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Talking Bro:
Māori English in the University Setting

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1. Introduction

Māori English[1] is the term linguists use to refer to a variety of New Zealand English (NZE) spoken by many Māori and some non-Māori in Aotearoa. Most speakers of Māori English are also speakers of Pākehā English, the other main variety of NZE. The two varieties are closely related, essentially differing only in the relative frequency shared features are employed.

The close relationship between Māori English and Pākehā English has meant that the very existence of Māori English has been debated until relatively recently.[2] Subsequent research on the variety has focussed on attitudes towards speakers of Māori English (Robertson, 1994, 1996) and investigating and quantifying characteristic features of the variety. Many of these studies have been based on material from the Wellington Corpus of Spoken NZE. Holmes (1997), Holmes and Ainsworth (1996), Warren and Britain (2000) and Bell (2000) have investigated phonological and prosodic features such as initial T non-aspiration, final Z devoicing and the use of syllable timing. Bell also studied features such as the discourse particles EH and Y'KNOW and the high rising terminal intonation which has also been studied by Britain (1992). The higher use of Māori words by Māori speakers of English has also been quantified by Graeme Kennedy (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2000). Other morphosyntactic and discourse characteristics have been analysed by Bell (2000) and Stubbe & Holmes (2000) respectively. We now know that Māori English, like other vernaculars worldwide, is characterised not by one or two salient markers but a large range of phonological, syntactic, discourse and lexical features also found to some extent in NZE. This research gives us a much clearer idea of the main features of the Māori English.

The present study has been designed to complement this quantitative

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[1] Some Māori have indicated to me that they find the term Māori English problematical, prefering to speak of Māori accented English, or, in the words of some of the participants in this study, 'bro talk.' There is no term used in everyday speech to refer to what linguists call Māori English or what Bell refers to as Māori Vernacular English (MVE) (2000: 222-3).

[2] See Bell, 2000:221-2 for a summary of the history of this debate.

research with an insider perspective on the use and functions of Māori English. The participants were Māori students at the University of Canterbury. At this campus Māori students are very much in the minority, constituting only 5% of the student body. Māori university students have been chosen, not only because of their accessibility, but also because they are a sociologically interesting group to study as part of a developing Māori middle class. Many of these students also have links to the wider Māori community, particularly to lower socio-economic groups, which use Māori English almost exclusively. Māori university students are also participants in the largely monocultural higher education system, which encourages the use of Pākehā English. The range of environments that these Māori students find themselves in shapes their use of Māori English and Pākehā English styles and their awareness of the functions of the varieties.

2. Method

In September 1996 I invited six Māori students to participate in a focus group discussion about Māori English. The four female and two male participants ranged in age from 19 to 29 years. The students knew each other and were representative of the Māori student body in the Māori Department at the time.

At the beginning of the interview the participants were shown a short video which featured people speaking in a Māori English style. Questions focussed firstly on whether the participants were aware of Māori English and whether they used it themselves. Discussion then turned to their experience and perceptions of who speaks Māori English, when they speak it, and where. The participants were also invited to reflect on the functions of the variety.

My presence as an older Pākehā did not appear to constrain the discussion, which at one point dwelt on inappropriate use of Māori English by Pākehā in authority roles. Participants did not seem inhibited in expressing their own opinions, even when they differed from those of the majority, an indication of the general supportive atmosphere within the interview.

The one and a half hour session was recorded and transcribed. Selections from the transcription were distributed and discussed with participants who were given the opportunity to make further comments and elaborate on various points. The quotations presented in this study reflect the content of the interview as a whole and the range of views of the participants. With permission, comments made by students in other contexts have also been used.

The transcript conventions used throughout are those used by Du Bois et al (1993). The spoken discourse is divided into intonation units which are written one to a line.[3] An intonation unit is a 'stretch of speech

[3] Intonation units which are longer than one line are indented on the following line.

uttered under a single coherent intonation contour' and marked by cues 'such as a pause and a shift upward in overall pitch level at its beginning, and a lengthening of its final syllable' (Du Bois et al 1993:47).

A series of full stops indicates significant pauses and rounded brackets enclose added information which clarifies the speaker's meaning. Italicised words add relevant contextual information, such as the use of laughter or body language and underlining indicates emphasis by the speaker. Square brackets are used to indicate speech segments spoken simultaneously by two speakers. A double hyphen (--) indicates that the speaker breaks off the intonation unit before completing its projected contour.

