

Students Attitudes Towards an Advanced Level Māori Language Immersion Program

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The goal of the research project reported here was to analyze data relating to the views of 16 advanced students who participated in the Māori language component of a degree program (Te Tohu Paeatahi/ First degree) offered by the University of Waikato in New Zealand in 2008. In setting up the program, every effort was made to ensure that those factors widely regarded as impacting positively on Māori students success rates were catered for. The data collected indicated that the students were generally happy with all aspects of the program and believed that it met their expectations, particularly in terms of language improvement.

Māori is the ancestral tongue of the Māori people, the early inhabitants of New Zealand. It is the language of the Treaty of Waitangi (1840)¹, signed by representatives of the British Crown and the indigenous people, which asserted that Māori taonga (treasures), later defined as including the Māori language, should be preserved in perpetuity. In pre-European times, as Biggs (1968, p. 77) observes, a “great body of myth, legend and historical tradition was passed down the generations in prose narrative, sung poetry and genealogical recital, the three literary media of pre-European Māori society.” These forms of ‘literary media’ helped reinforce the maintenance of the intergenerational transmission of the language. However, government policies, such as those enshrined in the Education Ordinance Act 1847 and the Native Schools Act 1858, began a long tradition of prioritization of English which, combined with the urbanization of Māori people, ultimately led to language shift and impacted in a negative way on intergenerational transmission of the Māori language. By the 1970s, the number of fluent speakers was inadequate to ensure a sustainable future for the language and it was feared that it might become extinct within the next 20 years (Benton, 1997). At that point, the Māori started to engage in a wide range of language revitalization initiatives. In 1972, Ngā Tamatoa (The Young Warriors), a group consisting mainly of urban, university-educated Māori, whose members, together with members of the Reo Māori Society (Māori Language Society) led by the late Hana Te Hemara, presented a petition with more than 30,000 signatures to the New Zealand Government demanding that the Māori language be taught in primary and secondary schools (Mead, 1997; Metge, 2004; Smith, 1999). In 1979, Katarina Mataira and Ngoi Pēwharangi offered the first of many free community-based Māori courses using Te Ataarangi (The Shadow), which was an adaptation of a language teaching method developed by Caleb Gattengo, an Egyptian mathematician (Gattengo, 1972).

The most important of all of the revitalization initiatives that began in the middle of the second half of the 20th century was the Kōhanga Reo (Language

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Nest) movement, a pre-school program incorporating Māori culture that was intended to be run exclusively in Māori by mature women fluent in the language. The first *kōhanga reo*, Pukeatua Kōkiri, was opened in 1982 in Wainuiomata, near Wellington (Walker, 2004). One hundred *kōhanga reo* were established in the first year alone (Sharpe, 1990) and by 1985, there were over 6,000 children attending 416 *kōhanga reo* (Waitangi Tribunal, 2011). The establishment of *kōhanga reo* was followed by the establishment of Kura Kaupapa Māori, Māori language immersion primary schools set up to ensure that those who attended *kōhanga reo* could continue their language development. The first Kura Kaupapa Māori was set up in 1985 at Hoani Waititi Marae² in West Auckland and by 2009, there were 70 (Waitangi Tribunal, 2011). Next to be established were Whare Kura (Māori immersion secondary schools), of which thirty four were operational by 2008, and Whare Wānanga (Māori Tertiary Institutes), run by Māori for Māori, of which there are currently three (Te Whare Wānanga o Raukawa, Te Whare Wānanga o Awanui-a-rangi, and Te Wānanga o Aotearoa).³ In addition, Māori is taught as a subject in mainstream schools, where there are also many bilingual (English and Māori) units, and Māori language and culture are taught in mainstream universities, including the one in which the program discussed in this paper is run.

Introduction to the immersion program

In the late 1990s, a group of senior academics from the University of Waikato put forward an initiative to create the first intensive, fast-track *reo Māori* (Māori language) immersion program in a tertiary institution in New Zealand. This proposal came about because many students and staff of the then Māori department of the University believed that the language proficiency of students completing their Bachelor's degree with a major in Māori language was not high enough to make a significant impact on the revitalization and maintenance of the language. The result was the establishment in 1991 of Te Tohu Paetahi (First degree), a Bachelor's degree program in which the intention was that students should spend most of their first year learning Māori language in an immersion context and then be taught their other subjects through the medium of the language. In this way, it was hoped to contribute to the aspirations and dreams of the elders, the status of the language and the pool of fluent speakers who could transmit the language to the next generation.

