

## "Hey, you!": the Maori-NZE Interface in Sociolinguistic Rules of Address<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

*He tao rākau ka taea te karo, he tao kupu e kore e taea.*

(A weapon's barb can be dodged, a verbal barb cannot)

Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names can never hurt me.

These two sayings express polarised views of the ability words have to inflict pain or injury. The first is a *whakatauki* (proverb) often quoted to explain why the majority of Maori tribal *kawa* (protocols) forbid women to speak on the marae during a *pōwhiri* (welcoming ceremony). It expresses the Maori view that the physical injury threatened by a weapon can be avoided by agility, whereas the injury inflicted by words cannot so easily be avoided. The injury inflicted by a weapon affects only the victim, whereas the spiritual injury inflicted by words affects not only the addressee, but, in the case of women, also the generations as yet unborn. This philosophy is reflected in the formal welcoming process which Anne Salmond (1975:115) calls the 'rituals of encounter'. Women are seated behind the male speakers and remain physically protected by the men until it is clearly established that no threat exists. Should a woman stand to speak she would remove herself from that protection. As Timoti Kāretu (1978:71) observed, the very word *paepae*, which describes the seats on which the orators sit, means 'barrier'.

Although the English proverb appears to contradict the *whakatauki*, it may be recited as a protection from the sting of words, or a challenge to the addressee to "hurt me if you can". As native speakers of NZE we have observed this proverb in use, and conclude that it means the opposite of

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what it says - that names do hurt. We have checked our impressions with our student informants, and other English speakers, and all who are familiar with the proverb confirm that this is their interpretation also. This gap between what is meant and what is said can be explained in terms of Grice's conversational maxims (cf. Grice 1975 and 1978), as discussed by Levinson (1983:101). The first maxim of quality "do not say what you believe to be false" is flouted, since the speaker does not believe that the assertion "names can never hurt me" is true. Assuming the speaker who utters the expression "sticks and stones..." is actually following Grice's co-operative principle, then the expression must be interpreted as having some underlying meaning, such as "I know that names can hurt, but let's pretend they don't". The expression is invoked as a ritual incantation, or retort, which is attributed with the power to protect the speaker. It is as though by uttering the words they will become true.

Kāretu (1978) also compared these two sayings,<sup>2</sup> assuming they represent opposing views, but in reality they convey a similar sentiment. Words are generally acknowledged to have the power to hurt, in both Maori and Pakeha societies, so the way we address people is especially important, given the extra dimension of personal identity which address terms reflect, determined as they are by the social characteristics of the addressee.

With these two sayings in mind, we compare the naming practices in both New Zealand Maori and NZE, and discuss the relative importance each society places on status and solidarity. Janet Holmes (1990) outlines a two-dimensional model for analysing both affective meaning and referential content of an interaction. Following this model, unmarked address terms express low referential content, but affective meaning can cover the length of the continuum from high solidarity to high social distance, depending on features of the context and participants. Where address rules are broken, this can convey additional referential meaning, as well as indicating shifts in affective meaning.

As Susan Ervin-Tripp suggests, sociolinguistic rules of address can be broken or manipulated to insult, or to increase or decrease social distance. She illustrates this with a discussion of a white policeman addressing a black doctor as *boy*, hence denying him the status his age and occupational rank warranted. She comments

"communication has been perfect in this interchange. Both were familiar with an address system which contained a selector for race available to both black and white for insult, condescension, or deference, as needed. Only because they shared these norms could the policeman's act have its unequivocal impact." (Ervin-Tripp 1972: 230)

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<sup>2</sup> Using the variation "Sticks and stones may break my bones but words can never hurt me".

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### The Models

Following the model of rules of address in American English proposed by Ervin-Tripp (1972), we sought impressions from a group of second year Linguistics students in an attempt to produce a model for New Zealand English (NZE), based on educated Pakeha between the ages of 18 and 30 who speak NZE as a first language. These are the speakers whose socio-pragmatic competence our rules describe. They are not prescriptive, but descriptive rules. That is, the models represent the factors which determine what forms of address are possible and appropriate, but do not categorically rule out other options.

