaluates their effectiveness, in terms of both internal factors and external responses. Based on this analysis, points for improvement and potentially effective future directions are discussed.

1. **Introduction**

The attitudes and behaviours of majority language speakers play a significant role in the health of minority languages. Majority language speakers often contribute to a language becoming ‘minoritised’ (Nelde et al. 1996) and may then resist attempts to regenerate it. They generally report more negative attitudes towards minority languages than speakers of those languages themselves. May (2000a: 123) claims as a general feature of minority language policy development that ‘no matter how cautiously and temperately promoted and implemented, such policies will invariably invoke opposition, particularly […] from majority language speakers’. Despite general acknowledgement of the impact of majority language speakers on minority languages, not all agree that they should be a target of minority language planning. Fishman (1991, 2000) is skeptical about focusing on ‘outsiders’, advocating a focus on minority language speakers themselves. He doubts the usefulness of targeting attitudes more generally in language regeneration planning, and dismisses focusing on ‘atmosphere effects’ when intergenerational language transmission has not yet been secured. May (2000a, 2002), however, claims that ‘the long-term success of [minority language] initiatives may only be achieved (or be achievable) if at least some degree of favourable majority opinion is secured’ (May 2000b: 379). For minority language planners, the so-called ‘problem of tolerability’ (May 2003) of minority languages provides a rationale for targeting the attitudes and behaviours of majority language speakers (de Bres 2008a) **[[1]](#footnote-1)**. Although this form of language planning has received little attention, recent research shows that it has occurred in practice for some time in a number of minority language situations, including Wales, Catalonia and New Zealand (de Bres 2008a). The effectiveness of such policies has, however, rarely been evaluated.

1. **Promoting positive attitudes and behaviours towards the Māori language among non-Māori New Zealanders**

Māori, the indigenous language of New Zealand, is a language on which the impact of majority language speakers is clearly evident. It underwent rapid language shift in favour of English after colonisation, in part attributable to the actions of majority language speakers (see Spolsky 2003, Chrisp 2005, Benton 1981, 1991). Significant language regeneration activity has occurred since the 1970s, led by Māori themselves and since supported by government. Government planning has included the Māori Language Act 1987, establishing Māori as an official language, the creation of the Māori Language Commission, and the development of a government-wide Māori language strategy (MLC 1996). The Government has also provided support for a number of initiatives in education (e.g. Māori medium education at all levels) and the media (e.g. funding for Māori radio and television). Despite this, the 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. Less than 1% of non-Māori New Zealanders can speak Māori, and research has consistently shown that the attitudes of non-Māori towards the Māori language are considerably less positive than those of Māori (see Boyce 2005 for a review). In a context where Māori make up only 14.6% of the total population and English is the dominant language, the attitudes and behaviours of non-Māori New Zealanders are likely to be one factor influencing the future of the language. With this in mind, the New Zealand government has explicitly taken into account the attitudes and behaviours of non-Māori New Zealanders since the beginning of its development of a strategic plan for Māori language regeneration in the mid-1990s (MLC 1996).

The main two government Māori language planning organisations are the Māori Language Commission (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori), and the Ministry of Māori Development (Te Puni Kōkiri)[[2]](#footnote-2). The statutory functions of the Māori Language Commission (henceforth MLC) include to ‘give effect to the declaration of the Māori language as an official language of New Zealand’ and ‘generally to promote the Māori language, and, in particular, its use as a living language and as an ordinary means of communication’. The Ministry of Māori Development (henceforth TPK) incorporates a ‘Māori Language and Broadcasting’ team.  Although other agencies have Māori language responsibilities (e.g. the Ministry of Education provides Māori language education to both Māori and non-Māori New Zealanders), TPK and MLC are the most actively involved in language planning at the highest level.

