My journey with *te reo Māori*: From primary schooling in the mid 20th century to retirement from full-time academic service in the early years of the 21st. century

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Abstract

This is not an academic article in the traditional sense. It is a personal account of my experiences, as a first language speaker of *te reo Māori*, of New Zealand's educational system from the middle of the 20th century to the early years of the 21st century, from the early days of my primary schooling, through my service as a teacher, teacher trainer and academic researcher until my retirement from full-time academic service in 2005. A great deal has been written about the ways in which attitudes and approaches to *te reo Māori* have changed over that period of time but very little has been written about how it felt to be part of these changes. Our society is based on facts and feelings. If our *mokopuna* are to understand the fabric of our society, they need to have access to feelings as well as to facts. In this paper, weft and warp, facts and feelings, are woven together. This personal account is dedicated to our *mokopuna*, to all of our *mokopuna*, whatever their origin and whatever their colour. The future of our society depends upon their understanding.

Introduction

The journey, the many paths that we, my *reo* and I, have travelled, the political and social obstacles that we have encountered along the way, are typical of those experienced by many of my generation.

I was indeed fortunate to have been raised in a strong Māori *whānau*, with a strong sense of *reo* and *tikanga*. For me, the acquisition of *te reo Māori* and *tikanga Māori* occurred naturally, in the environment of home and family. This was the case for all the *whānau* in the Māori community in which I was raised in the 1940s and 1950s. In those early years, we were not aware that the assimilationist policies of successive governments represented a threat to all of those things that were most precious to us. We could not have anticipated the ways in which social, economic and educational policies would impact on, and reshape, our lives. We did not know then that the changes that were to take place would represent a threat to our very identity. The beginning of formal schooling, however, brought with it the beginning of uncertainty. To step into the playground was to step over the threshold between certainty and fear.

The late 1940s: The beginning of my formal education

Entry into the education system in the late 1940s meant total submersion in English. For most of us, this was our first direct experience of the effects of the assimilationist policies of the time. All teaching instruction, all requests for permission to leave the room, all requests for help must be in English. We had no choice. For those of us who spoke little or no English, this was a terrifying time. Our teachers were not trained to teach English as a second language. Nor had they any real understanding of the long-term psychological and social consequences of alienating children from their home language.

It was difficult to understand at the time why we were instructed to leave *te reo Māori* at the school gate or why the curriculum content was totally divorced from our world

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of home and *whānau*. In retrospect, it is possible to understand that good, if wholly misguided intentions, often accompanied the implementation of assimilationist policies: teachers, both Māori and non-Māori, believed then that the future for Māori children lay in learning English. They believed that bilingualism represented a barrier to rapid acquisition of a second language. Māori parents, who naturally wanted the best for their children, were often swayed by these arguments. As Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1989, p. 38) observe, what was taking place was a type 'symbolic violence', a type of psychological control that presupposed the implicit consent or active complicity of the victims. In any event, Māori parents had little alternative but to comply: their children had to learn to survive in a monolingual school context. For this reason, many Māori parents began to encourage their children to speak English at home. When Sir Apirana Ngata, of Ngāti Porou, a notable Māori leader and scholar, opposed the teaching of Māori in Native schools (believing that the inclusion of Māori in the curriculum would mean that there was insufficient time for Māori children to come to terms with English), he could not have foreseen the dangers that lay ahead. When, in 1949, he wrote these words of encouragement to a young girl, he could not have known that access to the treasures of the ancestors was under threat:

> *E tipu e rea mō ngā rā o tō ao.*
> *Ko tō ringaringa ki ngā rākau a te Pakeha hei oranga mō tō tinana.*
> *Ko tō ngākau ki ngā taonga o ō tīpuna Māori hei tikitiki mō tō māhunga.*
> *Ko tō wairua ki tō Atua, nāna nei ngā mea katoa* (Walker, 2001, p. 397).[1]

Sir Apirana Ngata firmly believed then that *te reo Māori* would continue to be transmitted from one generation to the next. Our family was fortunate in this respect; others were less fortunate.

