

Te Reo Maori: Panel Discussion

Theme: The Current Status of the Maori Language and the Role of the Linguist

As part of the proceedings of the Language and Society Conference, a plenary panel discussion was organised on June 30 1998. This session was chaired by Wiremu Kaa from the School of Māori Studies at Victoria University. Te Haumihiata Mason, Kathy Dewes, Hine-i-haea Murphy, Heni Jacob and Mike Hollings contributed as panellists. Each spoke for between ten and twenty minutes on selected issues relating to the present status and future prospects of the Maori language, while also offering suggestions for academic linguists and sociolinguists about fruitful areas for collaborative research in the future. What follows is a series of discussions based on the talks of these speakers which were recorded and transcribed.¹ The transcripts were edited by Terry Crowley and Janet Holmes, and were checked by the participants.

Reclamation

Kathy Dewes

Kathy Dewes is Principal of Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Ruamatā, as well as chairperson of Te Rūnanganui o Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori.

I consciously chose *reclamation* as my title because this reflects my involvement with the Māori language revitalisation movement since about 1972. I am principal of Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Ruamatā, as well as chairperson of Te Rūnanganui o Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori. The latter is a national organisation which oversees Kura Kaupapa Māori, and which attempts to work in partnership with government in designing policies and in making decisions which affect Kura Kaupapa Māori, established to reclaim the Māori language. My language is very dear to me, and I see Kura Kaupapa Māori as being an integral part of this whole revitalisation process.

Whenever I had a question when I was growing up, I would ask my father or a respected elder. They would never answer my questions directly, which I found very frustrating at the time since this was not how I learned things at school. They would, instead, nearly always answer my questions

¹ Te Haumihiata Mason's contribution was not recorded at her request.

by telling me a story. Having in the meantime learned from those great minds, I propose now to tell you a story.

My daughter is seventeen years old and she is in the seventh form at Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Ruamatā. Her story illustrates the state of the Māori language right now for about four thousand students attending Kura Kaupapa Māori, as well as about thirty thousand in mainstream programmes who are learning Māori. That number includes students ranging from those taking just a little bit of Māori a day, to those involved in total immersion programmes.

Māori was my daughter's first language and she is a fluent speaker. However, despite having been educated throughout her entire life totally through the medium of Māori, she is still more confident speaking English than she is speaking Māori. If the frequency of spontaneous utterances were a measure of linguistic competence, then she would surely fail the assessment as a Māori speaker.

This is an indication of the hostile environment within which the Kura Kaupapa Māori movement is working to reclaim our right to our language, culture and indigenous values base, as well as the achievement of education and gaining control of our lives. At the age of six, my daughter had read every Māori text that was suitable for children, and she ended up sating her thirst for knowledge by reading the Māori version of the Holy Bible. Eleven years later, she continues to be confronted with this same problem of the lack of resources. There is still no suitable dictionary in Māori which our children can refer to as they independently pick their way through a new text that contains new vocabulary.

School certificate science, school certificate and sixth form certificate mathematics, sixth form certificate computer studies, sixth form certificate accounting, sixth form certificate physical education, and school certificate and bursary history are all subjects that she has taken in Māori without a single Māori text to support that learning. Her other subjects — bursary calculus, bursary statistics, sixth form certificate physics, and bursary chemistry — could not be taught in Māori due to the unavailability of Māori-speaking staff.

She coached herself through bursary calculus by taking the correspondence school course. Given that she was sixteen at the time, and that she was required to switch firstly to a distance learning course with no personal or oral contact with her tutor — which was totally different to the environment that she had previously been learning in — and secondly to reading mathematical terms in English, which previously had been explained to her only in Māori, she managed what I think is a very impressive 52 percent. In that year she gained a B bursary with only four subjects, scoring higher than I did before her. She also did better than her oldest brother, who had completely missed out on attending Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori. He had persevered in the mainstream system that was based on the English language and Pākehā culture.

Apart from when she is at school, she has little opportunity to hear

Māori being used as a living language of communication. She tunes in occasionally to television programmes such as *Marae*, and she listens to *Te Reo Irirangi o Te Arawa* on the radio as we travel to and from school. At the marae she is more often than not bored with many of the formal speeches, where ritualistic and formulaic utterances seem to take precedence over real and meaningful talk. However, she does appreciate a good whaikōrero where the mind is challenged, the heart is taxed, and history books are replenished or rewritten.