The Maori model is based on the guidelines for terms of address given by Moorfield (1988:2), and the personal experience of one of the writers with second language speakers of Maori. These speakers of Maori are in the same approximate age group as the NZE model. The model was also shown to two native speakers of Maori.<sup>3</sup>

The rules are represented in two flow-charts, with the point of entry on the left, and the path taken through the chart determined by a series of binary choices (diamond shaped boxes). These choices represent features of hearer or social context. As the charts represent our ideal speakers' sociolinguistic competence, some of the choices pre-suppose cultural knowledge, for example, of who is considered *kaumātua*.<sup>4</sup> Aspects of this cultural knowledge assumed by our flow-charts are explained under the headings Maori and English below.

### Maori:

Of the factors which determine choice of address term in Maori, the most important are those which place the speaker and addressee in a multi-dimensional relationship within the community. The primary focus is on relationships between people, especially those within and between families. A speaker's place within her own family's hierarchy determines how she addresses family members. These address terms are extended to others of similar age outside the family. This tends to be over-ridden only in Pakeha situations of high status.

In Maori society people are generally considered adult once they have had children, or when the majority of their peers have had children.

Similarly, once they become grandparents, or the majority of their peers are grandparents, they are generally regarded as *kaumātua*, and can be addressed as *e koro*, or *e kui*. Younger people can also be called by one of these *kaumātua* titles, or *e te rangatira*, if they have demonstrated wisdom commensurate with that of their elders, or have demonstrated leadership skills.

<sup>3</sup> One of Rongowhakaata, one of Te Aupōuri descent.

<sup>4</sup> See discussion under Maori.

