

# What are the perceptions of Māori bilingual-educated families towards growing up and learning the Māori language?

Richard Hill

Waikato University

[richard.hill@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:richard.hill@waikato.ac.nz)

# Today's presentation

- ▶ Background to the Māori language (te reo) in Aotearoa New Zealand
- ▶ Introducing Māori medium education and statistics on participation
- ▶ A summary of previous research findings into Māori perceptions around te reo Māori
- ▶ Findings from Hill, Rameka and Skerrett into Māori medium transitions from preschool to secondary school.
- ▶ Conclusions

# For information on Māori medium education

- ▶ Benton, R. (2015). Perfecting the partnership: revitalising the Māori language in NZ education and society 1987-2014. *Language, culture and curriculum*. 28 (2), 99-112
- ▶ Hill, R. (2017). Bilingual Education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In O. Garcia & A. Lin. *Encyclopedia of Language and Education* (Vol.5). New York: Springer.
- ▶ May, S. & Hill, R (2018). Language Revitalisation in Aotearoa New Zealand. In L. Hinton, L Huss & G. Roche. *The Routledge Handbook of Language Revitalisation* (pp.309-319). New York: Routledge.

# Background into the Māori language

▶ Māori language - the dying language until the 1980s

▶ Māori language speakers (Census results)

▶ 1996	108,712	25.0%
▶ 2001	130,482	25.2%
▶ 2006	131,613	23.7%
▶ 2013	148,395	21.3%

▶ Perceptions towards te reo being in the public eye are also steadily improving

▶ 2000 40% non-Maori happy for Maori to be spoken in public places

▶ 2008 80% non-Maori happy for Maori to be spoken in public places

(Te Puni Kokiri, 2006/2012)

# Māori medium education

- ▶ 1982 - the first Kōhanga reo (early childhood Māori language nests) opened
- ▶ Significant growth through to the mid 1990s where 46% of Māori preschoolers were enrolled in kōhanga reo
- ▶ Establishment and expansion of primary school level schools (kura kaupapa Māori and immersion), secondary schools (wharekura) and tertiary (wānanga)
- ▶ Today
  - ▶ In total 19,438 students attended Māori medium in 2017 (Statistics NZ, 2018)
  - ▶ 20% of Māori preschoolers attend kōhanga reo/immersion programmes
  - ▶ 7% of Māori students attend Māori medium at secondary school level

## Students enrolled in M.Medium in 2017 (MoE, 2018)

Year	Students in Level 1 (81-100%)	The difference	Students in Level 2 (51-80%)	The difference
Preschool	8631			
1	1585	6939 drop	393	
2	1692	107 rise	453	60 rise
3	1653	39 drop	428	25 drop
4	1526	127 drop	481	63 rise
5	1511	15 drop	491	10 rise
6	1348	163 drop	474	127 drop
7	1326	22 drop	570	4 drop
8	1085	241 drop	445	25 drop
9	742	343 drop	323	122 drop
10	642	100 drop	315	8 drop
11	491	151 drop	223	92 drop
12	357	134 drop	89	134 drop
13	280	77 drop	42	47 drop

Research	Description	Findings
McKinley (2000)	81 families of Level 1, 2 and mainstream schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KKM whānau were more committed and better able to support their children in their education.</li> <li>• Less commitment to te reo Māori from whānau in Level 2 programmes and English medium whānau.</li> <li>• Distance to school was also a factor influencing parents.</li> </ul>
Campbell and Stewart (2009)	Perceptions of 4 whānau of year 9 (wharekura) students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chose wharekura for <u>cultural and social and social health reasons</u>, the availability of Māori performing arts, small class sizes, sense of belonging.</li> <li>• Concerns over curriculum subject range, specialist teachers, and the place of English.</li> </ul>
Hill (2016a; 2016b)	Transition experiences of 6 Maori medium students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sports opportunities, wider curriculum choice and gaining a balance in education were reasons for choices to transition.</li> </ul>
Hill (2017)	Family perceptions at 12 Level 2 Māori medium schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly supportive of school culture and teacher commitment</li> <li>• Low expectations of Māori language outcomes of children. Higher expectations of children to learning te reo Māori.</li> <li>• Concerns over secondary school options for continuing to learn te reo Māori</li> </ul>

# Conclusion

- ▶ Staying in Māori medium often hinges on cultural/whānau support factors
- ▶ Factors that can lead whānau away from Māori medium include narrow options in sport and study, and concern over English language learning.
- ▶ Māori whānau in Level 2 programmes are less inclined to have expectations for high levels of bilingual attainment in their children.

# Transition pathways of tamariki between Māori medium ECE and schooling (Hill, Rameka and Skerrett, 2017)

- ▶ Ministry of Education project over 2 years (2016-2017)
- ▶ Key themes
  - ▶ Transition decisions/influences, support mechanisms, whānau/student/school needs.
- ▶ Four regions - Six education providers in each region
- ▶ Semi-structured interviews - both individual and focus group
- ▶ Researchers followed whānau through a transition, asking them to explain their perceptions and reflect on their experiences.
- ▶ Also interviewed groups of students, teachers, principals, parents/grandparents

# Participants

	<b>Whānau in transition</b>	<b>Principal</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Year 6-8 students</b>	<b>Year 11- 13 students</b>	<b>ECE parents</b>	<b>Whānau of a large metropoli tan area</b>
<b>Method of data gathering</b>	Individual or group interview	Individual interview	Focus group	Focus group	Focus group	Focus group	Focus group
<b>Total number of interviews</b>	50	24	24	8	5	4	3

## Findings - general

- ▶ Māori medium offers very good support mechanisms for Māori medium students in general and when transitioning.
- ▶ Patterns of transition in three hubs
  - ▶ **Early childhood** - 10 transitioned to Māori, 2 transitioned to Level two programmes and 1 transitioned to English.
  - ▶ **Primary school level** - 5 transitioned to Level one Māori medium 1 transitioned to Level 2 and 7 transitioned to English medium.
- ▶ Children have more influence on education decisions as they get older, particularly at the secondary school transition

# Reasons for choosing Māori medium education

- ▶ Sense of identity and belonging
- ▶ Māori medium offered an education which best provided for their needs.
- ▶ Whānaungatanga (relationships) was an important factor in choosing school options and staying committed. This included:
  - ▶ Māori medium offered a more welcoming option than English medium.
  - ▶ Whānau often chose a programme where whānau were already involved
  - ▶ An influential figure was often instrumental in helping with decisions
- ▶ The need for Māori language revitalisation.
- ▶ The maintenance of tribal customs and knowledge

# Reasons for transitioning to English medium

- ▶ Whānau in Level 2 programmes all (except one) chose an English medium option when transitioning
- ▶ It was perceived that English medium offered additional options for students, including:
  - ▶ a wider range of subject study options
  - ▶ career opportunities as a spin off to study options
  - ▶ sports opportunities
- ▶ Care for children was more important than pursuing te reo Māori. As such, a knowledge of the staff was an important factor in decisions

# Conclusions

- ▶ Support for many of the findings from previous studies (described above), particularly Campbell and Stewart, highlighting the importance of care and nurture in decision making.
- ▶ Māori medium programmes continue to offer an education that fits the culture/language needs of Māori students.
- ▶ Māori medium schools should be able to offer equivalent opportunities for students to study a wide range of topics.
- ▶ Staying in Māori medium was far easier when the institutions were housed Māori medium at all school sectors under the same roof.
- ▶ The place of English language instruction in Māori medium programmes continues to be a barrier for students.
- ▶ Level 2 programmes offer opportunities for further development.