Comparing her situation with mine when I was a seventh former in 1968, I was learning Latin, German, French, Italian and English. I approached the principal of my school, Wellington Girls' College, to allow me to study Māori by correspondence. My request was declined on the grounds that I had too much other work to do. The fact that I accepted that decision without a fight is an indication of my own lack of political awareness at the time. It is also an indication of the lack of awareness among Māori people at the time, as well as Pākehā in general. Thirty years later, I am certain that no principal would dare to deny a senior Māori student her right to learn her language in school.

In the ten years after 1968, a number of people — including myself — became involved in the Te Reo Māori society. As part of a process of politicisation, we actively lobbied for a chair of Māori at Victoria University as well as a Māori television production unit, and we pushed for just five minutes of news in Māori during primetime television. We took untold numbers of submissions to parliament for Māori to be made an official language of Aotearoa, and for the establishment of a Māori Language Commission. We established Māori Language Day, which then became Māori Language Week. Things have changed to the point where this is no longer needed because of the various systems in place by which Māori is promoted.

We started lobbying initially on the advice from somebody from the BBC, who argued that we should start off with a programme similar to *Country Calendar*. The reasoning was that the predominantly Pakeha audience was not yet ready for Māori language or culture to be invading their homes, so it was necessary to cultivate their receptivity. Accordingly, *Koha* was born, which was a twenty minute programme broadcast on Sunday afternoons.

In 1972, we started looking at the school system. A petition was initiated by Hana Jackson and Nga Tama Toa because there were only thirteen secondary schools at that time which were teaching Māori as an option. Thirty years later, we have sixty Kura Kaupapa Māori where *all* of the learning is conducted totally in Māori. We now have two *wharekura* — Rakaumanga and Ruamatā — which are teaching up to bursary level totally through the medium of Māori. Progress in terms of the reclamation of our language and culture, and of our right to control that, has been quite significant.

I feel somewhat overwhelmed by technology and am worried by

decisions that are based on cost-effectiveness, as these are not always outcome-effective decisions. Teacher-student ratios of one to thirty are having an impact on the quality of the language that we are able to maintain in both our schools and other institutions which have taken on board the teaching of Māori. These kinds of decisions have, I believe, tended to mistakenly treat the people and the language as being separate.

I think that linguists can help us to put the heart and soul back into our language by supporting the revitalisation process and our reclamation of the language by empowering Māori. They can acknowledge the native speakers of *te reo*, who are to all intents and purposes at this point in time its owners. Linguists need to acknowledge that Māori is not just a matter of language and culture; we are really talking about the survival of a people.

The lure of English

Mike Hollings

Mike Hollings (Ngāti Raukawa) is currently CEO of Te Māngai Pāho. He has been involved for many years with Māori bilingual and immersion education.

While I was working at Te Puni Kōkiri there was a group of native speakers of Māori employed whose task it was to be the “eyes and ears” of the organisation in the regions. A requirement of their employment was that they were native speakers of Māori as it was assumed that they would spend a large amount of their working time in Māori-speaking situations. I asked them how much Māori they actually spoke. The answer was that they spoke Māori for perhaps half an hour to an hour every day. These were people who were fully capable of speaking Māori, but the opportunities for them to actually speak it are very limited.

If that is the situation for native speakers, you can imagine that there are even fewer opportunities for learners of the language to be in situations where Māori language is the medium of communication. Even those of us who have spent some years trying to learn Māori, and who have become missionaries for the cause of language revival, face particular difficulty in achieving our goals, because there are just not the opportunities to use the language in everyday communicative situations. I work in an industry (*Māori broadcasting*) where the focus is the promotion and revitalisation of the language. However, in my day to day dealings with people I have regular contact with — technicians, suppliers, lawyers, consultants, auditors, accountants, government officials — the language of communication is necessarily English. Apart from Māori Language on Air announcers, there is no need or social pressure to require people to use Māori language. On the rare occasion I do come into contact with someone who does speak Māori, for efficiency reasons, communication beyond simple phatic exchanges usually reverts to English. We simply find it easier to speak English.

I also sometimes avoid situations where I may have to speak Māori because I fear that I will not be able to articulate my views as easily as I can in English. I find that when I ring people who speak Māori, I practice first what I am about to say. This is especially so when I need to communicate with people who are very fluent as when I ring the Māori Language Commission.