Schools as a powerful mechanism for assimilation

According to Garcia and Baker (1995, p. 33), schools have always been the most powerful mechanism for assimilating minority children into mainstream cultures. It is clear now to many Māori of my generation that our schooling was just such a powerful force. In fact, our experiences were the result of a carefully planned programme of assimilation: teaching English to Māori children was to be at the expense of their own heritage language. *Te reo Māori* was, in fact, regarded as far back as 1862, not only as the main obstacle to the educational progress of Māori children, but also the main obstacle to the social progress of a people. Thus it was that a report written by Henry Taylor, an inspector of Native Schools stated:

> The Native language itself is also an obstacle in the way of civilisation, so long as it exists there is a barrier to the free and unrestrained intercourse which ought to exist . . . it shuts out the less civilised portion of the population from the benefits . . . which intercourse with the more enlightened would confer. The schoolroom alone has power to break down this wall of partition. (Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives, E-4, 1862, 35-38).

Over a century later, a publication by the Department of Education (1971) clearly indicates that beliefs about *te reo Māori* and *tikanga Māori* had not changed in any major way. Such beliefs continued to underpin assimilationist social and educational policies. This critical quotation is cited in Benton (1981, pp. 8-9):

> In general Māori homes preserve, in varying degrees, some of the elements of the traditional social structure, which was based on communal living, and this structure is not conducive to the development of language.

The English-only educational movement continued even after it became clear that linguistic and educational research provided little or no support for it. This 'intellectual dishonesty' (May, 2001, p. 215) was compounded by the argument that providing Māori with access to English was the key determinant in effecting the social and economic betterment of marginalised minority-language speakers. The linguistic rights of Māori did not include the right of access to *te reo Māori*.

The most immediately obvious effect of assimilationist policies was the rapid urbanisation of Māori, the mass movement away from traditional rural communities. A communal life-style was replaced by the alien and isolating environment of city life. This inevitably led to the undermining of the strong extended family and community networks that had characterised Māori society. *Whānau*, *hapu*[2] and *iwi*[3] support structures, the very thread that had held Māori society together, were being lost.

From *whānau* and community to urbanisation and isolation

Our family experienced the direct impact of these social and economic policies: we moved from our community, leaving behind our *pā*[4], our *whānau*, indeed, our direct link to the land. The families who remained, or who shifted to other urban areas, often failed to remain in contact so that the sense of unity and support was increasingly lost. Although it was not clear at the time, we as a family were on the crest of a wave of assimilation. We were unable to control our own destinies – the victims of social and economic policies that would later be shown to be destructive, insensitive and racist. The patterns of our lives changed dramatically. Economic and social policies impacted directly on all aspects of our personal, social and cultural lives, including patterns of relationship and language use. As Gal, (1979, p. 3) observes, social changes affect not only social networks generally, but also relationships between individuals, and the patterns of language use in a community.

We, as a family, experienced the impact of urbanisation on the use of *te reo Māori* as the domains in which the language was used rapidly shrank. We experienced this at first hand as the need to seek employment in order to survive in this new environment drove us into a workforce where knowledge of the English language was essential. This merely reinforced our experiences in the school and the classroom. However, we were unaware at the time of the long-term implications of this: soon *te reo Māori* would no longer be the main language of communication in the homes of Māori *whānau*. As our language was being undervalued and replaced by English, we, as a people, were being further marginalised.

Language, culture and identity

History clearly shows that language is the means by which the culture of a people is disseminated. The imposition of a majority language also means the imposition of a majority culture, and the ultimate marginalisation and undervaluing of the indigenous culture (Bisong, 1995, p.123). And so it was that the language and culture of our *whānau*, the very threads that bound us together, the threads that embodied our

uniqueness as Māori, were about to be broken. At risk was not only our language, but also the cultural values that it embedded. Monolingualism and monoculturalism were on the horizon.

The failure to continue the intergenerational transmission of the home language is the most critical factor in language decline. This factor has been exhaustively researched. Thus, in discussing the decline of the Gaelic language in Scotland, Dorian (1981, p. 105) notes:

> The home is the last bastion of a subordinate language in competition with a dominant official language of wider currency . . . speakers have failed to transmit the language to their children so that no replacement generation is available when the parent generation dies away.