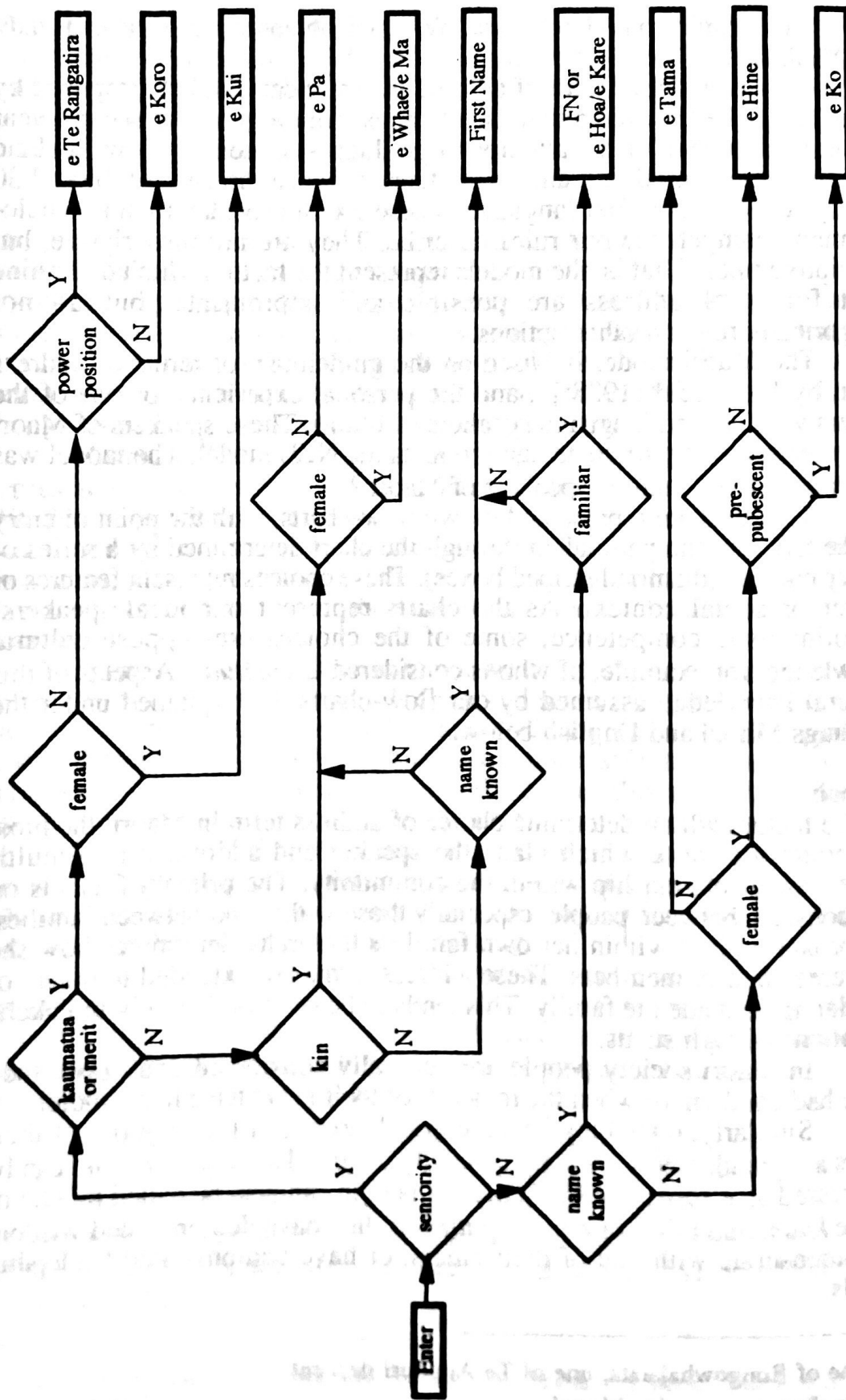


Fig. 1 - A New Zealand Maori Address System



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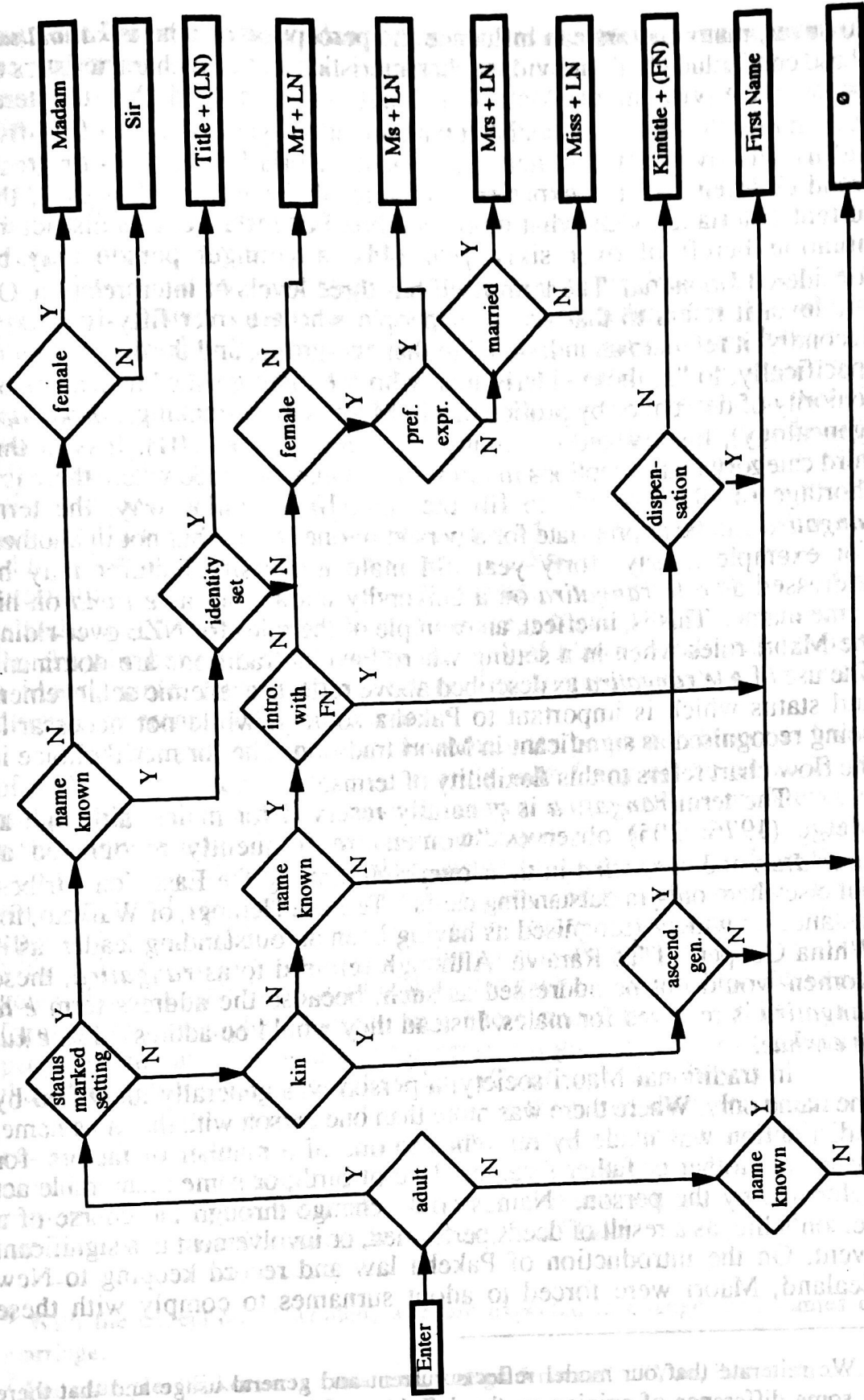