In fact, as I was driving to the airport before this panel discussion to pick up one of the other discussants, I thought, "Oh my God, we're going to have to speak Māori in the car because she is so staunch". I was determined not to be the first one to give in, though in the end it was me who initiated the switch to English. Even though we have both reached quite a high level of Māori language competence, it is still very difficult for people like us to continue speaking the language. It is far easier, more efficient and more effective for us to speak English. This is an indictment on what we do in that there is no social pressure for us to avoid using English.

This happens with school children as well. My own children grew up speaking only Māori when they were younger. However, by the age of eleven or twelve they stopped speaking to me if I insisted that they speak Māori. Their cognitive ability had outstripped their linguistic ability and they did not want to talk to me as I was having difficulty in expressing myself on complex topics.

Many of the situations that we find ourselves in are not accommodated in Māori because the only domains that the language is equipped to handle focus on school. Outside of school, there is actually very little opportunity for people to speak the language. The reason why there are no monolingual speakers of Māori in a society such as ours is that there is a requirement for people to be bilingual. In New Zealand everybody speaks English, and there is no social pressure for people to speak Māori. Most people, even if they are bilingual in Māori, speak English better than they speak Māori.

Children at Kōhanga Reo may sound, to the uninitiated ear, as if they are extremely fluent in the language, as they can hold conversations and appear to be speaking the Māori language very well. However, what is distressing is not what these children are saying, but what they are *not* saying.

I understand that most children's English language, when they start school, is fairly well developed in terms of grammar, and they have a large number of vocabulary items. In Māori, however, the levels of both grammar and vocabulary are very limited. Grammatical patterns tend to be collapsed together. For instance, there are separate nominal and verbal negatives in Māori which often become just one. The distinction between *a* and *o* possessive constructions is almost non-existent among second language learners. Students often do not know how to use the passive voice properly, and we seldom hear gerunds used. Complex sentences are rare, while the particle *ai* to indicate a relative clause is not used by many speakers. Margaret Mutu-Grigg (now Margaret Mutu) produced an excellent PhD

thesis on manner particles and showed the complex ways in which they can be used, though we seldom find this now in second language learners' speech.

The language has therefore become somewhat simplified. In order to express complex ideas, people have to use circumlocution, which makes the language very cumbersome and imprecise. It is therefore not surprising that children do not want to speak the language outside of the classroom context. They are able to accommodate mathematics and science in Māori because they have learnt the relevant words in the classroom. However, they lack a command of idiomatic expressions. In fact, idioms seem no longer to be growing in the language, or, if idioms are used, they simply mimic the idioms of English. Such expressions do not have the same kind of credibility as expressions which develop from children themselves experimenting.

Another problem is that children are no longer allowed to experiment with the Māori language. English-speaking children experiment with English, which is how the language grows. However, if Māori children experiment with their language, they are often criticised as speaking incorrectly by native speakers. This prevents children from developing the kind of sociolinguistic competence that will enable them to communicate effectively in all the domains that are demanded of adult speakers.

Māori-speaking children often do not have access to the kind of written resource materials that are available in English, so they do not have the opportunity to hear a range of genres of Māori language. With regard to the media, the only genre that people are exposed to is basically current affairs, and that is not a genre that entices young children to listen to the language. When *Te Karere* comes on the television, my children — who are reasonably fluent in Māori — turn to another channel because they are not interested in the content. They certainly do not watch *Waka Huia* for which the target audience is people aged forty-five and over. *Marae*, which is probably of more interest to them, has the least amount of Māori language of all of these programmes.

It is very difficult for broadcasters to try to accommodate these needs because they need to think about their audience, and ratings have become extremely important. They therefore need to make sure that as many people as possible are listening to their programmes. This often means that there is a contradiction between having Māori language programming and attracting an audience. Radio stations have both a Māori language imperative and a commercial imperative, but these do not go together very well.

In terms of research, we need to start looking at the outputs that the government is purchasing to determine whether we are actually achieving the outcomes that are intended. Many people seem to be under a misapprehension that education is, in fact, achieving the expected outcomes. We also do not really know if broadcasting is going to have a huge impact on the revitalisation of the language. Is this the most effective place to spend the money in order to get the greatest outcome?