In a few instances short portions of dialogue have been omitted from the text, and the use of a line wholly consisting of full stops has been employed to indicate the omission. In all cases, care has been taken to ensure that deleted material does not alter the context of the quote.

Results from the focus group discussion have been grouped into three sections. The first section details expectations of who should and who should not speak Māori English. The second section discusses the functions of the variety including concepts such as whanaungatanga (creating family), awhi (group support) and manaaki tāngata (hospitality) as well as cultural identity. The final section discusses aspects concerning where and how the variety is employed by the participants, including the importance of greeting ritual and body language as well as stigma the variety receives from outsiders.

3. Defining the group

One of the most important roles of any language variety is to define a group, that is, those who are part of the group and those who are not. The parameters of group membership are set by those within the group, and focus group participants indicated that the use of Māori English is expected of some people and not of others. Pix[4] told us about one of her friends who works in broadcasting:

Pix: and she's always had quite a--,
you know, people tell her it's a Pākehā sounding voice,
because she speaks well.
So people automatically assume that it's Pākehā.
... And um, yeah,
she just used to get hassled all the time by callers and stuff,
they'd ring in and say, 'oh, you don't sound like a Māori to me,'
you know there's this real idea that --,
of how a Māori sounds.
And she's always been hassled about it ever since she was at school,

[4] Pseudonyms have been used throughout.

> and going through university and stuff.
> But she's just really strong about it,
> ...
> and she says, 'well, I don't have to talk ... like that to be a Māori.'

This anecdote demonstrates that there is an assumption that certain people are not only able to speak Māori English, but that they should choose to speak it according to certain rules of place, interlocutor and topic. These expectations are similar to those in American Indian English where, particularly in Native American settings, use of the variety signals solidarity with the group, in contrast to solidarity with wider Eurocentric society and the government in particular (Leap 1993:193 & 197). Rickford (1999: 106-7) also describes similar expectations within African American Vernacular English (AAVE) speech communities in North America with regard to how Blacks should talk.

Nevertheless, as Pix's friend maintains, some Māori don't feel that Māori English is necessary for participation in the group ethos and they consciously resist group expectations. Pix added that Māori English was part of a Māori perceived stereotype.

> Pix: I think it's just another one of those --,
> ... you know .. there's all these ideas (that we Māori have) about what a real Māori is,
>
> *everyone laughs*
>
> and that's one of them.

There is recognition that there is a norm, and that Māori, or those who wish to be seen as Māori, are expected to hold certain group ideas and that Māori English signals participation in the group and adherence to the group ethos. There are again similarities with American Indian English and the assumption from the Indian community that a 'real' Indian is expected to work from an Indian frame of reference (kaupapa) rather than an Anglo (Pākehā) one (Leap 1993:3).

That this form of Māori English seems to be associated with the younger generation[5] is confirmed by one participant in this study, who, in response to a question as to who speaks Māori English, replied:

> Mārama: Everybody in that environment at home[6] (uses Māori English).
> Oh, apart from the elders,

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[5] The existence of a more prestigious form of Māori English, spoken by older native speakers of Māori was suggested by Richards (1970) but subsequent work has yet to explore possible varieties within Māori English.

[6] i.e. on the marae.

they don't speak like that,
but everybody from ... my aunties and uncles right down to the little kids.

This perception seems at odds with the accepted fact that many of the features of Māori English undoubtedly derive from the Māori language[7], a language whose fluent speakers are overwhelmingly those in older generations. Mārama's perceptions of a generation gap may reflect an especially vigorous youth culture.

The perceived split between older and younger Māori speakers of English contrasts with American Indian English which is handed down from the elders and is expected to be used by younger members of the community when talking to them. Accordingly, American Indian English is a 'highly valued social skill' (Leap 1993:3) and has a status which Māori English does not have.

The use of Māori English by those not considered to be part of the group is deemed inappropriate by group members. Debbie and Mārama describe how it is difficult for Pākehā who are not closely associated with Māori to use Māori English in an acceptable way.