Fig 2 - A New Zealand English Address System

However, many factors can influence the perception of who is *kaumātua*. These can include both individual characteristics and also characteristics of the social environment. Metge (1976:200-1) observed that the term *kaumātua* is "invariably associated with advanced years - at least fifty-five and usually over sixty, an age when most Maoris have grand- or great-grand-children." In the experience of one of the writers, however, the current criteria are somewhat more flexible. For instance, in a district, or situation bereft of over sixty year olds, a younger person may be considered *kaumātua*. The term itself has three levels of interpretation. On one level it refers to that group of people who are over fifty-five/sixty. Secondly, it refers to an individual in that age-group, and thirdly, and more specifically, to "... those elderly men who are distinguished as leaders by seniority of descent or by proficiency in Maori speech-making, *whakapapa* (genealogy), history and ceremony ..." (Metge 1976: 201). It is in this third category that exceptions in terms of age may be made where there is a shortage of older people to fill the role. In a similar way, the term *rangatira* can be appropriate for a person in one setting but not in another. For example a (say) forty year old male university lecturer may be addressed as *e te rangatira* on a university marae, but as *e tama* on his home marae. This is, in effect, an example of the rules for NZE over-riding the Maori rules when in a setting where Pakeha traditions are dominant. The use of *e te rangatira* as described above reflects academic achievement and status which is important to Pakeha society, while not necessarily being recognised as significant in Maori tradition. The 'or merit' choice in the flow chart refers to this flexibility of terms.<sup>5</sup>

The term *rangatira* is generally reserved for males, although as Metge (1976: 205) observes "women are frequently recognised as *kaumātua* and *rangatira* in their own right among the East Coast tribes, but elsewhere only in outstanding cases." Te Paea Herangi, of Waikato, for instance, is widely recognised as having been an outstanding leader, as is Whina Cooper, of Te Rarawa. Although referred to as *rangatira*, these women would not be addressed as such, because the address term *e te rangatira* is reserved for males. Instead they would be addressed as *e kui* or *e whae*.

In traditional Maori society, a person was generally identified by one name only. Where there was more than one person with the same name, a distinction was made by reference to one of a number of factors, for instance: mother or father's name, place of birth, or some memorable act performed by the person. Names could change through the course of a person's life, as a result of deeds performed, or involvement in a significant event. On the introduction of Pakeha law and record keeping to New Zealand, Maori were forced to adopt surnames to comply with these

<sup>5</sup> We reiterate that our model reflects current and general usage and that there is some difference of opinion on the definition of *kaumātua* status.

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practices. However, many Maori retain a relaxed attitude to names, moving freely from one name to another depending on the social context. This is often misconstrued by Pakeha as arising from a desire to avoid identification, as in the use of an alias with criminal intent in NZE. This misconception is due to the Pakeha perception of birthname as being a person's "true" name, and therefore they are more resistant to name change.<sup>6</sup> Thus, deviation from birthname is marked and requires an explanation, such as "He's a crim."

The name known choice leading to first name does not necessarily mean the registered first name, and may differ according to social context, or the relationship between speaker and hearer. Many Maori have both Maori and Pakeha names, and sometimes a nickname, and the contexts in which they use each are clearly delineated. For example, a university student has two christian names: *Huia* and *Emily*. She is known as *Huia* to Maori Studies department staff, and classmates; other students and staff of other university departments call her *Emily*; while family and close friends call her *Bubs*. Identifying features of the addressee can also be used as address forms where the person's name is unknown, or as more permanent alternatives. For example, Henry Williams, a missionary in the Bay of Islands, was known as *Karuwhā* (four-eyes) because he wore glasses. A Pakeha who has been included in a network of Maori friends may be given a Maori name, signalling solidarity, and thereby reducing the social distance inherent in ethnic difference.

