

TE TIROHANGA I TE KÖREROTANGA O TE REO RANGATIRA I ROTO I NGĀ KĀINGA MĀORI ME NGĀ ROHE

Survey of Language Use in Maori Households
and Communities

PĀNUI WHAKAMŌHIO
INFORMATION BULLETIN

65

Localities in which
ten or more households
were visited

● Two thirds or
more of adults were
fluent speakers of
Maori

◆ Less than two
thirds of adults were
fluent speakers of
Maori

HE PŪRONGORONGO
WHAKAMŌHIO
MĀ NGĀ KAIURU KI TE
TORONGA TUATAHI,
1973–1978

A report to Participants in the
Initial Investigation, 1973–1978



Map showing Towns and Localities of the Waikato Region of the North Island visited during the Census of Language use

Percentage of Fluent Speakers of Maori Among Persons Aged 25 and over in Households visited

- ★ 70% or more
- ◆ 55% to 69%
- 40% to 54%
- ▼ Less than 40%
- Fewer than 10 households visited

THE MAORI LANGUAGE IN CAMBRIDGE

Fieldwork for the census of language use in Maori communities took place in 17 households in the Cambridge Borough in August 1976. The interviewers were Kathleen Potae (Ngati Tuwharetoa) and Maku Potae (Ngati Porou). All interviews were carried out in English.

The households surveyed had a total population of 111 of whom 106 were of Maori descent. This was about one-fifth of the total Maori population of the district at the time.

RESULTS OF THE LINGUISTIC SURVEY

Iwi Affiliation

The people interviewed mentioned ten major iwi to which they or members of their households belonged. The largest iwi represented was Ngapuhi with 22 members or a fifth of the total. Ngati Maniapoto, with 15 members, and Waikato with 12, were the next largest tribal groups.

Ability To Speak And Understand Maori

The table on the next page shows that just under a fifth of the people surveyed spoke Maori fluently while a little more than a fifth of them understood the language well. All but one of those who spoke Maori well were adults over 25. Half the total number of people surveyed knew hardly any Maori at the time; and most of these were school-age children.

KNOWLEDGE OF SPOKEN MAORI IN CAMBRIDGE BOROUGH (1976)

Age Group	Fluent Speakers		Understand Easily		Limited Understanding		No Knowledge	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
45 & over	10	100	10	100	0		0	
25-44	7	33	9	43	6	29	6	29
15-24	1	5	2	9	9	41	11	50
2-14	0		2	4	17	30	37	66
Overall	18	17	23	21	32	29	54	50

(Numbers and percentages refer to members of households visited; percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.)

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Use of Maori Language In The Household

English was the main language for everyday use in most households visited. There were 16 homes with dependent children, and in 15 of them people spoke entirely or mostly in English. In the remaining home the parents often used Maori with each other, but English was still the main language spoken.

There was one childless household visited and the couple living there always spoke English with each other.

The Maori Language In The Community

English was also the main language spoken in the community. The people most likely to speak Maori were kaumatua over 45, but they had few chances to do so in Cambridge and Leamington, as most people there spoke only English. Some good speakers said that they only

spoke Maori with close friends and family, or in their home area as speaking Maori in the town was looked down upon by some of the people there. Maori was most likely to be heard in ceremonies and ordinary talk on the marae. But even here many good speakers of Maori would use English especially when talking with those who did not understand much Maori. Certain religious services in the area were held partly or entirely in Maori, and for some people, especially kaumatua, private prayer was also in Maori.

If any two members of the community met unexpectedly, there was one chance in 25 that they could understand each other in Maori. If both people were adults over 25 the chances were much greater about one in three while it was very unlikely that people under 25 would be able to speak in Maori with each other.

Attitudes Towards The Language

Most of the people we interviewed were parents and many of them had strong opinions about how Maori is today and the future they see for it. Two thirds of the people between 25 and 44 could not speak Maori and many of them were sorry about this. They felt that they were missing out on a valuable experience because they could not talk with their elders in their mother tongue. This was why they were very keen that their children should have every chance to learn Maori in schools. However, a few parents thought that Maori was being taught badly in some schools, while others were doing their best to teach their children at home instead. Some of the people we spoke to thought that Maori could be learned only in country areas where the language and culture can be lived instead of being studied in a classroom for one period a day.

A number of people believed that going to classes to learn Maori is not enough. If their efforts were to be worthwhile, students of the language, both children and adults, should have the chance to use the Maori they have learnt in their everyday lives.

Many people would like Maori used in more TV and radio programmes, as well as in stories on local history in the newspapers. More Maori has been used in recent years, but it is still very much the poor relation of English when it comes to broadcasting.

CONCLUSION

At the time of the survey the vast majority of the people in Cambridge who spoke and understood Maori well were adults over the age of 25, and nearly two thirds of those under this age had practically no knowledge of the language. This decline in the Maori language concerned many of the people we spoke with and they were looking for ways to uplift the status of the language in the area. As we have found in most towns and cities where the Maori people were a minority group, English was the main language spoken in the community and so in most households it had replaced Maori as the main language for everyday use.

Some people tried to put the blame on their parents for not teaching them the language, or on attempts in the past to wipe out Maori (over half the people interviewed had been beaten for speaking Maori as school children) but others were organising classes in the community, on local marae or in private homes.