Debbie: I reckon there's also like --,
there's sometimes there's Pākehā that --,
like, they know that link between Māori,
and sometimes they like try and get into that link too,
like they'll speak, you know, the Māori accented English as well,
so that they can relate with you.
'Cos I've had a teacher do that to me,
say, um, 'oh, where's your clothes, girl?'
or things like that,
but it blew me away 'cos I thought 'what?'

Mārama: and you look at them funny,
...

Interviewer: How do you feel when they (Pākehā) start sort of speaking like that?

Mārama: You're trying too hard,

everyone laughs

... it's OK you don't have to speak to me like that.
...

[7] for example, features such as final Z devoicing, and initial T non-aspiration reflect features of Māori language – for a discussion of the relationship of Māori English to Māori language see Bell, 2000:223-4.

Mārama: A lot of Māori will look at you and think 'what are you trying to do?,'
... and a lot of the time they don't ... accept it.
They actually reject that person.

In this case, the use of Māori English by a Pākehā, especially one in an authority role, is not accepted as appropriate. This confirms that Māori English does not function in linguistic terms as a status variety, associated with higher education and power (King, in progress), but as a variety based firmly on notions of group solidarity. Mārama added that Māori English puts participants 'all on one level' implying that, in contrast, Pākehā English is a status variety with hierarchical functions.

There were strong feelings amongst the women in the focus group that Māori English, or 'bro speak', was heavily associated with male Māori.

Mārama: and it's like this real staunch,
you know, and it's not--,
and it is Māori accented language,
um, English,
and it is,
it's male,
not that we (females) don't do it,
but, you know.
...

Pix: you know there is this real bros' (male) thing.

The women were particularly referring to Māori male greeting ritual and other ritualised behaviours which are discussed in Section 5.2. Interestingly, the male participants were less certain of any significant male use of Māori English.

4. Functions of Māori English

The focus group participants identified a number of functions of Māori English, ranging from the signalling of cultural identity to a number of traditional elements such as whanaungatanga (creating family), awhi (group support) and manaaki tāngata (hospitality).

4.1 Cultural identity

Since not all Māori can speak the Māori language but virtually all Māori can speak English, it is natural that a variety of New Zealand English should evolve which could convey aspects of Māori identity.

Mārama: 'Cos you don't know whether they're (other Māori are) going to understand what you're saying (if you speak Māori),
whereas if you go into 'bro' and 'cuz' or things like that,
then you pick up straight away whether they [identify as Māori].

Lynette: [Comfortable with being] Māori or whatever.

Mārama: Yeah.

The importance of Māori English in indicating participation in Māori culture is expressed by Rangi:

Rangi: And I think that that's one way that you can acknowledge to the other person,
and show them,
look 'I'm a Māori and I'm into being Māori and not afraid of it,'
by using Māori accented English.

Just what it means to be 'into being Māori' and the culture represented by the use of Māori English can only be sketched briefly here and requires further investigation.

Being part of a group who speak Māori English gives feelings of belonging. Mārama describes the primary function of Māori English amongst the group as:

Mārama: Maybe (it's) security,
... like, when you're in a group of friends and you all speak the same,
it's that secure feeling.
You know you belong ... to them.

One of the uses of Māori English amongst students is to facilitate meaningful and ready contact with Māori in the wider community. The importance of this ease of communication with other Māori was mentioned Rangi.

Rangi: It's (Māori English is) used as a point of identification,
you know, like you can immediately --,
irrespective of what their facial features are, or what they, you know, look like,
if they start using ... bro speak then you can recognise them as another bro.

Thus, opportunity to belong to the group culture is extended to anyone who identifies as Māori and indicates this linguistically by choosing to speak Māori English. Māori English also facilitates contact with other Māori who may not be known to the speaker. Aspects of belonging to the group, or family, are discussed in the following sub-section.

4.2 Whanaungatanga

Rangi: I think it's (Māori English is) a tool of whakawhanaungatanga.

The word whakawhanaungatanga is derived from the base word whānau, meaning extended family. Russell Bishop (1996:210) defines

whakawhanaungatanga as 'the ... process of finding links, ... using the Māori metaphor of creating familiness, support and shared concern.' Rangi sees Māori English as having a central role in the process of creating relationships in a Māori context.