It is important to highlight that this article focuses on the attitudes and behaviours of non-Māori New Zealanders rather than non-speakers of Māori. ‘Majority language speakers’ is a useful umbrella term, but the precise definition of this group is dependent on contextual factors particular to each language situation. In the New Zealand context, majority language speakers have overwhelmingly been defined by researchers and Māori language policymakers as non-Māori New Zealanders. This makes practical sense for several reasons. One is the numerical majority status of non-Māori, who in 2006 made up 85.4% of the population. Although the term ‘non-Māori’ includes many different ethnic groups, it is likely that policymakers and researchers most often have a particular segment of non-Māori in mind: the ethnic group of New Zealand Europeans, who, at between 67.6% and 78.8% of the population[[3]](#footnote-3), are the numerically dominant ethnic group. Although numerical dominance does not always equate to other kinds of dominance (see Strubell 1999: 16), it is a relevant factor in defining majority language speakers. A second reason is that the Māori language is generally framed as just one of a range of inter-ethnic issues relating to the ongoing negotiation of the relationship between Māori and non-Māori. Language issues are inextricably linked to other inter-ethnic issues and there is evidence that attitudes towards the Māori language are strongly associated with attitudes towards Māori culture generally (see e.g. TPK 2002). The third and most important reason is the growing body of research showing the greatest resistance to the Māori language comes from non-Māori New Zealanders (see de Bres 2008b: 42-55 and Boyce 2005). Although there is also a range of attitudes towards the Māori language among Māori (see e.g. TPK 2002), the ‘problem of tolerability’ is by far the strongest among non-Māori New Zealanders[[4]](#footnote-4).

* 1. **Government policy**

The New Zealand government has acknowledged the importance of the attitudes and behaviours of non-Māori New Zealanders towards the Māori language since the development of the first government-wide Māori language strategy in the mid-1990s.

 TPK documents recognise the historical impact of the attitudes and behaviours of non-Māori, with several referring to institutional repression of the Māori language as one of the factors leading to its decline. Most frequently cited are the suppression of the language in schools (e.g. Native Schools Act 1867) and the Government policy of placing Māori families in predominantly non-Māori suburbs during urbanisation following World War II. TPK (2004a: 14-15) makes the points that what lay behind these policies were overtly negative attitudes towards the Māori language among the non-Māori authorities, that assimilationist institutional attitudes were widely held within non-Māori society, that they impacted on interpersonal interactions between Māori and non-Māori, and that Māori internalised the attitudes of the majority population in their own attitudes towards the language. In general, the attitudes of both Māori and non-Māori towards the Māori language are frequently noted as causes of language shift from Māori to English:

Faced with this situation, many Māori adults stopped speaking Māori to their children at home. This collective action, together with the attitudes of other New Zealanders and policies which favoured English as the dominant language in society, resulted in a massive language shift from Māori to English (TPK 2003c: 11).

TPK documents also refer to the continued impact of majority language speakers. The current Māori Language Strategystates that (TPK 2003c: 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.

There is also discussion of the benefits of more positive attitudes towards the Māori language among non-Māori, usually relating to two areas. The first is the reversal of internalised negative external attitudes (MLC 1996[[5]](#footnote-5): 17): ‘if the majority of New Zealanders and New Zealand institutions have generally positive attitudes to the Māori language and its use in public activities, it is likely that this will reinforce positive attitudes among Māori people and encourage them to make greater use of the language’. The second is the increased use of the language in wider domains (MLC 1996: 17): ‘the greater use of Māori in non-Māori domains will lay the foundations for ongoing increases in the range of domains where Māori is spoken, and will contribute to the establishment of the Māori language as an ordinary feature of New Zealand life’. TPK has collected data on the attitudes of non-Māori, alongside those of Māori, since the beginning of its surveys on attitudes towards the Māori language (TPK 2002, 2003a, 2006, 2010).The attitudes of ‘all New Zealanders’ towards the Māori language are considered sufficiently important to be included in the vision statement of the current Māori Language Strategy, that ‘all New Zealanders will appreciate the value of the Māori language to New Zealand society’ (TPK 2003c: 5).

Until recently, the policy of the MLC has mostly been developed internally, so there is a less obvious paper trail for the development of its policy relating to non-Māori. In 2004, however, the MLC released its first annual Statement of Intent, outlining its strategic direction (MLC 2004a). The Statement contained a single major outcome, namely:

Ka ora te reo Māori hei reo matua hei reo kōrero mo Aotearoa

Māori Language is a living national taonga for all New Zealanders

Of the four ‘intermediate outcomes’, one was that ‘all New Zealanders value reo Māori and have the opportunity to become bilingual’. The next Statement of Intent noted that ‘this intermediate outcome – perhaps more than any of the others – reflects our belief that reo Māori can be a taonga, a source of pride and a means of communication for all New Zealanders’ (MLC 2005a: 13). The MLC’s goals under this outcome included to ‘increase New Zealanders’ awareness, positive attitudes and acceptance of reo Māori in our society’ (MLC 2005a: 14). In its 2004 and 2005 Statements of Intent, the MLC identified a number of capabilities that it needed to strengthen in order to pursue the outcomes. One was its ‘ability to promote Māori language to all New Zealanders’. In both years, it stated that it planned to progressively strengthen its capability by ‘developing a reo Māori promotions strategy for all New Zealanders’ (MLC 2004a: 15, 2005a: 19). In its Statements of Intent from 2006 to 2010, however, this aspect was no longer listed (MLC 2006a, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010).