Each applicant for the program goes through a rigorous interview process since it is important to attempt to determine not only whether they have the ability to undertake university studies, but also whether they have the high level of commitment to their own language development that is required in the case of an intensive program of this nature and also the capacity to work as a member of a close-knit community, contributing in a positive way to the well-being and development of the other members of the community. As an added bonus for students enrolled in this program, the University of Waikato, as part of its contribution to the retention and revitalization of the Māori language, agreed to provide scholarships. Among the criteria for retention of these scholarships are

demonstrated aptitude and commitment, regular attendance and obtaining a pass grade in all six language papers.

In its earliest beginnings, Te Tohu Paetahi concentrated solely on teaching language papers (eight), particularly in its first year and through immersion style teaching, aiming, in line with immersion programs generally, to “provide the quantity and quality of involvement in the use of the target language that ensure the development of a high level of proficiency” (Johnson & Swain, 1997, p. xiii). However, in 1992 the program was slightly adjusted, the number of language papers taught each year being reduced from eight language to six and a culture paper being introduced. In 1997, in response to student demand, it was decided that two streams would be established, one stream designed to accommodate advanced learners, another to accommodate beginners. These two streams would be called Rehutai and Hukatai respectively after the two stones (Rehutai and Hukatai) brought back to earth by Tāne (a Māori deity) who, in Māori mythology, went to the heavens in search of the three baskets of knowledge. The Rehutai stream was intended to cater for more advanced speakers of the language (who had often attended Māori-immersion primary and secondary schools) and wished to begin their university studies at a more advanced level and to complete their major subject (Māori language) within two years rather than the usual three years.

In both streams, a normal day commences with a karakia (opening prayer), mihimihi (greetings) and kapa haka (performing arts session) before the main part of the teaching day begins. There is generally a morning tea break mid-morning and a one hour lunch break, with teaching ending for the day at 3 p.m. The six language papers are taught intensively, one after the other, four weeks each. Students are also given the opportunity to enroll in an extra paper (focusing on Māori culture) while focusing primarily on language development, and most have no difficulty in accommodating the additional workload involved. To complete their degree, students in the second and third year of the program are offered a suite of papers taught through the medium of Māori on topics such as culture, performing arts, development studies and Māori media.

Largely due to staffing constraints, the Rehutai (advanced) stream was discontinued in 2010, however, there is a possibility that it will be re-established in the future if there is sufficient evidence that it plays an important role in language revitalization.

A review of literature on immersion language teaching, learner motivation, and success⁴

It is widely believed that language immersion programs are effective. One of the reasons often given for this belief is that they reproduce, to some level at least, the context in which very young children acquire language. However, there are many different ways, in addition to proficiency gains, in which the effectiveness of immersion programs may be judged. For example, a language immersion program may be considered effective to the extent that it provides a safe and supportive learning environment or operates in a culturally rich context

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or because it is regarded by the target language community as being consistent with their beliefs about learning generally.

Writing in the early 1990s, Genesee (1994) labeled second language immersion programs as being among “the most interesting innovations in second language education during the last two decades” (p. 1). Many indigenous communities have established immersion programs. Just as Māori have come to the conclusion that language immersion has an important role to play in the revival of their language, so have other groups who have been involved in the struggle to save indigenous or heritage languages, such as the Hawaiian language. In her case study of Kula Kaiapuni Hawai’i (Hawaiian language revitalisation program), Slaughter (1997) observes that the “story of Hawaiian Language Immersion shows that an ethnolinguistic minority group can reclaim its language and culture, at least partially, through the development of an immersion program.”

The Catalan and Basque languages in Spain have suffered in the same way as have the Māori and Hawaiian languages and the people have made similar efforts to revive them. Artigal (1997, p. 131) argues that the Catalan immersion program “is not simply an opportunity for individuals to learn two languages [but]...part of the project of reinstating Catalonia’s heritage language as a language of normal use in its territory.” Thus, as Arzamendi and Genesee (1997, p. 151) observe, “[immersion] in the at-risk language is...often part of a more extensive plan for language revitalization.”