One of the problems that we have in broadcasting is that we have

only a small population to support a very expensive operation. We have just received nineteen million dollars for Māori-medium television, which should be sufficient to allow for the production of perhaps two or three hours of new programming a day. While English programming can be purchased from all round the world from a whole range of countries, Māori language programming has to be made in New Zealand. This means that the nineteen million dollars will not take us very far.

Teachers need much more research supporting them in teaching language through the curriculum. Teachers need to be both linguists and teachers of a subject, though I do not believe that many teachers have had the opportunity to learn how to do both of these things at once. Finally, from linguists, we need research on interlanguage and the characteristics of learners' language arising out of different kinds of programmes, such as total immersion, and other programmes where Māori is taken as a subject at secondary and tertiary level. One of the difficulties experienced by teachers is that they are not easily able to assess the level of their students' language. This makes it very difficult for them to teach reading, which is contingent on them having achieved a particular level of oral language.

Improving linguistic standards

Heni Jacob

Heni Jacob (Ngāti Raukawa) is a Māori Language Consultant; she was formerly Research Officer for Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, the Maori Language Commission.

The Māori language today is a mere shadow of its former self, and for those of us who care about the language that is quite devastating. I am particularly concerned about the narrowing in the range of structures and the range of vocabulary that we now encounter. We find ourselves facing something of a Catch-22 situation. While native speakers may know a wide range of structures and vocabulary, they are loathe to use them because there is a good chance that they will not be understood by non-native speakers, which means that second language learners are no longer exposed to such a wide range of structures and vocabulary.

Native speakers are, these days frequently in a minority in any situation where Māori is being spoken, and very often there may be a single native speaker in a group. In such situations, they often have to struggle to make themselves understood, and they also have to struggle to understand the people that they are speaking Māori with.

Of course, the situation is also difficult for non-native speakers, and I can vouch for this as a second language learner myself. We all encounter many knocks along the way to being an even halfway decent speaker of Māori, and it is very difficult to get beyond a particular level of competence

because of the lack of exemplars. We need opportunities to excel and to acquire the expressive subtleties that make a difference between being an average speaker and being a really good speaker of the language.

It is not difficult to understand why native and non-native speakers alike struggle to express themselves in Māori in the modern world of technology as many of the words that we need have yet to be coined, while other words may have recently been coined but are not yet widely known. Fortunately, there are groups coining new words, though the question of acceptance often needs to be resolved. The current situation requires native speakers — even if they may be the sole native speaker in a given situation — to realise that there is nothing wrong per se with new words and that they need to learn to accept these. They also need to be confident about saying something when they know a word or a construction to be correct, in order to provide a good role model to non-native speakers.

Another issue that concerns me is the loss of once rich lexical resources in some areas. To talk about wind, for example, there were once more than fifty different words available, depending on the direction of the wind, or whether it is the first gust, a squall, or a gentle sea breeze. Linguists often refer to the wealth of vocabulary among the Eskimo to refer to snow; the Māori people also had dozens of words available for things that were important to them. There are beautiful phrases in Māori that can be found in *Nga Mōteatea* for the expression of human emotions such as grief or love. Some of these are set phrases, while others involve wonderfully creative expressions. However, these days there tend to be two or three fairly pedestrian phrases which dominate in Māori usage. Matters of the heart are obviously just as important as they ever were, but we have become so restricted in the kind of vocabulary that we use to express these feelings.

The sheer ubiquitousness of English has been a major factor in the decline of expressiveness in Māori. The fact that English is spoken everywhere makes it very hard for it not to encroach into the language of Māori speakers. English is present as soon as we turn on the television, and when we go outside the door we encounter English nearly all of the time. We can hear Māori spoken at Kura Kaupapa Māori and at Kōhanga Reo, and possibly on marae, but even in these situations it is rare to hear Māori being used to any great extent.

The situation today is one where the Māori language is awash with English influences, to the point where the essence of the language is being leached out of it. While nobody can be specifically blamed for this, we do need to try to keep the negative influences of English sentence structures, vocabulary, intonation, and even pronunciation at bay. We now hear a lot of words pronounced with a strongly aspirated *t* in Māori, which was not an original feature of the language. We also find second language Māori-speakers producing sentences with an intonation that is totally incongruous in Māori, and sometimes even with English word order.