* 1. **Policy initiatives**

Promoting Māori as a living language and a natural means of communication was one of the core functions assigned to the MLC at its creation, with the target being primarily the Māori population and secondarily the population as a whole (Chrisp 1997a: 101). Although there is no evidence of campaigns solely targeting non-Māori New Zealanders, there have been a number of campaigns with a partial focus on this group.

After its creation, the MLC undertook a number of ad hoc promotional activities, such as posters and radio campaigns, but sustained promotional activity was difficult to maintain because of budgetary constraints (Chrisp 1997a: 101, Nicholson 1997: 210). Its first large-scale campaign was *Māori Language Year* in 1995, intended to ‘raise the status of the Māori language among the Māori population, and throughout New Zealand society’ (Chrisp 1997a: 100). Branded ‘He Taonga Te Reo’ (Māori language is a treasure), it had three main goals: to encourage Māori people to learn and use the Māori language in daily activities; celebrate the place of the Māori language in New Zealand history and modern society; and generate and actively employ goodwill towards the Māori language within the wider New Zealand population (Chrisp 1997a: 101-102). Events targeted at the ‘general population’ included a series of television vignettes, a poster, library displays, open days, a Māori-themed exhibition, performing arts festivals, pop songs, and Māori programming on a television soap[[6]](#footnote-6).

 In 2000, the MLC launched *Into Te Reo* (Into the Māori language), a five year programme to gather goodwill around the Māori language and ‘establish Te Reo Māori in the hearts and minds of the entire nation’ (MLC 2000). In the press release launching the campaign, the MLC commented that ‘the heart of Te Reo Māori remains ‘He Taonga’ however we are also extending the hand of welcome to call everyone ‘Into Te Reo’’ (MLC 2000). The only promotional activities specifically mentioned were a poster and two television advertisements. The ‘Roma’ advertisement featured two young New Zealanders (one Māori, one non-Māori) talking in Māori in a café in Italy, and the ‘Koro’ advertisement portrayed the relationship between a non-Māori grandfather and his Māori grandchild, who was attending Māori-medium schooling (these are discussed further below).

 *Māori Language Week* (Te Wiki o te Reo Māori) has been celebrated annually since 1975 and is presented by the MLC as an important opportunity to promote the language to all New Zealanders. According to a website established in 2003, the goals of the Week are to: encourage non-speakers of Māori to use the Māori language; encourage speakers of Māori to support others who are starting out; encourage community, business, government and media organisations to participate; create a positive environment for the use of the Māori language; promote resources to make the Māori language more accessible; promote Māori language initiatives and events; and contribute to the Māori Language Strategy[[7]](#footnote-7). In recent years, some Māori Language Weeks have demonstrated a particularly strong focus on non-Māori alongside Māori. One such example is Māori Language Week 2003, which featured the launch of a new promotional campaign, ‘NZ Reo, NZ Pride’. The aim of this campaign was to encourage a broad range of New Zealanders to have a greater sense of pride in the language and its contribution to a unique New Zealand identity, and the approach involved strengthening the association between the Māori language and ‘traditional Kiwi icons’ such as the haka (traditional war dance now performed before rugby matches) and the national anthem (MLC 2004b: 5). Promotional materials included a ‘Kōrero Māori’ phrase booklet (discussed further below); national anthem cards; and bilingual place name posters (MLC 2004b: 7-12). The target audience was variously stated as ‘all New Zealanders’ or ‘mainstream New Zealanders’.

While these campaigns were developed informally, based on available resources at the time, from 2004 the MLC had a more significant budget for promotional campaigns through the *Māori Language Information Programme* (MLIP), funded at NZ$1 million per year. According to the budget bid to Cabinet in 2004, the programme was intended to focus on both Māori and non-Māori, ‘provid[ing] accurate information at a broad societal level, to Māori and non-Māori, about the use and value of the Māori language, in order to create a more receptive socio-linguistic environment’ (TPK 2004b). Accordingly, the programme brand, ‘Kōrero Māori’ (speak Māori) appears in two different forms: ‘Kōrero Māori – Kia kaha ake!’ (targeting Māori speakers) and ‘Kōrero Māori – Give it a go!’ (targeting all New Zealanders). Many of the promotional materials and projects produced as part of the MLIP over the ensuing years have targeted speakers of Māori (and thus largely Māori New Zealanders), including language-themed television shows in Māori, Māori radio serials, and language resource kits for parents. Those targeting non-Māori alongside Māori have included a series of ‘Kōrero Māori’ phrase booklets released annually since 2004 during Māori Language Week, a website launched in 2005 that targets ‘everyone who wants to speak the Māori language, or learn more about it’ ([www.koreromāori.govt.nz](http://www.koreromāori.govt.nz)), the development of an online ‘Māori Language Club’, and Māori language events such as ‘Matariki’ (Māori New Year) and Māori Language Week (MLC 2005b).