It has been claimed that immersion programs are highly motivating for participants. Thus, for example, Jones (1991) notes that the most significant factor in participants’ choice of one of the Ulpan intensive Welsh language courses in Lampeter is the fact that it involves language immersion. She also claims that “frequent...contact with the language over a short period, rather than weak contact...over a long period is the best way for learners to master this new medium” (p. 184). This claim is based on the views of participants who felt that “[intensive] instruction in an immersion setting...[resulted] in superior language proficiency and [eased] integration into the Welsh community” (p. 183). Indeed, one participant noted that there “is no opportunity to lose interest when you are learning quickly,” adding “I want to learn quickly because I wish to use the language and it would take me years to learn the language in a conventional night class” (p. 187).

It is important when reviewing what has been written about the teaching and learning of languages in immersion settings to separate belief and assertion from evidence. Thus, with reference to children learning the Arapaho language, while Greymorning (1997, p. 25) asserts that they needed to be placed “in a setting that paralleled the way fluent speakers acquired Arapaho” in order to “accomplish the long range goal of producing children who can fluently speak Arapaho.”⁵ He also counters the commonly held belief that immersion is sufficient in and of itself, noting that the progress of some students was less than desirable until “it became clear that what was missing was an understanding, implementation, and effective use of methodology.”

Just as there are multiple criteria by which the effectiveness of language immersion programs may be judged, there are multiple reasons why people choose to learn languages. They may, for example, wish to be part of a language revitalisation movement, to reclaim the language of their forebears, to integrate into a new community, to take advantage of job/career opportunities. Whatever their reason/s, they will need to maintain their motivation over a long period of time if they are to succeed in achieving their goal. Bandura (1991, p. 69) defines motivation as follows:

Motivation is a general construct linked to a system of regulatory mechanisms that are commonly ascribed both directive and activating functions. At the generic level it encompasses the diverse classes of events that move one to action. Level of motivation is typically indexed in terms of choice of courses of action and intensity and persistence of effort. Attempts to explain the motivational sources of behavior therefore primarily aim at clarifying the determinants and intervening mechanisms that govern the selection, activation, and sustained direction of behavior toward certain goals.

Following studies by Gardner and Lambert (1972) and Masgoret and Gardner (2003), a distinction is often made, within the context of language learning, between intrinsic motivation and instrumental motivation. This binary classification has been challenged. Thus, for example, Green (1999) has argued that although looking at motivation in terms of intrinsic and instrumental categories might be appropriate in some contexts, it was not equally applicable in others, and Oxford and Shearin (1994) found, with reference to a study of American learners of Japanese, that more than two thirds of the reported motivations of participants could not be usefully described as either integrative or instrumental. Furthermore, Green (1999) has objected to an ‘immutable and non-manipulable’ concept of motivation (p. 276), noting, in particular, its failure “to provide a meaningful developmental model for students and teachers” (p. 265). It is now widely believed that motivation is subject to change and can be influenced by the extent to which students see themselves as being competent (see, for example, Porter Ladousse, 1982 and van Lier, 1996).

Dörnyei and Ottö (1999) observe that motivation “is not a static state but rather a dynamically evolving and changing entity” and that a complex multi-faceted approach is necessary to account for “all the relevant motivational influences on learner behavior in the classroom” (para 3). Based on the action control model of Kuhl (1987), they proposed a process model which involves five phases: goal setting, intention formation, initiation of intention enactment, action, and postactional evaluation (Dörnyei & Ottö, 1999, para. 37), noting that “[a] broad array of mental processes and motivational conditions play essential roles in determining why students behave as they do” (para. 99). Green (1999, p. 265) argued that goal-centered, process-oriented approaches to motivation are of

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fundamental importance in that they enable teachers to “manipulate motivational variables to bring about optimal learning outcomes.”