Second person pronouns can sometimes be used in Maori as forms of address, in place of, or co-occurring with,<sup>7</sup> any of the forms in the model. When the pronoun occurs on its own it is usually in preference to no-naming. In English second person pronouns can also be used as terms of address, but whereas a speaker unsure of, or uncomfortable with, an appropriate address term in English is more likely to use the no-naming option, the second person pronoun is the more usual choice in Maori. Where the pronoun is used in combination with other address terms, it generally serves the function of making the exchange more intimate, or less formal. For example: "Koutou mā, haere mai koutou ki te kai" (You people, come and eat, will you.) expresses a greater degree of solidarity than does "Haere mai koutou, ki te kai" (Come and eat, will you.).

There is some dialectal variation in the terms used, for instance *e mara* and *e hika* are other options of address for a friend, and women and men of *kaumātua* status are generally addressed as *tāua* and *pōua* respectively in Southern dialect. The terms used in the model, however, are used widely across all dialects of New Zealand Maori.

<sup>6</sup> With the exception of women, who are expected to change their names on marriage.

<sup>7</sup> For example: "E koe, e te tamaiti rā, kainga ō riwai!" - "You, that child there, eat your potatoes!"

**English:**

The most crucial factors in determining an appropriate form of address in NZE are those which define the speaker's and addressee's role in relation to the context. Although the relationship between people is also taken into account, the context is the dominant determining factor. For example, a child whose mother is a teacher would be more likely to call her *Title + LN* than *Mum* at school, as the role-relationship of each in the context is more important than the kin relationship. In this sense, the rules of address in NZE are focused more towards the status end of the affective axis than the solidarity end (Holmes 1990: 253), as emphasising differences between speaker and addressee due to their differing status and role is considered more important than stressing their sameness due to familial ties.

Where first name is listed as the outcome abbreviations, nicknames and petnames can be used interchangeably, although there is sometimes a restriction on who may use them and in what context. Nicknames in NZE are commonly abbreviations or mutations of first name. This differs from Maori nicknames, which are usually unrelated to the registered first name. Use of a nickname or pet name is an expression of intimacy and so shifts the exchange further towards the solidarity end of the affective scale. *Mate* can also serve this function between people of similar ages regardless of whether or not the addressee's FN is known.

In Pakeha society, a person of school-leaving age begins to acquire the privileges of adult status. At this time people may begin full-time employment, open bank accounts, run their own households etc., often for the first time, and start accepting adult-like responsibility for themselves. They gain status which was denied to them as children, and this change in status can be reflected in the need for a title. Transition to adulthood is a slow process and in some social contexts a school-leaver continues to be regarded as a child for many years. This is a further example of how the role of an individual in relation to the social context is an important factor in determining choice of an appropriate address term. This contrasts with Maori society where seniority is defined in terms of relationships, potential or actual, with others.

The titles in use in NZE are *Mrs*, *Miss*, *Ms* for women, and *Mr* for men. Whereas *Mr* is universal for men, the traditional women's titles, *Miss* and *Mrs*, reflect marital status, hence the recent popularity of the neutral form, *Ms*. Often women who nominate the title *Ms* would prefer to be called by first name and last name only, but as many government agencies and other institutions still require use of a title, they choose *Ms*, not so much because they prefer it, but because they "disprefer" the alternatives *Mrs* and *Miss*, and the implications of these choices. In our flow chart, we state that a woman will be addressed as *Ms + LN* if she has expressed a preference for this. However, this is an over-simplification.

Perhaps because of the political nature of such a choice, the title itself arising out of a desire for women not to have to define themselves as being sexually available or not, or in relation to a man (father or husband),



many people hold strong views about the title *Ms*. Some refuse to call a woman *Ms* in spite of her expressing a preference for this form, while others will address all women as *Ms*, regardless of the addressee's personal preference. For example, to address a woman who prefers *Ms*, as *Miss*, can be intended as an insult if the speaker believes that *Ms* is used by women who are ashamed of their unmarried status, and wishes to draw attention to it. The speaker is also displaying a patronising attitude towards feminism in general, by refusing to acknowledge *Ms* as a valid title. Regardless of whether a woman wants to use a title at all, and whether or not she has a strong preference for any particular title, convention requires that she use one, and whichever choice she makes will be politically marked.