1. **Evaluating effectiveness**

We have seen above that promoting positive attitudes and behaviours among non-Māori New Zealanders has been part of the official policy and practice of the MLC and TPK since the beginning of their involvement in Māori language planning. There has, however, been little evaluation of the effectiveness of their approach.

* 1. **Internal aspects: ambivalence in current policy**

The analysis presented thus far suggests a strong official government commitment to promoting positive attitudes and behaviours among non-Māori New Zealanders. In contrast to statements made in policy documents, however, meetings with TPK and MLC between 2005 and 2008 indicated a degree of ambivalence towards targeting non-Māori New Zealanders in Māori language planning. Although mostly covert (see Baldauf 2005: 958 for the distinction between overt and covert language policy), evidence of this ambivalence is found in the implementation of official policy, of which two examples are given here.

 The first example involves a reduced focus on non-Māori in the implementation of official policy. While the original rationale for the MLIP was closely aligned with the goal of promoting positive attitudes and behaviours among Māori and non-Māori, the focus on non-Māori has lessened over time. The tenor of the MLIP Cabinet paper MLIP suggested that the focus was to be principally on non-Māori. The paper referred to both Māori and non-Māori, noting that ‘mechanisms are required to convert the positive orientation of Māori towards the language into positive action, and that it is important to disseminate to the non-Māori population accurate basic information about Māori language and culture’. The discussion of the ‘intervention logic’, however, related solely and at some length to the attitudes of non-Māori (Cabinet Policy Committee 2003: 6). By the time of the budget bid for the MLIP (TPK 2004b) the focus was more evenly on non-Māori and Māori, with the aim for non-Māori being more positive attitudes and the aim for Māori being increased critical awareness of language learning processes and language choice. The implementation of the MLIP by the MLC took this one step further: Māori were stated as the primary audience for the MLIP and non-Māori a ‘secondary audience’ (MLC 2005c: 3). The shift away from non-Māori is most explicit in the changed overall outcome of the programme in its second year, when it became ‘to increase use of reo Māori as a normal means of everyday communication’, with a focus on ‘increasing the proportion of Māori with Māori as a first language’. The MLC stated that it would use information, promotions and stakeholder relationships to increase the use of Māori in families, in public settings frequented by Māori and key social institutions (MLC 2006b: 28-29). This new overall outcome no longer had any specific focus on non-Māori.

Ambivalence towards promoting the Māori language to non-Māori is also evident in the 2003 attitude survey report released by TPK (TPK 2003a). Alongside questions about language attitudes, the survey collected information about participation in a range of ‘Māori language and culture related activities’, for example reading Māori magazines, listening to Māori radio, watching Māori news, and attending ceremonies or events with Māori welcomes and speeches. On finding that non-Māori engaged in these behaviours to a much lesser extent than Māori, despite an increase in positive attitudes towards the Māori language, the report observed that (2003a: 30):

The lack of behavioural change accompanying attitudinal change amongst non-Māori points to the limited usefulness of targeting Māori language revitalisation efforts at the population as a whole. Resources targeted toward those motivated to participate in Māori language and culture is clearly the course most likely to yield language revitalisation results.

The discrepancy in results between Māori and non-Māori can alternatively be explained by an argument TPK makes elsewhere that Māori and non-Māori may have different roles to play in supporting the Māori language[[8]](#footnote-8) –but TPK’s observations here can be interpreted as reflecting ambivalence towards focusing on non-Māori in Māori language planning.