The concept of whānau/family has evolved considerably in recent times in Māori society and 'new kinds of whānau have emerged, modelled on the traditional whānau and its values' (Metge 1995:17). In recent years, Metge argues, 'there have been signs of increasing participation in whānau, as part of a renewed emphasis on Māori cultural identity' (1995:17). While traditional whānau are based on kinship ties, the new type of families being created by Māori are more loosely arranged. Some participants of these whānau may be related to each other, but most are not. Examples of this type of whānau are those associated with individual Kōhanga Reo which actually use the word whānau to describe themselves (King, in press).

The more loose-knit groups of Māori students at university are also examples of a type of whānau, but they are not as structured or formalised as to use this word in describing themselves.

Around the world, vernaculars perform important functions with regard to solidarity and creating groups. Warren and Britain (2000: 166-7) note that a number discourse features of Māori English such as high levels of HRT indicate the importance that its speakers place on interspeaker conversational solidarity. Speakers of Māori English share this conversational goal with speakers in other Pacific and non-Western cultures. The focus group participants made many comments as to the function of Māori English in creating familial type ties.

Mārama: I think that's the word I'm looking for,
they (Māori) relate to that language.

It is interesting that Mārama talks about how people 'relate' to Māori English. This English word shares derivations with words such as 'relation' and 'relationship.' In the following quote, Pix describes the comfort and pleasure of using Māori English by using 'whanaungatanga', the Māori word for relationship.

Pix: But just like there's a real whanaungatanga about it (using Māori English).
It's just really nice,
you know,
to walk round and just go 'kia ora, sis.'

It seems no coincidence that Mārama and Pix have used English and Māori words for 'relationship' to demonstrate that Māori English has a role in helping to create a sense of family amongst groups of Māori students.

A particular feature of Māori English is the use of familial words such as bro (brother), cuz (cousin, of either sex), sis (sister) and bub (younger female) as terms of address. These words reinforce the importance of Māori English in creating family. Interestingly, these words are used to address or

refer[8] to those of the same or younger generation; there are no similar words used with reference to older Māori. This tends to support the view that this variety has become particularly associated with the younger demographic.

4.3 Awhi/support

The university can be an alienating place for virtually everyone who attends it. Like all large institutions, universities 'operate as cultural domains' (Anderson & Gale 1992:6) with their own sets of values. Being comfortable in the university means creating your own space, physically and culturally.

In the Canterbury university context Māori students are a minority. This means that, in contrast to Pākehā students, it is harder for Māori to feel comfortable.

Mārama: In Christchurch it's predominantly Pākehā anyway,
so that the groups that they (Pākehā) basically belong to are predominantly Pākehā,
so they don't feel --,
I suppose they still feel a bit whakamā (out of place),
but they still can relate to people,
whereas we walk in, it's like 'oh, look at that darkie.'
You feel everyone's eyes on you straight away,
you know, I dunno, I wouldn't call it racism or anything,
but it's just that you're a minority.

In another situation, one student, Tama, described the position of being in a minority as 'meaning trying to retain your cultural heritage,' thus indicating that active measures, such as claiming physical and linguistic spaces, are required.

Some participants recounted instances where the use of Māori English had helped them feel comfortable in otherwise overwhelmingly Pākehā situations.

Pix: But it's just that, you know,
like say you're in a room full of Pākehā and there's only two Māori in there,
then, and you're --,
one's on one side and you're on the other,
then, you just know, that that's probably the only person in the room that you're most gonna,
you know, immediately and easily,

Lynette: Have a chat to.

This aspect ties back in with feelings of safety, security and finding comfort

[8] Bro and cuz can be used both nominally and as terms of address, while sis and bub can only be used as terms of address.

that being part of the group and using Māori English evokes. Here, within the defined space of a room, two people are able to define their own space.

One of the functions of the culture of the Māori students on campus is to provide a support system. This is a very real and tangible benefit of the group.

Márama: Oh, it's (Māori English is) a support system,
... it's really --.
It's essential I think, because we are,
we are the minority.
It's essential to have this ... Māori feeling somewhere,
you know, somewhere you can go and you can find it,
otherwise we'd all keel over.