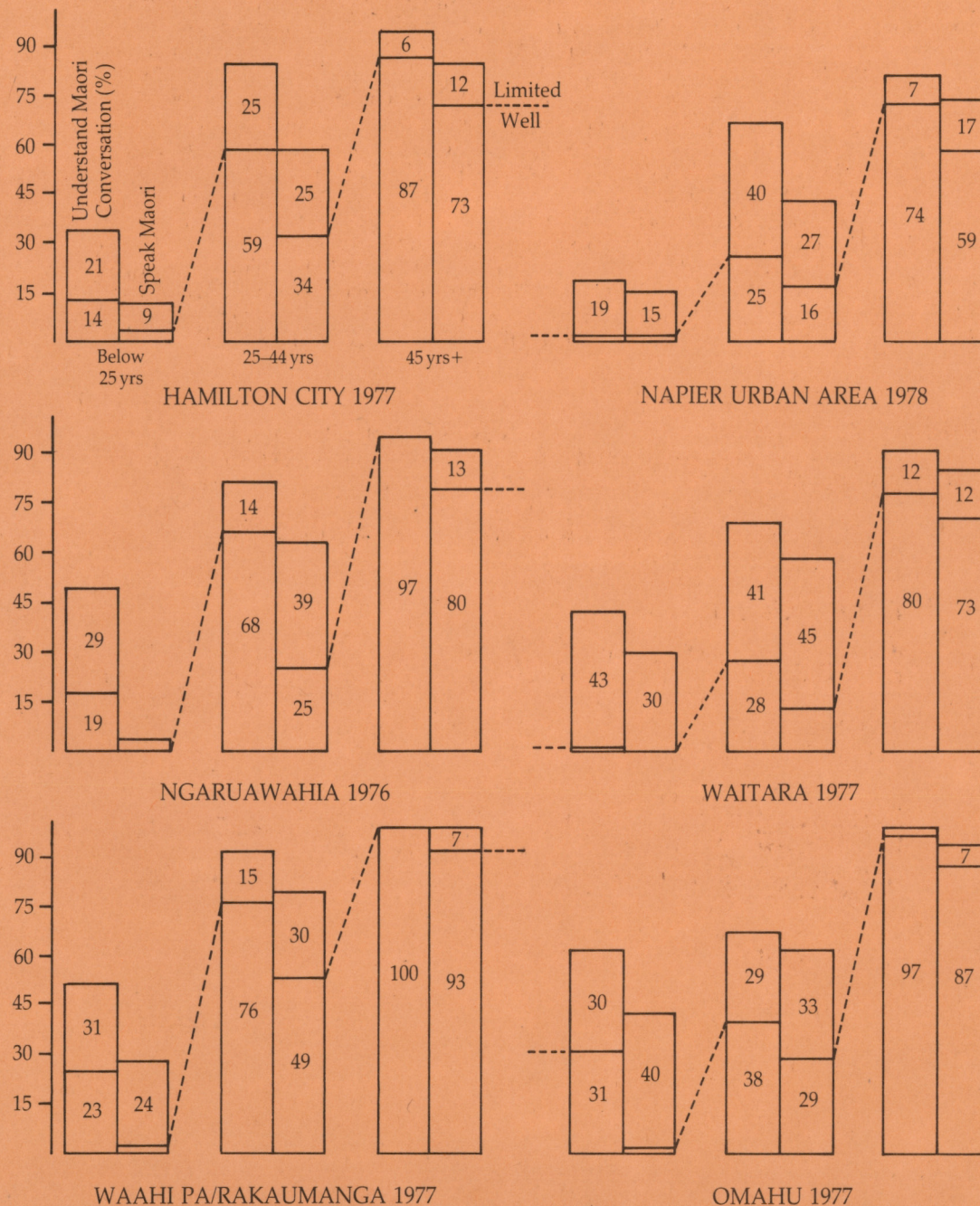
The establishment of Maori speaking pre-schools (Te Kohanga Reo) throughout the country is a recent move to make sure that Maori once again becomes a language for everyday use, and not just for ceremonies on the marae. Interested people should contact their local office of the Department of Maori Affairs for further information on Te Kohanga Reo and other Maori language schemes.



This report was prepared by Lee Smith (Ngati Kahungunu).

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Knowledge of Maori Language by Age Groups in Selected Areas at the Time of the Linguistic Census



The Survey of Language Use in Maori Households and Communities

The census of language use on which this report is based is the first part of a general study of the place of the Maori language in Maori communities, its structure, how it is spoken and written under modern conditions, and its relevance to New Zealand as a nation. This study is being conducted by the Maori Unit of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research. Fieldwork for the census phase began in Whangaroa County and Te Tii in August 1973, and ended in August 1978. Follow-up studies and studies in additional communities will be undertaken from time to time (the first of these was conducted in Waverley in August 1979).

The map on the front cover shows the approximate localities in which ten or more households were visited between 1973 and 1979. Since the linguistic census was completed, the major task of the Unit has been the analysing and reporting of the information collected. At the same time, however, studies of the structure and usage of the Maori language have commenced; these will result in a series of handbooks and other materials for teachers of Maori (including parents), and for people wishing to learn the language. An example of this is *The First Basic Maori Word List*, published in 1982. Other publications have included background studies for bilingual education projects, and reports on policy issues affecting the Maori language and Maori speakers—for example, the legal status of Maori in New Zealand.

The Purpose of This Report

This report has been prepared for the people who participated in the original survey and who provided the information on which it is based. It is hoped that it will encourage people to compare the situation now with that at the time covered by the report, and that this information will provide a basis for discussion and debate about what action, if any, each community might take to ensure that the Maori language is at least as important in the twenty-first century as it was in the 1970s.

Further Information

One copy of this report is provided free to each person interviewed during the linguistic census in the area concerned, and to local schools, Maori Language Boards, and Maori Committees. Further information about the linguistic survey, and lists of publications, may be obtained from the Maori Unit, New Zealand Council for Educational Research, P.O. Box 3237, Wellington.



Ngā Mihi/Special Thanks

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