Research has also shown that unless the language is transmitted across generations, other revitalisation activities tend to have short-term success but long-term failure (Fishman, 1991, p. 94). Thus it was that in the 1960s and 1970s, prominent Māori leaders such as Dewes and Hau repeatedly called attention to the fact that the current system threatened the very survival of a people, urging Māori families to foster *te reo Māori* in their homes as well as in their schools (Benton, 1981, p. 54).

The fact that *te reo Māori* is now used in so few Māori homes continues to impact on the vitality of the language. Baker (2001, p. 64) reminds us that when minority language speakers become bilingual and begin to use the majority language in more and more domains, the minority language is at risk of loss. In increasingly speaking English in their homes – often of necessity – Māori families added to the pressures on the language and contributed, often unwittingly, to its decline. We, as a family, witnessed all these developments in our walk with assimilation.

The loss of a minority language may have social, emotional cognitive and educational consequences (Baker, 2001, p. 93). One such consequence is the loss of the means by which parents socialize their children. This, in turn, results in the breakdown in the transmission of values, beliefs, understandings and wisdom about how to cope with experiences (Wong Fillmore, 1991, p. 343). There is, furthermore, a negative impact on cognitive development as a result of the dialogic breakdown between parents and children and the resultant loss of the necessary cognitive scaffolding. Another consequence of the domination of the English language lies in the fact that there is not merely a substitution of one language by another, but the imposition of new 'mental structures' through English (Phillipson, 1992, p. 166). It is imperative that Māori thinking, Māori perceptions, Māori cognition be examined, interpreted and explicated through *te reo Māori,* and not through the cognitive patterns of another language. Thus, Sir Hemi Henare asserts: "*Ma te reo Māori tonu te hinengaro Māori e wero, ma te reo Pākeha te hinengaro Pākeha e wero*[5] (Te Tāhūhū o te Mātauranga, 1999).

The role that language plays in identity is a crucial one. Language and identity are inseparable. Identity, according to Couloumbe (1993, p.141) translates into who we are and who we think we are. It ultimately relates to the community to which we belong. Sir Hemi Henare reinforces the importance of *te reo Māori* for Māori identity and cultural uniqueness in his claim: *Ko te reo te kaipupuri o te Māoritanga o te Māori. Ko tātou te iwi Māori, mehemea ka ngaro te reo, ka ngaro te Māoritanga*[6] (Te

Tāhūhū o te Mātauranga, 1999). Language plays a critical role in defining individual identity, culture and community membership. Indeed, Sir Apirana Ngata (cited in Karetu, 1990, p. 15) went so far as to say: *"Ki te kore koe e mōhio ki te kōrero Māori ehara koe i te Māori"*[7]. Sir Apirana Ngata believed that "nothing was worse than for one to be with Māori features but without his own language" (Barrington & Beaglehole, 1974, pp. 206-207).

For those of us of *Ngāti Porou* descent, tribal *whakatauāki* reaffirm both our communal and individual identities and link us back to our people, to our land, to our mountains, to our rivers and to our marae. Thus, as a descendant of Ngāti Porou I would claim:

> *Ko Hikurangi te maunga,*
> *ko Waiapu te awa,*
> *ko Ngāti Porou te iwi*
> *ko Reporua te marae.*[8]

The late 1950s and early 1960s: My experience of higher education as assimilation, acculturation, accommodation - and alienation

Identity crisis and conflict are characteristic of assimilation, acculturation and accommodation. All of these I experienced at first hand as I sought education and understanding. In pursuit of higher education, I moved from the security of *whānau* and community to a new, and even more alien, urban environment where my self-identity and cultural identity were increasingly at risk. The transition was at times, painful. Culture shock resulted in feelings of isolation, even anomie. Adapting to this new environment was made even more difficult by the fact that I could no longer seek support from my *whānau* in the way I was accustomed to doing. Wong Fillmore (1986, p. 680) alludes to this sense of alienation when she states:

> What is lost in surrendering the native language may be the connectedness with primary group and community that gives the individual the personal stability for coping with adult responsibilities and opportunities.