A number of possible reasons can be identified for this apparent ambivalence. One is the issue of priorities, following the argument that it is more effective to focus efforts among communities where use of the language is already strong and can be built upon. Understandably, the attention of policymakers is for the most part directed elsewhere than the attitudes and behaviours of non-Māori. In a meeting with TPK in December 2005, the then head of the Māori Language and Broadcasting Team, Tipene Chrisp, was asked if he personally thought the attitudes of non-Māori were important to Māori language regeneration. He said that they were important but they were low on the priority queue, as the main focus would always have to be Māori. A second reason relates to language ownership, i.e. who does the Māori language belong to – Māori alone, or all New Zealanders? In the same meeting Tipene Chrisp noted that the Māori Language Act 1987 refers to the Māori language being a taonga of Māori, in contrast to the vision statement of the MLC that the Māori language is ‘a living national taonga for all New Zealanders’. Another possible source of ambivalence may be that both TPK and the MLC are highly influenced by Fishman’s work on Reversing Language Shift (Fishman 1991, 2000). Fishman’s theoretical mark is evident from the focus on diglossia in the current Māori Language Strategy, in academic articles produced by TPK staff (e.g. Chrisp 1997b), from meetings with TPK officials, and from the predominant focus on intergenerational transmission at both TPK and the MLC (see e.g. MLC 2006b: 28-29)[[9]](#footnote-9). As noted above, Fishman has been highly critical of focusing on non-members of a minority language community, and has stated this view in relation to the Māori language (Fishman 1991, 2000).

When directly questioned over time as to why they did not appear to place strong emphasis on non-Māori in their language promotion practice, MLC staff gave a number of reasons, including that non-Māori are not their primary audience (meeting of 4 December 2006); their ultimate goal is to increase the number of Māori speakers among Māori (meeting of 23 September 2005); spending the available money where it is likely to be effective (meeting of 4 December 2006); and the difficulty of knowing how to address non-Māori attitudes (meeting of 15 March 2006). It is likely that a number of these reasons account for the approach of both the MLC and TPK in this area. Whatever the reasons, ambivalence within the organisations themselves as to the real value of official policy relating to promoting the Māori language to non-Māori New Zealanders places a strong potential limit on the effectiveness of the policy.

* 1. **External aspects: responses of non-Māori to policy initiatives**

The above analysis suggests a constraint on the effectiveness of government policy aimed at promoting positive attitudes and behaviours towards the Māori language among non-Māori New Zealanders originating from within the organisations themselves. This next section looks at external responses to the agencies’ initiatives, approaching the question of effectiveness from the point of view of the reactions of the target audience.

Evaluating effectiveness in this context involves at least three separate objectives: first, measuring the target audience’s immediate responses to the initiatives undertaken; second, measuring changes in their attitudes and behaviours over time; and third, the most difficult, linking the two. In relation to the first objective, there should have been an evaluation process undertaken for the MLIP. The MLC had intended to conduct research to inform the development of the MLIP projects in 2004-2005 but this was not possible because of a six month delay in launching the programme (MLC 2005d: 2). The MLC stated that it instead intended to engage in research to evaluate the impact of the MLIP in 2005-2006. Early in 2005, the MLC and TPK agreed it would be appropriate for TPK to undertake an independent evaluation of the MLIP, to ensure the robustness and impartiality of the evaluation process (MLC 2005d: 2). TPK has not since, however, undertaken any evaluative research on the MLIP (TPK, personal communication, 8 May 2008). The MLC has undertaken one piece of evaluative research, engaging a research company in 2007 to undertake a series of focus groups with parents of Māori children to test responses to the Kōrero Māori phrase booklets, with a resulting report on the attitudes and behaviours of parents/primary caregivers towards the Māori language (Akroyd Research and Evaluation 2007). This research did not include the non-Māori audience of the programme, however, and does not therefore relate to majority language speakers. Regarding the second objective, measuring changes in attitudes and behaviours over time, the TPK attitude surveys undertaken in 2000, 2003, 2006 and 2009 do suggest increasingly positive attitudes towards the Māori language among non-Māori respondents. The 2003 survey report stated that the second survey was undertaken to inform government policy with up-to-date data and to measure the effectiveness of policy in the area of attitudes towards language (TPK 2003a: 5). These surveys are not linked to concrete policy initiatives, however, and thus the third objective – linking any long-term changes in the attitudes and behaviours of non-Māori to specific policy initiatives, such as the promotional campaigns described in this article – is not met.