Another major concern is the loss of idiomatic expressions, or their replacement by constructions that directly reflect English expressions. For

example, in order to say 'it's your turn' (as in a children's game), the expression that is often used these days is *tō huri*. *Huri* actually means 'turn around', so the literal meaning here is nonsense in Māori. There is an idiomatic expression which expresses this meaning, but very often expressions like this are no longer known. Sometimes native speakers even come to believe that such traditional expressions are incorrect. Some people are now involved in the production of resources to ensure the survival of idiomatic expressions such as these, as it is an important aspect of the survival of the language.

Another great loss is that people no longer know how to string modifiers together to express subtleties of meaning. While people may be aware that grammar books say that *kē*, for example, has five meanings, *tonu* has perhaps four meanings and *hoki* has maybe six meanings, they are no longer aware that it is possible to express perhaps an additional thirty meanings by combining different modifiers. Some people have argued that Māori is a language that does not allow for subtlety of expression, but this is patently incorrect. The language *can* express great subtlety, though in order to do this, people need to know how to combine modifiers correctly.

While I realise that I have criticised second language learners, obviously none of us has asked to be in the situation that we find ourselves in. I realise that everybody involved in Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori is trying their hardest to improve themselves at the same time that they are trying to produce relevant classroom resources. These people are faced with something of an impossible situation because the relevant resources are not available. People have sometimes had to obtain English books, produce translations into Māori, and stick these over the English words. These translations are often not particularly good because people have not had the time or the resources to do the job well. Simply gluing Māori translation over English words is not acceptable at all. While the Ministry of Education is injecting money in an attempt to improve this situation, improvements are not taking place quickly enough.

Linguists can help with these kinds of problems in a number of ways. We need linguists to initiate, contribute to and encourage research into aspects of the Māori language that are deemed to be most important by Māori people, or those involved in the Māori language revival movement. This could include topics such as accelerated learning in particular, and language acquisition in general. Strategies for minimising interference from English could also be investigated. I think that there is also a role for linguists in collaboration with Māori in the production of resources.

There is one challenge that I would like to offer. I have noticed over the years that some papers produced by academic linguists have tended to examine very specific subjects, such as the use of particles such as *he* or *ai*. These papers are often written using highly technical linguistic terminology which neither I, nor many other people involved in the Māori language, can understand. While that is acceptable among linguists, this does give the impression that linguists have taken something from the language, simply

describing something "because it is there", as part of their duty to analyse languages of the world.

A linguist cannot be expected to have the same kind of feelings towards the Māori language as are held by Māori themselves. However, linguists should be encouraged to consider giving something back to the Māori language, perhaps in the form of some form of collaboration with Māori speakers who know no linguistics, by producing simpler versions of some of these features of the language that they have described in forms that are accessible to Māori people.

Priorities for action

Hine-i-haea Murphy

Hine-i-haea Murphy (Ngāti Kahungunu and Ngāti Apa) is a Māori Language Consultant. She was manager of the 1995 National Māori Language Survey which was conducted by the Māori Language Commission and Te Puni Kōkiri. She was also the principle writer of the Maori language curriculum statement.

My feeling about the current status of Māori language is that in terms of language health it is not faring very well. What concerns me most is the fact that the Māori language continues to remain weak despite the absolute urgency for remedies. From time to time, despite occasional positive feelings, probably most of us who work in the field of Māori language become quite frustrated and overcome by a sense of despondency. My despondency of late has been based on a realisation that for New Zealand society at large — including the Māori population — the Māori language issue does not have a very high priority.

While for some of us, the Māori language has effectively become our lives, I have had to learn to accept that language is not a priority for other people in this country. New Zealand society as a whole rarely debates language issues, other than through letters to the editor of the newspapers. Most of those debates tend to be negative and uninformed, and are often stimulated by events which look like altering the status quo, or which give the appearance of favouring Māori over English.

While as Māori we claim that the language is a vital part of our cultural well-being, clearly for most of us, Māori language does not have the same value as other things that we hold dear, such as land and fisheries. Accordingly, we do not fight for Māori language in the same way that we struggle for land. Moreover, we have been happy, to some extent, to relinquish the primary responsibility for maintaining or reclaiming our language to the government, which we have definitely not been prepared to do for our other taonga. My feeling is that, until we Māori, both individually and collectively, reclaim responsibility for the maintenance and growth of the

Māori language, then all of the language policies that the government can dream up will not work. This is not in any way to condone the Crown abrogating its responsibility to ensure the survival of the Māori language. Rather, it should be taken as an encouragement to the Crown to redirect its energies and resources into the promotion and support of Māori language through Māori-inspired and Māori-owned language initiatives.