The 'identity set' in our flow-chart refers to the existence of a prescribed set of titles, frequently occupational (military, academic, medical, religious etc), which are used in status-marked settings, such as those described by Ervin-Tripp

"where status is clearly specified, speech style is rigidly prescribed, and the form of address of each person is derived from his (*sic*) social identity, for example, 'Your honour', 'Mr Chairman'." (1972:227)

The titles in this identity set will always be used in the status-marked settings for which they apply, regardless of any other address terms which could be appropriately used by participants outside that setting, except when these rules are deliberately broken to increase or decrease a face attack. For example, at a faculty meeting, B aggressively questioned A about her new course proposal. As the Chair tried to terminate the discussion, he said to A "would you like to add anything Joyce?" His use of first name in a context where *Title + LN* was the expected option could have served two possible functions. It could have been intended as a threat to her negative face, by denying her the status of her position which warranted her being addressed as Dr A. Alternatively, it could have been intended as a show of solidarity, to express support for her after a face attack from B. Women with whom we have discussed this tend towards the first interpretation, whereas men prefer the second. If this reflects a general tendency, it has serious implications for cross-gender mis-communication.

### Discussion

Michael Canale (1983) distinguishes four types of communicative competence: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic. In our discussion of rules of address in use, we focus on sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence. Canale defines strategic competence as the "mastery of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action (to) . . . enhance the effectiveness of communication" (1983:10-11). With respect to rules of address, this describes the ways in which speakers manipulate the rule systems for effect. Sociolinguistic competence is defined as "the extent to which

utterances are produced and understood *appropriately* in different sociolinguistic contexts" (1983:7), and refers to appropriateness of both meaning and form.

#### Strategic Competence:

Friederike Braun (1988:19) points out that previous writers have not accounted for variation in address forms, and that "presenting rules in a flowchart is in itself a method of voluntary or involuntary standardising and leads to reducing behaviour to a single set of rules." However, much variation in terms of address used can be explained and perhaps better understood if interpreted as rule-breaking. The fact that people perceive a standard set of rules of address is evidenced by their discomfort with alternatives, and offence at being misnamed.

Moorfield (1988:2) notes that the choice of address form in Maori "is influenced by the relative ages of the speaker and the person being addressed, so that a sixty-year-old man might address a fifty-year-old one by using *e tama!*". Similarly, *e hine* is perceived as a compliment when used to address an old woman, but only by a speaker close in age to that of the addressee. Young people are expected to respect their elders, because of the high status accorded to age. A relatively young woman may be addressed as *e kui*, not to insult but rather to imply the knowledge, wisdom or expertise of a much older woman. This usage is distinct from the 'or merit' option on the flowchart, in that it tends to reflect the personal perception of the speaker, whereas the usage referred to in the flowchart reflects a community-wide perception.

In NZE there are two possible outcomes from using first name to address someone you have just met, or don't know very well. It can be interpreted either as friendly, or as invasive. The reaction is governed by a number of factors including the situation, the relative age and the respective roles of the participants. For example, sales representatives often use first name with potential customers, thereby claiming more solidarity than actually exists in order to gain a sale. Addressees often feel uncomfortable with this usage, as it is harder to disengage from the exchange, without appearing rude to someone who has claimed friendship by their use of first name. Maori are unlikely to find first name offensive, due to the greater emphasis on solidarity in comparison with Pakeha society, which is relatively more status oriented.

Discomfort can also arise in an interaction where the participants have different perceptions of the degree of intimacy that their relationship has reached. For instance: Joanne feels uncomfortable with her mother-in-law's insistence that she call her *Mum*. Although they are close, Joanne does not feel that their relationship is the same as that of a real mother and daughter, and would be more comfortable calling her *Pat*. Pat's preference for *Mum* arises from a desire to encourage the closeness of a mother/daughter relationship. In this example, mother-in-law and daughter-

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in-law are both Pakeha. This conflict is less likely to occur in Maori than in Pakeha society, given the flexibility of roles within the Maori family.