Given that the status quo is at a low position in terms of evaluating effectiveness, research undertaken by the author between 2005 and 2008 focused on what appeared to be the biggest initial gap, that of how the target audience of non-Māori New Zealanders was responding, in an immediate sense, to the promotional campaigns. A data collection process was undertaken in 2007 in Wellington (New Zealand) with eighty non-Māori New Zealanders, using questionnaires (N = 80) and semi-structured interviews (N = 26). An attempt was made to recruit participants with a wide range of attitudes towards the Māori language, through the use of a workplace-based participant recruitment approach. Participants were recruited from nine white-collar workplaces that exhibited differing degrees of connection to Māori issues, from a strong connection to no connection at all (see de Bres 2008b for further details of the methodology). This approach was successful in obtaining participants with a range of attitudes towards the Māori language. Attitude statements in the questionnaire, in the form of a 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree), were used to place participants into three attitude categories. These were ‘Supporters’ (56.3%, who had positive attitudes towards the Māori language), ‘Uninterested’ (38.8%, who were largely uninterested in the Māori language), and ‘English Only’ (5%, who had negative attitudes towards the Māori language)[[10]](#footnote-10). These results reflected previous research on attitudes of non-Māori (e.g. Te Puni Kōkiri 2002) in that they showed evidence of negative attitudes towards the Māori language among some participants, but also indicated a group with considerably more positive attitudes towards the language. This provides an important reminder that, when talking of the attitudes of non-Māori in relation to the Māori language, we should have a diverse group of people in mind.

The overall aims of the data collection were to investigate the participants’ attitudes towards the Māori language, their responses to current and recent Māori language promotion materials targeted at them, and the role they saw for themselves in supporting Māori language regeneration. The results presented here focus on the responses to the promotional materials, which were investigated as part of the questionnaire. The materials chosen for inclusion were two television advertisements (from the *Into Te Reo* campaign), one of three Kōrero Māori phrase booklets (from the *NZ Reo NZ Pride* campaign), and the Kōrero Māori website (from the MLIP). The participants were given a DVD of the advertisements, a hard copy of the booklet and the website address as part of their questionnaire pack. For each item they were asked two open-ended questions, firstly, what messages about the Māori language they thought the creators were trying to convey, and secondly, what they thought they were being asked to do, if anything. These questions aimed to elicit, respectively, the attitudinal and behavioural messages about the Māori language present in the materials. They were then asked whether or not they liked each item, the response options being ‘like’, ‘dislike’ and ‘neutral’. This question aimed to obtain general information as to the popularity of the advertisements among the target audience. Finally, the participants were asked whether they had seen each of the items before, the response options being yes or no. This aimed to elicit information regarding the effectiveness of the advertisements in reaching their target audience.

The results are reported in detail elsewhere (de Bres 2008b); the focus here is on several important themes that emerged for the responses to the promotional materials as a whole. Firstly, they were effective in transmitting a wide range of attitudinal and behavioural messages in relation to the Māori language to the participants. Attitudinal messages perceived by the non-Māori audience included that Māori is for everyone (including non-Māori), Māori is a New Zealand language, Māori is easy to learn, Māori can be used in everyday situations, Māori is cool and Māori has status/is important. Behavioural messages included learning Māori, taking an interest in the Māori language, pronouncing Māori words correctly, promoting/advocating for the Māori language, using Māori words and phrases, finding out about Māori culture, taking advantage of Māori language resources, and participating in Māori language regeneration initiatives. These messages, among others, closely reflect those discerned in a prior discourse analysis of the materials (de Bres 2008b).

Secondly, despite these messages reaching the sample as a whole, the extent to which the participants perceived the messages was strongly influenced by their attitude category. Participants interpreted the messages in a manner in line with their existing attitudes towards the Māori language, so that different groups of participants ‘got’ different messages. In relation to attitudinal messages, for example, the message ‘Māori is for everyone, including non-Māori’ was much more likely to be perceived by Supporters than by Uninterested participants (36.4% of Supporters compared to 16.7% of Uninterested participants for the Roma ad, 41.5% of Supporters compared to 20.7% of Uninterested participants for the website, and 17.1% of Supporters compared to 0% of Uninterested participants for the phrase booklets). This result suggests Uninterested participants were less willing than Supporters to accept the message that the Māori language was relevant to them. In relation to behavioural messages, the greatest divergence between Supporters and Uninterested participants related to using the Māori language. Specifically, the messages ‘speak/use Māori’ and ‘use Māori phrases’ were much more likely to be perceived by Supporters than by Uninterested participants in the television advertisements and phrase booklets. This suggests Uninterested participants were less likely than Supporters to identify use of the Māori language as a behavioural message targeted at them, and is also likely to reflect the Uninterested participants’ own attitudes towards use of the Māori language by non-Māori (as expressed in their responses to other parts of the questionnaire). Both these results relate to a noted tendency in attitude research. Fabrigar et al. (2005: 99) observe that pre-message attitudes can bias evaluation of the arguments in a message, so that ‘arguments compatible with one’s pre-message attitudes are accepted, whereas arguments incompatible with one’s pre-message attitude are undermined’. The results for the promotional materials thus revealed some differences between attitude categories regarding the messages that participants were prepared to accept in relation to the Māori language. This result may be of concern to policymakers on two levels, suggesting both that some participants did not perceive the promotional materials as being targeted at them, and some were not open to the message that the Māori language was relevant to their lives.