For the Māori population at large, there seems to be a belief that Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori are the answer to the rapidly declining number of Māori speakers. People have therefore tended to support the government's focus on the education system as the main vehicle for supporting the revitalisation of the Māori language. My belief is that these are only a part of the answer, that there is a much bigger picture that we need to focus on. In fact, I would go so far as to say that our strong focus on education to date has in itself led to some dangers. We now see Māori being spoken as a school language, but it is still not a viable language in society at large. While our children are speaking Māori in the classroom, their language outside of the classroom remains largely English. What else can we expect if Māori — and society at large — do not accord Māori language the value that it deserves?

While large numbers of parents are sending their children to Kōhanga Reo and to Kura Kaupapa Māori, I am not sure that their motivation in doing this is an absolute belief in the value of the Māori language. For some parents, there are non-linguistic reasons why they enrol their children in Māori-medium schools. This was made clear to me recently when I read an advertisement for a Kōhanga Reo tutor, which listed a number of requirements for the position — a driver's licence, availability to work a certain number of hours per week — while at the end was the statement "Māori language desirable, but not essential"!

Another concern that I have relates to the standard of Māori being spoken in the classroom, as well as the expectations that we have of how well learners should speak Māori. For many years now, we, as teachers, parents and Māori, have simply been glad that our children are speaking Māori, no matter what kind of Māori that was. However, the standard of their language has been for the most part, in my opinion, not very good. How, then, can we establish the expectation that our children will speak good Māori? There is no simple answer to this question, yet I believe that it is absolutely critical that we find an answer, in order that our children be able to reach educational excellence through Māori-medium education, and also in order for our children to become as articulate in Māori in adulthood as they are in English. However, this will not happen unless Māori is also used outside of the classroom.

Until Māori is spoken as a means of everyday communication in our community, the likelihood of the quality of the language that is spoken improving to any great extent — or that children will speak the language after they leave school — is minimal. They will continue to be the same sort of speakers as people like myself and others for whom English will always

be the language of preference when we want to just have a chat with our friends, gossip, or talk about things that require strenuous thought such as the state of the country's economy. If this does not change and our children are unable to speak about these things in Māori as easily as they can in English, then the dream that Māori will one day be a vibrant living language will remain just that.

I have a number of suggestions for ways in which linguists could help in this regard. Firstly, we need to increase the number of Māori involved in the field of linguistics. While there is a huge need for research in the Māori language area, non-Māori researchers are likely to be confronted with all kinds of barriers. People who have tried to do research in Māori communities will know what I am talking about, particularly if you are non-Māori. We therefore we need to find ways to encourage Māori to become language researchers as we suffer from a lack of skilled Māori professional linguists. There must be ways that Māori students can be encouraged to do language-related research at masters and doctoral level. This could involve closer liaison between Māori and Linguistics and Education departments at universities, along with the provision of scholarships.

Secondly, we need to prioritise linguistic research to focus on topics that benefit Māori and the Māori-speaking community, rather than just reflecting the particular interest of the non-Māori researcher. I realise that this might appear to threaten the traditional academic freedom to pursue research topics out of current interest, but research on the syntactic behaviour of a particular grammatical particle in Māori is really of limited value to the overall revival of Māori language at the moment. Of greater benefit would be studies on topics such as the characteristics of child language among Māori language learners, or the extent to which current approaches to Māori language revival are effective. There could be research to determine whether current approaches to spread limited resources are working, or whether resource allocation should be more streamlined. Should we aim to create what some would call an elite group of high standard Māori language speakers? Before embarking on Māori language research, linguists should ask themselves how that research is going to increase either the quality or the quantity of Māori language speakers. If those questions are difficult to answer, then I would suggest that perhaps that research should not be a priority at this time.

Thirdly, linguists can be involved in the promotion of language issues in society in general, by stimulating debate and raising language issues for the wider society to consider and respond to. New Zealand society at large needs to be educated about the power of language and its intrinsic value to society. I believe that there is an important role for linguists in raising these kinds of issues.