The need to integrate into this new culture seemed evident. Always, however, there was an underlying sense of difference, even inferiority. *Te reo Māori* and *tikanga Māori* had no place in this new context: I had to learn the linguistic and social skills required to survive in the new environment in which I found myself. In such a situation, the temptation to abandon the language and culture of my people was very real. Few of us had the strength to insist on being valued for who we were. It was, therefore, not long before I began to conform, before the new language and culture began to compromise my own language and culture. Only in the company of other Māori students and in the safe environment of culture clubs could I use *te reo Māori*, and so I began to develop positive strategies for re-establishing a sense of identity and self-esteem. I began, in fact, to develop a type of schizophrenia, moving uneasily in and out of different identities in different contexts. The fact that higher education has its own culture increased the complexity of this process.

The late 1960s: Beginning my career in teaching and beginning to recover my sense of identity

Unlike so many others, I continued to have strong links with my mother and my *whānau*. The fact that I had been firmly rooted in *te reo Māori* and *tikanga Māori* as a young child stood me in good stead. Behind the facade, my language and culture lurked, waiting upon the day that I would return to them. Most urbanised Māori are not so fortunate. For them, there is little or no access to *te reo Māori*. As a result, the battle to save the language from extinction is immense. This is the price that Māori have had to pay for so many ill-informed Government policies.

Having been fortunate enough to be rooted in *te reo Māori* is for me an important link to my being as Māori. It affirms my identity and provides me with a link to the past and the future. It empowers me in the control of the contexts in which I live and work. As the whakatauāki states:

> *Ko taku nui*
> *Taku wehi*
> *Taku whakatiketike*
> *Ko taku reo.*[9]

The loss of *te reo Māori* would represent for the Māori people not only the loss of a very valuable possession, but also a loss of identity and cultural uniqueness. This is clearly reflected in a claim made by Sir Hemi Henare (as quoted in a Department of Education document) that the loss of the Māori language represents a loss of the vital force, the very inner core of the Māori people:

> Therefore, the taonga, the Māori language as far as our people are concerned is the very soul of the Māori people. What profit to the Māori if we lose our language and lose our soul even if we gain the world (Department of Education, 1989, p. 10).

Reviving and nourishing *te reo Māori* is thus something for which all of those fortunate enough to speak the language must take responsibility. My career in education represented, for me, an opportunity to play a role in the revival of *te reo Māori* and the reassertion of Māori as a people.

Towards Taha Māori as an aspect of the school curriculum

As early as the 1930s, Māori academics and scholars began to put pressure on government to have *te reo Māori* recognised as an important aspect of the formal education of Māori children. Prior to this, Māori language maintenance had attracted little interest. For many Māori, it seemed unnecessary. After all, a 1930 survey indicated that 96.6% of children attending Native Schools spoke only *te reo Māori* in their homes (May, 2001). Two decades later, in 1950, between 50% and 75% of Māori children attending Māori schools spoke and understood *te reo Māori* (Biggs, 1991, p. ix). During the 1950s and 1960s, there was a significant decline in the percentage of Māori who spoke *te reo Māori* at home. Rapid urbanisation had reduced the numbers to a mere 26%. By the end of the 1970s, Māori communities and their heritage language were under severe threat (Benton, 1979; 1983). The rapid decline in natural acquisition contexts led many Māori to conclude that *te reo Māori* should be taught in all secondary schools. Indeed, many Māori also advocated its

introduction into the primary curriculum. In this way, it was believed that Māori children would learn to appreciate the value and relevance of their heritage language. All children would, it was believed, respond positively to the language and culture if their inclusion in the curriculum signalled to them the positive attitudes of others. At this point, however, the status of *te reo Māori* was in decline. Indeed, extinction had become a very real possibility (Benton, 1988).

It was in this context that the government of the 1970s advocated a change to the long-standing education policies of active opposition and neglect. The 1960s policy of assimilation was replaced by a policy of integration. Thus, the Hunn Report (1961, pp. 14-16) advocated a combination of Māori and English elements in schooling, with Māori culture remaining 'distinct'. However, even with the policy in place, there were difficulties with implementation. Agreeing that a language should be taught is one thing; training teachers appropriately and developing syllabuses and materials is another.