Dörnyei (2003) has identified three theories of cognitive motivation (self-determination theory, attribution theory, and goal theory) that have influenced L2 motivation research. The first is self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2002), a theory which has much in common with Gardner and Lambert’s (1972) framework. According to this theory, intrinsic motivation is conceptualized as involving enjoyment and satisfaction and extrinsic motivation as involving instrumentally driven actions. The second theory, (causal) attribution theory, is described by Weiner (1992) as being centrally concerned with the impact on motivation and future achievement of past positive or negative experiences. Here, increased motivation is associated with confidence (in turn associated with past positive experiences), and reduced motivation (involving a greater likelihood of failure) is associated with anxiety (in turn associated with past negative experiences). In connection with this, it is relevant to note that the research of Clément, Dörnyei and Noels (1994) demonstrates the powerful influence of self-confidence on motivation in language learning settings. The third theory, situated/goal-based theory, emerged out of research in the 1990s on cognitive neuroscience (involving the study of brain mechanisms during activities of various kinds). Here, motivation for action is seen as being stimulated by novelty, pleasure, self-image and social image and the significance of specific needs and goals (Schuman, 1997), and emphasis is placed on the impact on motivation and learning outcomes of learning context (e.g., classroom context, course design, teacher and learner characteristics). Thus, for example, Batstone (2002) argues that the essential difference between communicative contexts, which locate learners in social environments where use of the target language is necessary for interaction to occur, and learning contexts which locate learners firmly in classroom situations must be accommodated in studies relating to motivation. Ellis (1994) observes that the first of these contexts is generally associated with stronger integrative motivational factors than is the second. This would appear to be of particular significance so far as Māori participation rates and Māori success rates are concerned. Thus, for example, Nock (2010) found that students enrolling in a Māori language program for beginners were more highly motivated by the desire to learn the language than they were by the desire to obtain a degree and/ or employment.

There are two studies that are of particular relevance to Māori learners. The first of these studies (Levy, 2002) is very specific in its orientation, relating to barriers and incentives to Māori participation in the profession of psychology. It is, however, important in that it draws attention to the fact that “barriers are closely interrelated, with each impacting on the other” (p. 5) and identifies a number of needs that are common to a range of areas, including the need for “a supportive network of whanau (family), friends and tutors” and “the ability to access support.” Referring to the research of Nikora (1998), this study notes the importance of the presence of Māori staff in terms of the continuing motivation and success of Māori students (Levy, 2002). The second study (Greenwood &

Te Aika, 2008) explores, in relation to four case studies (one of which involves a language revitalization program for teachers offered at the University of Canterbury), factors that impact on success in the case of Māori learners in tertiary institutions. In each case, administrative leaders, teaching staff, students and members of iwi (Māori tribes), community groups and wider whānau were interviewed and twenty-one factors that were seen as contributing to success were identified. These were: a high level of iwi support; strong institutional support; active consultation with iwi and engagement of iwi with the program; a clear professional or vocational focus; accommodation of students' varying levels of entry and needs; insistence on high standards; recognition of students' emotional and spiritual needs as well as academic needs; affirmation of students' connection to the community; creation of teaching spaces appropriate to the field of studies; implementation of tikanga Māori (Māori culture) and Māori concepts and values; strong, clear-visioned and supportive leadership; significant Māori role models; teaching staff who are prepared to learn; teaching staff who have professional credibility in their field; respectful and nurturing relationships with students; opportunities for students to redress previous unsatisfactory schooling experiences; opportunities for students to develop effective learning strategies; tuakana-teina (older sibling of the same sex, younger sibling of the same sex) relationships between students; a personalized and preferably iwi-based induction; a graduation that involves whānau; and strategic reduction of financial barriers to learning. Five overarching themes were also identified:

- In Māori terms, education is valued as a communal good, not just a personal one;
- Māori models of sustainability or kaitiakitanga involve not only conservation of resources but also guardianship of land, language, history and people;
- The learner is a whole and connected person as well as a potential academic;
- The development of space where Māori values operate becomes a 'virtual marae';
- Tensions need to be navigated between institution drivers and iwi goals.

The questionnaire-based survey:

The overall aim of the questionnaire-based survey reported here was to collect and analyze data relating to the perspectives, expectations and attitudes of students who entered the Te Tohu Paetahi program in 2008. The findings relating to the 16 students (9 males and 7 females ranging in age from 18 to 45) in the Rehutai (Advanced) stream who participated in the survey are reported here. The questionnaire developed for this survey has five main thematic areas:

- Background information;
- Expectations, challenges, barriers and highlights;

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- Experience of the program and attitudes towards aspects of the program and the institution;
- Self-assessment of progress made during the program.