Thirdly, participants whose attitudes towards the Māori language were already positive responded more positively to the advertisements. A majority of participants liked the promotional materials (63.8% Roma ad, 67.5% Koro ad, 62.5% website, 73.8% phrase booklets), and it is notable that very low proportions of participants disliked the materials, most of those who did not ‘like’ the materials expressing a ‘neutral’ rather than a ‘dislike’ response. There were considerable differences between attitude categories, however, with the Supporters consistently liking the promotional materials in greater proportions than the Uninterested and English Only participants, and the Uninterested participants generally liking the materials in greater proportions than the English Only participants (e.g. 80% of the Supporters liked the Roma ad, compared to 48.4% of the Uninterested participants, and none of the English Only participants).

Fourthly, some messages perceived by the participants did not align with those officially intended. A distinctive aspect of Māori language planning in relation to non-Māori New Zealanders is that official policy does not propose learning and using the Māori language as primary behaviours for non-Māori. As noted earlier, most documents refer to the ‘attitudes’ of non-Māori as being important in language regeneration, and one document explicitly notes that ‘New Zealanders can express their support and goodwill towards the Māori language without necessarily having to learn or use Māori’ (TPK 2003b: 11). In the responses to the promotional materials, however, the participants tended to think they were being encouraged to learn Māori. Three perceived behavioural messages were strikingly common across the promotional materials, and arguably represent the strongest behavioural themes of the Government’s overall promotional approach, as perceived by the participants. These were to ‘learn Māori’, ‘give it a go’ and ‘speak/use Māori’. Messages relating to other behaviours did appear in the participants’ responses, but were much weaker than the learning-related behavioural messages. Despite the fact that government policy does not strongly propose learning and using Māori to non-Māori, therefore, according to the non-Māori participants in the current research the strongest behavioural message in these materials was still to learn Māori.

Finally, only a small proportion of participants had seen the materials before completing the questionnaire, 33.8% having seen the phrase booklets, 32.5% the Roma ad, 27.5% the Koro ad, and 12.5% the website.

Overall, the results show that although the promotional materials were effective in transmitting to their non-Māori audience several attitudinal and behavioural messages relating to the Māori language, the participants’ responses were strongly conditioned by their existing attitudes towards the language, some of the main messages of official policy were not successfully conveyed, and a majority had not seen the materials prior to the data collection, placing an immediate limit on their effectiveness.

1. **Conclusion**

Any language planning project should involve an evaluation of effectiveness in achieving its objectives, to assist in refining the approach and to feed into future planning.

Although the two main Māori language planning agencies in New Zealand have demonstrated an official commitment to promoting positive attitudes and behaviours towards the Māori language among non-Māori New Zealanders, there has to date been little evaluation of their success in achieving this goal. This article has attempted to fill out this picture, considering both internal organisational factors and external responses. Based on the results of this combined analysis, there are several areas in which the two agencies could improve their effectiveness in this form of language planning.

Firstly, they would do well to address their ambivalence towards their official policy. There is ample evidence of the ‘problem of tolerability’ in relation to the Māori language among majority language speakers in New Zealand. This justifies a focus on non-Māori New Zealanders in Māori language regeneration planning, as expressed in official government policy. If, as the current analysis suggests, the agencies only partially subscribe to their stated goal, this places a strong limit on the effective design and implementation of policy initiatives

Secondly, if they do want to encourage positive attitudes and behaviours towards the Māori language among non-Māori New Zealanders, they may need to find new ways to encourage a larger proportion of this audience to feel personally targeted and that the Māori language is relevant to them. This relates to a broader issue of what is possible in terms of attitudinal and behavioural change for each attitude category. It seems uncontroversial that what is achievable will differ between attitude categories, and it is likely that, rather than using a one-size-fits-all approach to the diverse target audience of non-Māori New Zealanders, segmentation of this audience is required.

A third issue is for them to make clearer what behaviours they intend to promote among non-Māori, with a particular focus on the place of language learning. Notable here is that language planners in other minority language situations (e.g. Wales and Catalonia) have demonstrated a concerted focus on majority language speakers learning the minority language, rather than engaging in non-learning related behaviours (see de Bres 2008a). The fact that participants in the current research felt Māori language learning was being asked of them anyway, in combination with such learning being universally promoted across ethnic groups elsewhere, suggests it is worth considering whether the agencies should more strongly promote learning the Māori language to non-Māori. On the other hand, if they wish to promote behaviours other than learning Māori, they will need to make these behaviours more explicit in future initiatives targeting non-Māori New Zealanders – because the participants in the research reported here were getting a different message.