Peter: Yeah, and it helps us, I think, all get through 'varsity.
You know, 'cos we all awhi (help) each other,
everyone's helping each other and,
yeah... in fact a lot of us wouldn't be here otherwise,
... and I think that's where we differ from the Europeans,
'cos they're very individual,

Márama: [competing against each other],

Peter: [and do it by themselves],
the Māori students will all do it together and,

Márama: Yeah, rather than having [one competing],

Peter: [sharing knowledge],

Márama: and going through at the top,
we all make sure that we all get through.
Rather than having someone way ahead getting top marks,
we'd rather have that the whole group gets through.
... We're not that competitiveness, where 'I want to beat those marks,'
(it's) like 'hey I'm going to get through and I'm going to get my mate through too.'

Debbie: Yeah,
yeah, that's true.

In emphasising the importance of an environment where Māori students can work cooperatively and help each other, Márama and Peter's conversation is itself an example of cooperation, with their overlapping speech both reinforcing the other's views. The importance of group obligations is also emphasised by the speakers. Individuals are responsible not only for their own education in the university environment, but also take some responsibility for their friends' participation as well.

Márama's comment about it being essential to have somewhere you

can go and find 'the Māori feeling' stresses the importance of spaces where Māori students can practice their whanaungatanga. They recognise their culture as being different from the cultures of other students and they need particular spaces from which to base their expression of the whānau/group.

4.4 Manaaki tāngata

Māori English can also be used to make connections and welcome other Māori students into the group. In her desk job in the university library Lynette described how she enjoyed chatting to Māori and Samoan students whom she did not know.[9]

Lynette: It's good to --,
yeah, just say, like --,
tell them about our kapa haka group,
and if they're interested, to come,
or invite them up to Bentley's[10] for a beer,
or something like that.
Being friendly.

Māori English can also make other everyday situations like playing sport, more comfortable. Debbie had been playing in a rugby team in which every one was Pākehā, except for one Māori player who had really made her feel welcome and comfortable.

Debbie: The only one I can relate to she was half-caste Māori,
and she'd call me --,
and made me feel much better because she'd say to me,
'oh, hey bub, hey girl'.
And um she's a year older than me,
but I related to what she was calling to me.
...
'Cos all the rest of them--,
I still don't know half of them.

Debbie's experience of being welcomed and Lynette's experience of welcoming students in the library reflects the Māori concept of manaaki tāngata (hospitality) where newcomers are made welcome and are brought into the group.

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[9] Implications of Lynette's welcoming of other Pacific Island students are discussed in the final section. The social expectation for Māori to acknowledge other Māori is discussed more fully in section 5.2.

[10] A bar in the Students' Association building.

5 Aspects of use

This section deals with locations where the Māori university students use Māori English and some aspects of their use of the variety, such as greeting ritual (mihi) and body language, both of which were regarded by the focus group participants as integral and important elements of Māori English.

5.1 Where Māori English is spoken

Māori English helps Māori students define places where they can express Māori student culture.

Pix: I think one thing about --,
like say being in a --,
in a university like this,
and, you know,
I think it (Māori English) can be a really sort of strong point,
a really strengthening thing,
you know, like,
I think that some of us --,
or when I was in Tāmaki (Auckland University campus) we just sort of went out of our way to Māorify our environment.
And if that meant, you know, like really,
yeah, just taking over the space --,
whether you did it through the way you spoke,
whether you spoke Māori -- (or Māori English).

Pix indicates that the use of Māori English is contextualised and defines particular physical spaces on campus. This implies that some places are more appropriate for the use of Māori English while other spaces are not. Mārama commented on the use of Māori English at Canterbury University:

Mārama: I think within this Department[11] it's fine,
... obviously in the Māori Department and in rooms like Te Putairiki[12] and the room up in the Education (Department),
it's fine.
But as soon as you step out of that boundary,
... you just switch off, switch out of that language,
unless you see a Māori person.

As Mārama indicates, Māori English is not only associated with certain places, but with certain people. But when using Māori English with those people outside of the places indicated, Mārama finds she needs to be vigilant.

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[11] The Māori Department.
[12] A room in the Law building for the use of the Māori Law Students group, opened in 1994.

Mārama: Probably because you're in tertiary education and it's not looked on as 'the' thing to do.
OK, it's OK to do it amongst your groups,
but as soon as somebody comes into that group,
... or there's a lecturer around, or something,
you stop (speaking Māori English).
... I find myself very conscious of it.
And you think,
... better not speak like that,
... 'cos it's looked down,
it is looked down upon.