A final question provided an opportunity for participants to make any other comments they chose. The questionnaire⁶ was approved by the appropriate research ethics committee of the School of Māori and Pacific Development (University of Waikato) combined multiple choice questions, closed questions, and open-ended questions. In the case of three of the questions, participants were asked to select a point on a scale. It was distributed to students during their end of year marae field trip and was collected on completion. Each of the 16 participants (9 males and 7 females, with 13 in the age range of 18 to 21) was given a code for data entry and analysis purposes.

Fourteen participants gave their interests in te reo Māori as their reason for enrollment, one indicate employment as the main factor in enrolling in the program and 14 said that the program completely met their initial expectations and the other two indicated in had partially met their expectations. In the open ended question asking participants to identify any low points in the program there were only six responses:

Horekau he raru, ka mau kē te wehi o te kaupapa nei. (Nothing at all, it was absolutely fantastic and choice.)

Kāore he kino o Te Tohu Paetahi. (There are no low points about Te Tohu Paetahi.)

Kei runga noa atu ngā hua o te kaupapa nei, ko te mea pōuri ko te whakamutunga o ngā karaehe. (The program has so much benefit and all round goodness that the only low point is THE END.)

Horekau. Ko te whakamutunga o te tau. (None. The very end of the year.)

Ko te noho pōhara. (Being poor.)

Ko te kore taetae mai o ētahi taurira ki te karaehe, kīhai i whakapau ō rātou kaha ki te kaupapa. (Students not showing up for classes, not giving it all they had.)

Participants were asked to indicate whether one of more of three categories—financial; personal; learning problems—hindered their learning and invited them to comment on anything, both within and outside of the university, that created difficulties for them. Only ten participants responded with five indicating financial reasons and six personal. In regard to whether the program provided a sufficient variety of activities

Participants were asked whether they believed that there was sufficient variety of activities in the program. Thirteen participants responded to this question, all in the affirmative. Of these, some either added positive evaluation (e.g. ‘All the way’) or commented positively on a specific aspect of the activities. Positive comments included *Āe, he rahi kē ngā momo mahi-ā-karaehe* (Yes, I found that there was a wide range of variety in activities), *Āe, he maha ngā mahi, ā,*

he rerekē tō ia pouako me te āhua o ngō rātou mahi whakaako (Yes, there was a variety of activities and each teacher had their own teaching style), Āe mārika (All the way) and Āe, he rerekē tō tēnā kaiwhakaako mahi (Yes. Every teacher put in a different style). Reservations/concerns of the participants included:

I ētahi wāhi o te karaehe, engari, i te mutunga i tutuki pai. (In some areas of the class, but it all came together in the end.)

Mōku ake/Ki a au nei he pai ake mehemea ka whakatūwhera i te kūaha kia ahei ai ngā tauria ki te whakaputa whakaaro kia wānanga ai tātou katoa, ā, kia kitea hoki ai he aha ngā whakaaro o tēnā, o tēnā. (I personally would have appreciated a greater focus on class discussions in order to more fully gauge the skills, views and ideas of students.)

Ki tōku nei whakaaro, ko tētahi mea kia whakapiki ake i tēnei hōtaka, ki te whakauru ētahi mahi whakaari i roto. (In my opinion one way to help improve the program would be to introduce performing/creative arts.)

Participants were also asked whether they found the pace of learn sufficiently or too demanding. All indicated it was sufficiently demanding with the workload being about right. One participant suggested that the program could have included, Ngā kaupapa o te wā, o te rohe, o te motu, o te Ao anō hoki (Dealing with current affairs, topics pertaining to the various districts, to the country or the world as well). Participants felt they had been supported by the School of Māori and Pacific Development. Thirteen responded to this question, all in the affirmative. The comments provided are divided into categories below:

Generally positive

Ko te wāhi nei, e hāpai ana, e poipoi ana te kura nei i ngā tauria kia eke panuku, kia eke tangaroa i roto i ngā mahi me te kura hoki. (The School of Māori and Pacific Development provided a conducive environment to enable students to succeed at the highest level.)

Āe, i te mea he wairua tino aroha, tino māhaki hoki i roto i tēnei kura o Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao. (Yes, the School of Māori and Pacific Development exudes a very caring spirit.)