The early 1970s: I begin to teach te reo Māori and tikanga Māori in mainstream intermediate schools

As the dissatisfaction of Māori became more evident, changes were formalised in the 1970s and 1980s with the replacement of the principle of 'integration' with a policy of multicultural education. This policy saw the introduction of *Taha Māori,*[10] an approach designed to facilitate the introduction into the school curriculum of *te reo Māori* and *tikanga Māori*. As a teacher in a mainstream intermediate school in the 1970s, the responsibility for teaching *Taha Māori* was mine. The assumption then was that because one spoke *te reo Māori* and was familiar with *tikanga Māori*, one could teach them (with few resources and no curriculum) to students, many of whom had no real interest in them. It was therefore with a measure of relief that I left teaching temporarily to bring up my children. I hoped that things would have improved by the time I returned to teaching.

The mid 1980s: I return to teaching and become part of 'the milk run'

Although interest in *te reo Māori* increased from the 1980s onward, problems, including the difficulty of finding and training sufficient numbers of teachers with a high level of competence in the language, were evident. Furthermore, teaching resources were still scarce and there was considerable passive resistance from schools. As Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1989, p. 47) observe, overt permission to teach a language does not protect it. Languages are, in fact, often oppressed not only by active opposition, but also by lack of resources.

There was a great shortage of Māori language teachers by the time I returned to teaching in the mid 1980s (following a 15 year break). *Taha Māori* had been introduced into the curriculum for all pupils and was being treated not only as a curriculum area, but also as a vehicle for parent-teacher relations, and race relations more generally. Māori were, however, far from satisfied with what was little more than token recognition of *te reo Māori* and *tikanga Māori*. In addition, the burden on teachers who were competent in Māori rapidly became intolerable. A single teacher was often made responsible for all aspects of *Taha Māori* in a school and was often expected to move from class to class in what became known at the time as 'the milk run'. I was one of several teachers who, in addition to attempting to meet the needs of an entire school in relation to *Taha Māori*, were also required to assist in other

schools. Such were the demands on Māori who had teaching qualifications. In this context, it is worth reinforcing the point that teaching materials were scarce, there were no clearly defined teaching methodologies, and there was little support. The phenomenon of teacher burn out began to have a significant effect. Furthermore, there was growing recognition of the fact that there was a real difference between the language of the classroom and the natural language of every-day use. Meanwhile, the focus on *te reo Māori* as a vehicle for racial harmony, while commendable in itself, meant that less attention was paid to standards of teaching and learning than might otherwise have been the case. As a result, *te reo Māori* soon came to be seen as an easy option and, once again, Māori were marginalised (Benton, 1981, p. 41).

All of these things proved to have disastrous effects on *te reo Māori.* Although children were learning aspects of the language, they were failing to attain high standards of competence in its use. Furthermore, few of them had any real understanding of the ways in which the language was used in marae settings. Even today, it is often difficult to find speakers to represent groups or to function as designated *paepae*[11] orators. *Taha Māori* turned out to have little to offer to those who were genuinely committed to the revival and survival of *te reo Māori*.

Te reo Māori: Towards revitalisation

Fishman (1991) suggests that minority language education should be the responsibility of governments as a first step in reversing language shift. In 1985 (reported in 1986), The Waitangi Tribunal ruled that the New Zealand education system had a duty to support the learning of Māori children and to protect *te reo Māori* (Waitangi Tribunal, 1986, p. 51). Subsequent legislation, the Māori Language Act (1987), gave recognition to *te reo Māori* as an official language.[12] However, as our experience with *Taha Māori* indicates, there is a difference between genuine support and token support. Successive governments have assumed that the future of *te reo Māori* should rest with the majority. However, the majority has thus far done little to assure its future. New Zealand, in spite of the recommendations made by Waite (1992), still has no national language policy, let alone one that gives priority to *te reo Māori*. The consequences of the lack of a national language policy are reflected in the fact that neither road signs nor currency are bilingual. Therefore, although children may learn *te reo Māori*, the community at large ensures that there are very few domains in which these children can actually use it. Thus, it is the revitalisation initiatives that have come directly from Māori communities that are likely to be most effective, precisely because these communities have focused not only on the use of *te reo Māori* in schools, but also on the need to establish and maintain domains in which *te reo Māori* is the expected medium of communication.