Finally, further evaluative research is required to link language promotion campaigns to longer-term changes in the attitudes and behaviours of non-Māori New Zealanders. Aside from the research reported here, there has been little evaluation of policy initiatives undertaken to promote the Māori language to non-Māori New Zealanders. The results described provide information on how a non-Māori audience responded in an immediate sense to some of the promotional materials released to date. Future research will need to link evaluation of specific policy initiatives to findings regarding attitude change more generally. This could also assist in answering the question of whether language promotion campaigns are in fact an appropriate method of promoting positive attitudes and behaviours towards minority languages among majority language speakers. Skepticism can be expressed as to whether such campaigns genuinely result in attitude change. This author sees no reason to believe this approach is inherently ineffective, given the available evidence of successful social marketing campaigns in relation to other issues. Different approaches to such planning can and have been used, however (see de Bres 2008a). Only extensive, ongoing evaluative research can show if the current approach is on the right track to promoting positive attitudes and behaviours towards the Māori language among non-Māori New Zealanders, with all that this implies for the future of the Māori language.

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*Abbreviations used*: TPK (Te Puni Kōkiri), MLC (Māori Language Commission)

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1. Elsewhere, I refer to this form of language planning as ‘planning for tolerability’ (de Bres 2008a, 2008b). This term is taken from Stephen May’s work on the ‘problem of tolerability’ (inherent majority language speaker opposition to the exercise of minority language rights), but in a language planning context I use it to refer more broadly to any language planning targeting the attitudes and behaviours of majority language speakers towards minority languages.   [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This is not to suggest that these government organisations are the only groups involved in Māori language planning. Language planning occurs at all levels of society (see Ager 2003: 7). There are non-government groups working in Māori language regeneration planning in New Zealand, and many iwi (Māori tribal group) organisations have highly active Māori language planning programmes, for example Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Raukawa, Tūhoe and Ngāti Porou (see Spolsky 2003: 568). For reasons of scope, this article focuses on government activity alone. Nonetheless, the author hopes that the research will be of use to anyone working in Māori language regeneration planning. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The 2006 census included the ethnic category of ‘New Zealander’ for the first time. The 11.2% of respondents who selected this category are likely to have included many who would previously have identified as New Zealand European. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Majority language speakers have been defined differently in other minority language situations. For instance, In Wales non-Welsh people are not a particular focus of minority language planning targeting majority language speakers. The relevant target audience there tends to be non-speakers of Welsh generally, because people of Welsh ethnicity make up the large majority of people living in Wales. In Catalonia, three distinct groups of majority language speakers are discernible at different stages of minority language planning (for a full discussion, see de Bres 2008a). The point here is that the minority-majority relationship is fubndamentally about power relations between minority and majority groups (see May 2001: 195). The ‘problem of tolerability’ expresses itself in different ways in different places because of contextual factors specific to each situation, relating primarily to how the majority-minority power relationship is defined. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. MLC (1996) is discussed here as a TPK policy document as it was the first document in the development of the Māori Language Strategy, subsequently taken over by TPK. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Summary of events taken from an earlier draft of Chrisp (1997a), consulted during file search at the MLC in November 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. NZ Reo, NZ Pride website www.nzreo.org.nz, accessed March 2006 (since subsumed into Kōrero Māori website www.koreroMāori.co.nz) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. TPK’s 2000 attitude survey, for example, states that the analysis in the report is based on twin assumptions that, in the immediate future: for Māori people, the objective is to learn and use Māori; and for non-Māori people, the objective is to create a positive disposition towards Māori people learning and using Māori (TPK 2002: 12). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. This focus is also apparent in the review of the current Māori Language Strategy released in 2011. Undertaken by an independent panel established by the Minister of Māori Affairs, *Te Reo Mauriora* (Independent panel 2011) states as one of its two main desired outcomes the reestablishment of the Māori language in Māori homes (2011: 5) and makes explicit reference to the theories of Joshua Fishman (2011: 7, 15). Although the document refers to the importance of raising the ‘status’ of the Māori language (2011: 11) and to the attitudes of ‘New Zealand’ (2011: 23-25), the role of non-Māori New Zealanders (as opposed to government) is not discussed, and no policy outcomes in relation to non-Māori are specified. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. These categories were based on those developed by Te Puni Kōkiri (2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)