He tohu tautoko tēnei a Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao i Te Tohu Paetahi, kāore he kaupapa i tua atu i tēnei puta noa i te motu whānui. [The very fact that the S.M.P.D (School of Māori and Pacific Development) has such a program, which simply does not compare to other programs around the country, is a true expression of the commitment of S.M.P.D to T.T.P. (Te Tohu Paetahi).]

Ahakoia he whare wānanga Pākehā, kei roto tonu i a SMPD (School of Māori and Pacific) ngā āhuatanga me te wairua Māori e ora ana. Kua mārama hoki rātou ki ngā raru me ngā tikanga a te Māori. (Despite this being a non-Māori University, the School of Māori and

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Pacific Development was still able to maintain a Māori philosophy within the School. The School was aware of any problems/concerns and well versed in Māori culture.)

Āe, kua tata oti taku tohu. (Yes, a step closer to getting my degree.)

Āe, tautoko katoa te kura i a mātou. (Yes, they provided us with everything we needed.)

Environment/style of learning/activities

Kāore pea, tēnā whakaarohia a Wikitōria me tā rātou whakamahi i tō rātou marae. (Not really, compared to X⁷ - should have a look at their marae and how they use it.)

Āe, engari, nā taku ngoikore kāore i tino puta taku ihu. (Yes. But a lack of effort prevented me from achieving my goal.)

Lecturers

Āe, he kaha te tautoko a ngā kaiako o roto o tēnei kura. (Yes, the lecturers were very supported within the School.)

Āe, nā ngā pūkenga, ngā pūmanawa me te aroha anō hoki o ngā kaiwhakaako i eke Tangaroa ai ahau. Ki a au nei kei runga noa atu ngā kaiwhakaako o Te Tohu Paetahi. (Yes, it is sheer skill and passion for our language which enabled me to want to learn through our teachers. I believe that the tutors provided are the top of tops!)

Kāore i ārikarika ngā mihi ki ngā kaiwhakaako o Te Tohu Paetahi. [All thanks to my teachers of T.T.P. (Te Tohu Paetahi).]

Progress in te reo Māori (the Māori language)

Āe, i taku taenga atu ki Te Whare Wānanga i pōhēhē kei runga noa atu tōku reo Māori, engari nā Te Tohu Paetahi i whakangungu, i whakapakari anō hoki i tōku reo. (Yes! When arriving at university I thought I was good at Māori, but this increased my skills and improved my language.)

Āe, ko tōku tino hiahia kia whakawhānui ake, kia whakapakari ake i tōku nei reo Māori. Ahakoa kei te ako tonu, ā, kei te whakatakoto hapa tonu ki a au nei kua whakatutuki pai ērā wāwata. (Yes, one of my desires was to develop and improve my language. Although I am still learning and making mistakes, I have achieved my goals.)

Finally, participants were invited to add any comments they wished to make. Six participants chose to do so and all comments were of a positive nature. Generally positive comments included, Kāore he kaupapa e tū atu i Te Tohu Paetahi (There isn't another program to match Te Tohu Paetahi) and Me hokohoko ngā kai paku noa te utu, koirā tētahi huarahi tautoko mai i a mātou (Selling cheap food for everyone would be a good way to assist us). Several participants expressed thanks for the program. One wrote He nui āku mihi ki a Te Tohu Paetahi, me ngā kaiako mō ngā mahi me a rātou awhi kia whakapakari i a mātou reo rangatira (My genuine thanks to the Te Tohu Paetahi program and teachers for their dedication and work to allow our language to develop). A second wrote Kia rimurere, kia kutarere, kia maro mahue ki tō tātou reo, engari, kia mauri tau, kia manawa tina.

Kia pai te kirihimete me te tau hou. (Do not be fearful, but be excited, committed and lets exhaust all of our energy in a direct and purposeful manner towards ensuring the survival of our language. Have a great Christmas and a happy new year!). A third wrote Kua rangataira ahau i a koutou katoa, Tūrou Hawaiiiki. He mihi kau ana tēnei ki ōku pouako katoa (I have developed beyond my means. I am truly grateful to all of my lecturers.)