Here Mārama perceives a stigma against using Māori English in some spaces and contexts. Māori English is part of the group and is best kept safe within that group. It has functions there which do not or cannot exist in the other contexts that Māori students find themselves in the university. Being conscious of using Māori English means being conscious of one's identity, and when a lecturer is around, Mārama wants to be seen as a student, not particularly as a Māori student. She does not want to stand out, she wants to blend in.

Mārama: That language is kind of underground,
and everybody speaks it,
whereas if you use that language in a group of Pākehā students or people who weren't Māori,
they look down on you.

Debbie: [Yeah].

Mārama: [You know], like, 'can't you speak, can't you speak properly?'

This quote reminds us that standard Pākehā English is the model of prestige in the university setting and Māori students know that Māori English has no status within mainstream university culture. Mārama added, 'I wouldn't speak it (Māori English) in the classroom.' Māori English has solidarity functions within the culture of the Māori student and has very real purposes there. Māori English has no functions for a student interacting with a (Pākehā) lecturer. Māori English is used by the students to recognise other Māori and to quickly establish and maintain relationships with them. The appropriate variety which students need to use in class and with other non-Māori students is standard Pākehā English.

This demonstrates the point that for many of the mainly middle-class Māori students attending university, Māori English is just one point of a continuum that is at their linguistic disposal. This is exemplified by Mārama who, in another investigation, (see King, in progress) was able to speak in alternately a Pākehā English style and a Māori English style, demonstrating the linguistic range she has available to her. For many other speakers of

Māori English in the wider community Māori English is the only variety of New Zealand English available to them.

5.2 Greeting ritual & body language

In order for Māori English to perform as a variety that can be used to establish quick contact between people there is understandably great importance on greeting ritual. This greeting ritual ties in with traditional Māori emphasis on rituals of encounter.

Mārama: You find Māori people actually acknowledge each other when they walk past.
... I don't find that very often that someone doesn't make eye contact,

Lynette: Yes.

Mārama: somehow, say, ... 'hello,'
whether they do that eyebrow thing,

Peter: Eyebrow thing!

everyone laughs

Mārama: That's the body language of this language,
you know, of Māori English language,
it's the body language, kind of.

Interviewer: So there's a body language as well?
It's not just the speech thing?

Mārama: It's the hand signal, *uses hands*

everyone laughs

... or the eyebrows going crazy,

Interviewer: A total thing.

Mārama: Yeah,
that's the other part of it,
it's not just the 'kia ora.'

Lynette: You don't actually have to speak to--,

Mārama: But you always acknowledge ... a Māori person.

One of the rules of encounter is that Māori will always greet one another – 'you don't ignore them,' as Mārama commented. In greeting ritual it is essential within a short time frame to be able to use as many cues as possible to indicate participation in the group. Therefore, a combination of lexical and phonological cues as well as body language is used to facilitate the initial contact between individuals.

The emphasis by the focus group participants on the importance of

body language reinforces other work which shows that non-verbal signals have a greater importance for Māori speakers than Pākehā (Stubbe 1998, Metge and Kinloch 1984).

5.3 Stigma

The Māori university students interviewed had encountered stigma for both speaking in Māori English and for not. Mārama describes how her Pākehā mother would admonish her way of speaking after she had spent holidays amongst strong speakers of Māori English.

Mārama: Mum'd be 'don't you speak like that,
speak properly,
you've just come back from that place (a rural marae),
you're not there any more,
you speak properly.'

One member of the group said that he personally did not use Māori English and he had very clear reasons for doing so.

Peter: I try not to talk like that.

others laugh

... Yeah, I don't like that type of speech.

Interviewer: Really?

Peter: ... Yeah, it makes me cringe when I hear people talking like that.
... I hate that stereotype (that Pākehā have) that we all, Māori, speak like that.

Peter later added that in social situations it was important for him to make contact with other Māori.

Peter: I'll do that sort of thing (interact)
but without the bro talk.
... Just that we're Māori.
I won't use that language to do that (interact with other Māori).

The use of Māori English by university students also facilitates links with Māori in the wider community even though many other Māori are much stronger speakers of Māori English.