Initiatives aimed at revitalising *te reo Māori* have in the last twenty years been increasingly driven by Māori communities and Māori *whānau* who believe that *Kaupapa Mātauranga Māori*[13] may hold the key to language revival and survival. Many parents now have the opportunity to choose to have their children educated, from pre-school onwards, through the medium of *te reo Māori* and in the context of Māori values and Māori culture. This is largely because Māori themselves, starting with the *Kōhanga Reo* movement (involving the establishment of Māori-medium pre-schools referred to as 'language nests'), have insisted on their linguistic and cultural rights. However, in spite of the increase in the quality of training and resources available, Māori teachers continue to carry a very heavy burden. They will need as

much enlightened assistance as possible if they are to succeed. They currently carry much of the responsibility not only for the revitalisation of *te reo Māori*, but also for improving the educational performance overall of Māori children. They undertake this responsibility in a context where Māori families continue to suffer the effects of decades of unequal development. They also do so in an atmosphere of considerable suspicion. Unless they are seen to succeed in this very difficult task, the danger is that future generations will seize the opportunity to attribute all of the problems that Māori experience to Māori themselves. Thus, community support is likely to prove to be crucial. As Benton (1996, p. 56) observes, education cannot by itself ensure the survival of a minority language. Furthermore, Hornberger (1989, p. 229) notes that schools cannot be agents for language maintenance if their communities, for whatever reason, do not want them to be. If the community is content to leave issues of schooling and language maintenance to others (May, 2001, p.149), then *Kaupapa Mātauranga Māori* schools may not succeed in their mission whatever the dedication of their teachers.

The early 1990s: I begin to train teachers to work in Māori-medium educational settings

In the 1990s, I moved from a school to a university setting. My task was now to train teachers to teach in Maori-medium educational settings.

Starting in 1994, a number of curriculum documents, designed to support Māori-medium teaching, began to appear. There was also increased emphasis on the production of high quality Māori-medium teaching resources and assessment tools. These initiatives formed part of a larger initiative within the Ministry of Education's Māori Language Education Plan (Ministry of Education, 2001). Even so, the fact that trainee teachers who wished to teach in *Kaupapa Mātauranga Māori*[14] schools often continued to be educated in an environment in which there were very few domains in which they could actually use *te reo Māori*, meant that many of those involved in training teachers to teach through the medium of *te reo Māori* became disheartened, feeling that their efforts were constantly being undermined. Furthermore, there continues to be a serious shortage of teachers who can work effectively in Māori-medium contexts and the majority of those currently training to do so are second language learners of the language, many of whom do not have a high level of proficiency. These problems were noted by the Ministry of Education in the early 1990s (Ministry of Education, March 1994, p.21). Even so, comparatively little has been done about it to date. Thus, for example, in a 2001 issue of the *New Zealand Education Review* (16 March, 2001), Cathy Dewes, Chairperson of *Te Runanganui o Kura Kaupapa Māori,* felt it necessary to remind the Ministry of Education of its assurances (see, for example, Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 11) that the need for Māori-medium teachers and teachers of *te reo Māori* would be addressed.

In the course of my work in teacher education, I became increasingly aware of the fact that those trainee teachers who aimed to teach in Māori-medium contexts not only often lacked fluency in *te reo Māori*, but often also lacked any real understanding of what is involved in creating coherent written discourses in *te reo Māori* in academic contexts. At the same time, it became clear to me that there were many teachers and trainee teachers who were passionate about the survival of the language and who were more than willing to make the effort to learn what was required. If my students were willing to learn from me, I must also be willing to learn from others.