Overview and discussion

The number of Māori men who are sufficiently proficient in the language to deliver traditional whaikōrero (speeches) is diminishing rapidly. In spite of the fact that a considerably higher proportion of Māori women than men enroll in tertiary level educational institutions, over half of the students in this cohort of the Rehutai stream (9/56%) were male. In addition, the majority (13/81%) were at or near eighteen years of age on entering the program and most of them had come directly from school (mainly from Wharekura). So far as publicity and marketing are concerned, word of mouth (through family members and friends) appears to have been considerably more effective than any institutionally-based marketing strategies thus far employed. Furthermore, for these students, improving their Māori language proficiency was a more important reason for enrolling in the program than was obtaining a degree/qualification or successfully securing employment (a distant third). Their primary commitment was to their own language development and to making a contribution to the revitalisation of the language. At the beginning of the program, all of the participants expected that their proficiency in Māori to increase. At the end of the program, all of the participants indicated that their expectations had been met either in full (14/87 %) or in part (2/13 %). Some clearly had an unrealistic view of their own proficiency. Thus, for example, on a nine point scale (with 9 equivalent to expert user), one of the participants judged their proficiency to be 8 on entry and 9 on exit and another judged their exit level proficiency to be 9.5. What is significant, however, is that all of them believed that their proficiency had improved by at least one band, with the overall average perceived increase being 2.5 bands.⁸ Interestingly, only two of the participants identified ‘low points’ of the program, one being lack of money and the other being a perception that some of the other students had not contributed as much to the program as they could have done.

So far as the perceived highlights of the program are concerned, the highest percentage selections were ‘personal development’ and ‘fellow students’ (each with 13 selections. 81% of the cohort), followed by ‘learning environment’ (12 selections/75%) and ‘learning styles’ (11 selections/69%) and ‘kapa haka’ (87 selections/50%). The fact that ‘fellow students’ rated so highly is significant in view of the fact that immersion programs rely heavily on the level of interaction among participants. The fact that half of the participants selected kapa haka as a highlight is an indication of the students’ appreciation of the cultural context in which the learning program operated.

Although over one third of the participants indicated that personal issues had impacted in a negative way on their learning and one quarter that financial

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problems had done so, none selected ‘learning problems.’ This suggests that the team may need to give more attention in the future to the provision of extra-curricular support and, in particular, attempt to ensure that the University’s scholarship program (which is constantly under threat) is continued and, if possible, improved.

So far as the academic program itself is concerned, all 15 who responded to the relevant questions indicated that they considered the pace of learning to be ‘sufficiently demanding’ and the workload to be ‘about right.’ However, while all of those who responded to a question relating to activities (13/ 81%) indicated that they believed that there had been sufficient variety in the activities offered, three had reservations, with one expressing the view that there should be more *kapa haka* and another that there should be more in-class discussion and a third indicating that some areas of the program included more varied activities than others. Furthermore, when asked which of three things not currently included in the program they would like to see included, over half selected guest speakers and/or *ngā mōteatea* (laments - an important Māori verbal art form), with a smaller number (5/31%) selecting critical research. All of these things could be accommodated within the program.

So far as the context in which the program operates is concerned, all of those who responded indicated that they believed they had been supported by the School within which the program operates, with one commenting specifically on the School’s positive *wairua* (spirit) and three on the quality and dedication of the teaching staff. There was, however, one comment about the better use of its *marae* (Māori meeting house) by another university, something which is clearly worth giving careful consideration in planning programs in the future.

Although it is not possible to provide proficiency test scores, the students clearly believed that their proficiency gains on exit from the program were in line with their expectations on entry. Furthermore, I referred above to the fact that there are many different ways of measuring the effectiveness of language immersion programs. By any of these, this program seems to have performed well.

Notes

¹There was also an English version of the Treaty of Waitangi.

²A *marae* in contemporary terms is the traditional/formal gathering place of Māori, where they are able to engage in their traditional rituals and cultural traditions.

³Two of these are named after a distinguished ancestor.

⁴This literature review relies heavily on other literature reviews that I have written for other purposes, see for example Nock, 2010 and Nock, 2006.

⁵Following observations he made during a language conference in 1993 that showcased the immersion efforts of the Hawaiians, Greymorning (1997) estimated that for students to become fluent in a language they generally require a minimum of between 600 and 700 contact hours.

⁶A copy of the questionnaire and be obtained by contacting the author.

⁷The name of another university was supplied here.

⁸There is clearly an urgent need for the development of an effective, validated proficiency test instrument that can be used to provide a much clearer indication of progress.

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