### Sociolinguistic Competence:

Canale's distinction between appropriateness of meaning and appropriateness of form can be exemplified in respect to naming. In Maori, it is culturally inappropriate to ask someone their name, as it is regarded as tantamount to challenging a person's presence; that is, the meaning is inappropriate, whatever the form. In NZE the enquiry is acceptable, but consideration must be given to appropriateness of form, for example compare "Sorry, I didn't catch your name", with "Who the hell are you?"

The following extract from Patricia Grace's novel *Pōtiki* (Grace 1986:75-6) represents the speech of an elderly male Maori, living in a small coastal community.

Show your cousins and then all of *yous* will know us old ones tried, and had a go. You show them we really tried and they won't blame. And if *yous* can do something . . . well good on *yous*.  
(Our emphases)

The use of *yous* as a second person plural pronoun is recognised as a stereotyped feature of Maori English, although this form also occurs in a number of other dialects of English. A distinction exists between singular, dual and plural second person pronouns in Maori, and the desire to express this distinction of meaning in English has perhaps encouraged the now widespread use of *yous* in NZE. The form *yous two*, heard less commonly in NZE, could well be a representation of the dual distinction.<sup>8</sup>

Maori speakers of NZE use address forms which reflect the kinship relationships of Maori language terms of address,<sup>9</sup> such as *cuz*, *sis*, *bro*, *aunty*, *uncle*. There are two differences between this usage and that of Pakeha NZE speakers. The range of relations for whom kinship forms can be used as terms of address is greater; and Maori speakers more commonly display a fictive use of kinship terms, when addressing someone to whom they are not biologically related. This reinforces solidarity by making the addressee "one of the family". Pakeha often misread this, forming the basis for the stereotype of Maori as being "related to everybody".

*E hoa* has been picked up and used by Pakeha to Maori addressees.<sup>10</sup> This has come to have patronising connotations, especially

<sup>8</sup> A colleague commented that this three-way distinction can also be expressed as *you*, *yous*, and *yous fullas*.

<sup>9</sup> ie, *tama* = son; *hine* is a contraction of *tamāhine* = daughter; *whae* = *whaea* = mother; *pā* = father

<sup>10</sup> As in "What are you doing there, *e hoa*?"

for young Maori speakers,<sup>11</sup> who have turned to the alternative *e kare* as a preferred expression. When a monolingual English speaking Pakeha uses a Maori form of address to a Maori addressee it draws unnecessary attention to ethnicity, by stepping outside an address system (NZE) which does not consider ethnicity a relevant factor. In this way, the use of *e hoa* by Pakeha is similar to the use of *boy* by white Americans as a racial put-down.

### Conclusion

As illustrated in the preceding discussion, Maori speakers often transfer features of the Maori address system, and the rules for applying and interpreting them, into NZE. (For example: the use of multiple aliases,<sup>12</sup> the use of singular, dual and plural second person pronouns,<sup>13</sup> and transference of kinship terms.<sup>14</sup>) This can cause misunderstanding, as monolingual NZE speakers interpret them using the rules for production and understanding of NZE address forms. In its mildest form, this misunderstanding can lead to ethnic stereotypes being formed, but it also has serious implications for social harmony, especially as Jenny Thomas notes, because "pragmatic failure . . . is rarely recognised as such" (1983: 96).

In the Maori system the prime determiner of status is age, contrasting strongly with the importance the NZE system places on personal achievement as a determiner of status. The extent to which status considerations are significant in the choice of address term also differs considerably between the two systems. In the Maori model, solidarity is the primary consideration in selecting terms of address, whereas the status relationships within a given context will generally over-ride solidarity considerations in the NZE model. The negative face requirement that individual success should be recognised leads Pakeha to feel themselves insulted when status is ignored in preference to solidarity.

The primary focus of this paper is on proposing models of the factors which determine terms of address in both NZE and NZ Maori. As these models reflect the socio-pragmatic competence of each language's speakers, these determining factors differ according to the emphasis each society places on status and solidarity. We have discussed some situations where conflict between the two systems of address can result in cross-cultural mis-communication. The extent to which these differing emphases affect Maori-Pakeha communication across a range of interactions remains to be studied.

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<sup>11</sup> This was observed by one of the writers when growing up in a small Northland community in the 60s, and was also reported by young Maori students at the University of Waikato in the late 80s.

<sup>12</sup> See under **The Models: Maori**

<sup>13</sup> See under **Sociolinguistic competence**

<sup>14</sup> Also under **Sociolinguistic competence**



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