The mid-1990s: I continue in teacher training and return to study
Since I had completed my own higher education, a great deal had happened in the field of applied linguistics, especially in relation to the teaching and learning of second languages and teaching through the medium of second languages. I decided that it was time for me to return to study. I therefore enrolled in a postgraduate programme in second language teaching and learning, going on from there to complete another postgraduate programme in the same area.

This was a difficult time for me. It was frustrating to be in a position where I had to constantly question my current skills and understanding. It was difficult to come to terms, once again, with an educational context in which the dominant language was English, especially when my real interest was in *te reo Māori*. On those occasions when my existing skills were simply not acknowledged, I felt humiliated. Even so, years of struggle within the educational system had taught me to have patience and to value the skills, knowledge and understanding of others, particularly where they were different from my own. They had also taught me to suspend judgment and to accept genuine friendship and intellectual companionship when it was offered, as it often was. I knew that if I was to survive the experience of long hours of teaching and long hours of study, I needed to remain focused on my ultimate goal – to find a way of making a genuine contribution to Māori-medium education.

This was to be a long journey. After I completed the courses in which I was enrolled, I decided to go on to do research. In selecting my research area, I gave a great deal of thought to the type of contribution I might be able to make. I was a native speaker of *te reo Māori* with a background in teaching and teacher education who had qualifications in applied linguistics and second language teaching and learning. I had a particular interest in the needs of teachers and learners in Māori-medium educational settings. In particular, I felt that there was a need for materials that would support the development of academic writing in *te reo Māori*. First, however, it would be necessary to find out how highly educated native speakers of *te reo Māori* structured written texts of various kinds and whether these texts different in any significant ways from texts written in English by highly educated native speakers of English. Only then would it be possible to provide teachers and learners of *te reo Māori* with materials designed to help them to develop a high level of competence in writing authentic texts in *te reo Māori* in a range of different genres for a range of different purposes.

In 2004, I completed my doctoral research (Houia-Roberts, 2003; 2004a & b). In 2005, I moved into an area of university activity that was dominated by Māori, one in which I would be surrounded by *te reo Māori* on a daily basis. I hoped that here I would have the time., space and encouragement to turn my academic research into something useful and practical – a teaching and learning resource for those operating in Māori-medium educational contexts. In the event, this did not happen. What I learned is that many of those involved in Māori education, at whatever level and in whatever context, are too busy, too driven by the immediate needs of their current students, to think beyond the immediate imperatives, to move from survival mode to planning mode. The advantages of research, its possibilities in terms of offering new ways of thinking and new, and improved outcomes, are too often forgotten. This is not only a question of time, it is also a question of belief – belief in ourselves and

belief in the right of our *mokopuna* to be given equal access to the past, the present and the future.

2005: I retire from full-time involvement in academic life and begin a new venture.

At the end of 2005, I retired from full-time employment in education and began a new phase and a new venture. Now, at last, I have time to appreciate the changing seasons, time to watch my *mokopuna* grow, time to talk to them in the language of their tīpuna, time to prepare, for them and for others, my small contribution, time to turn my research into something practical, time to contemplate the journey that I and my reo have taken together.

Tēnā tātau katoa.

Endnotes

1. Grow tender shoot for the days of your world/ Turn your hands to the tools of the Pakeha for the well-being of your body/ Turn your heart to the treasures of your ancestors as a crown for your head/ Give your soul to God, the author of all things.
2. Sub-group; section of a large tribal group.
3. Tribal group.
4. Tribal meeting place.
5. The Māori mind must be challenged through the Māori language; the English mind, through the English language.
6. Our language is what embodies our *Māoritanga.* For us, the Māori people, if our language is lost, our *Māoritanga* will be lost.
7. If you do not speak Māori, you are not Māori.
8. Hikurangi is the mountain/ Waiapu is the river/ Ngāti Porou the people/ The marae is Reporua.
9. My stature/ My inspiration/ My elevation/ Is my language.
10. A Māori dimension.
11. The threshold: the area directly in front of the meeting house where speakers are seated.
12. Even so, *te reo Māori* is still used only in oral contexts in courts of law.
13. Philosophy of Māori-immersion education: education by Māori, for Māori.
14. The representative body for Kaupapa Māori schools.

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