Lynette: Even though you try to switch into the Māori accented stuff,
it's still not as strong as them.
And they can still look at you to say,
'oh yeah, you're at university, what are they teaching you down there?'

Mārama indicated that when staying in a rural area it wasn't long before she was speaking just like her Māori relatives:

Mārama: You'd get a hard time (at first).
...
But it doesn't take long,
two days, and you were back into their language (Māori English).

The use of Māori English is necessary to maintain credence with the wider Māori community and counter notions that Māori university students are essentially Pākehā, and not active participants in Māori culture.

Māori English has also been influenced by AAVE, especially through black youth culture, a fact which has drawn condemnation from older Māori (for example, see Duff 1994). Younger Māori see similarities between the two cultures but reject the notion that both varieties of English are the same.

Mārama: I've got a friend in one of my touch teams,
and he, um, he knows I talk like that, he's heard me,
and he tried to do it to me,
but he'd gone from Māori accented English into American.
...
And I said to him, 'hey I'm not a Negro, I'm Māori.'

Younger Māori strongly claim that their language reflects their own experience as indigenous people in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

6. Discussion

Lisa: I didn't identify as Māori until I got into an environment where it was acceptable to be Māori.

Lisa is a Māori student who found a space at university which encouraged her identity as a Māori. For some, coming to university is a first exploration of being Māori, for others it is a continuation. The use of Māori English by Māori students in a university setting can provide a culturally safe base, a t?rangawaewae.

Rangi described Māori English as a 'tool' of whakawhanaungatanga. A tool makes something happen. Māori English is certainly as a mechanism for enabling. Māori students are continually working to negotiate the diverse types of linguistic environments they find themselves in, from the marae to the lecture room. We have seen how Māori English helps create an environment which enables Māori students to function both within the university and the wider Māori community.

Aspects of an evolving Māori culture based on tikanga (Māori custom) are evident among the group interviewed. Firstly, there is the sense of whānau/group equating with the solidarity function of Māori English. Secondly, the whānau/group provides awhi (support) in a number of practical ways which enable effective participation in the university. In

addition, there are aspects of manaaki tāngata (hospitality) in welcoming participants into the group, with rituals of encounter being expressed in greeting protocol.

Lynette's welcoming of other Pacific Island students into the group reveals that the subculture is not as tightly bounded as these excerpts presented might otherwise imply, a reminder that features of a language variety tend to be perceived much more absolutely by speech community members. While this must temper any conclusions, the perceptions of the actual speakers, even if more apparent than real, reveal what may be an important 'truth' for the speakers, and their perceptions as such must inform linguistic enquiry.

Undoubtedly the use of Māori English has been increasing in recent years, paralleling the so-called 'Māori renaissance' which has seen an upsurge in pride in wide-ranging aspects of Māori culture. Part of this renaissance has been the Māori language revitalisation movement which, through Kōhanga Reo, Kura Kaupapa Māori and bilingual schooling, has spearheaded increasing use of the Māori language in all language domains. Although I have argued previously (King 1995) that some aspects at least of the use of Māori English indicate solidarity towards the Māori language, the true interrelationship between these two linguistic markers of 'being Māori' have yet to be studied in detail.

Because Māori English is a variety associated with solidarity rather than status functions, the importance of Māori English spoken by the younger generation has been hard to access and consequently the valuable functions that it performs is poorly recognised. Further research on many aspects of Māori English is required, but research can be problematic because of a number of practical and philosophical issues. Phonological analysis can be time-consuming because of difficulty in obtaining suitable recordings from speakers (see, for example, Gordon 1991:27). Attitude studies can be criticised as being based on a linguistic framework which may obscure, rather than illuminate, important insights as to the role of the variety.

The present study studies the purposes of Māori English by using data obtained from a group who use the variety. The study is premised on the necessity to study the insider viewpoint, complementing recent work on assessing a wide range of features of Māori English.[13]

Like AAVE, Māori English is 'more than just a set of features' (Rickford, 1999:xv). Listening to this group of Māori university students speaking about 'bro talk' gives voice to speakers of the variety and reveals how Māori English helps to create and define Māori students' identity within the confines of physical and social spaces both on and off campus. The study shows that for these Māori students, Māori English functions as an important emblematic marker of their group identity.

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[13] For example see Bell 2000 and Stubbe & Holmes 2000.

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