

# 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

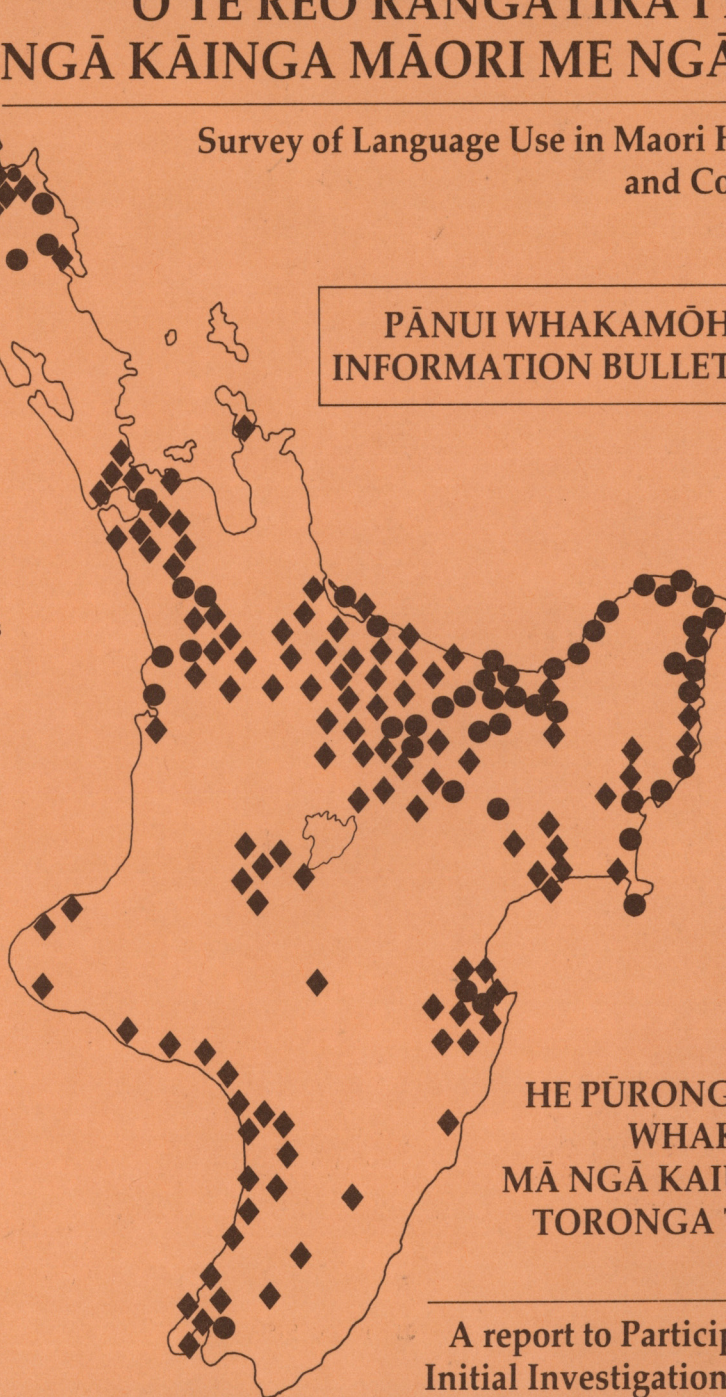
PĀNUI WHAKAMŌHIO  
INFORMATION BULLETIN

52

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



## THE MAORI LANGUAGE IN NGARUAWAHIA

Fieldwork for the census of language use in Maori communities took place in 34 households in Ngaruawahia in January 1976. The interviewers were Ameria Ponika (Tuhoe) and Joe Rua (Te Whanau-a-Apanui). Eighteen interviews were carried out partly or entirely in Maori; the rest were in English.

The households surveyed had a total population of 208, of whom 205 were of Maori descent. This was about an eighth of the Maori population of Ngaruawahia at the time.

### RESULTS OF THE LINGUISTIC SURVEY

#### *Iwi Affiliation*

The people interviewed mentioned 10 major iwi to which they or members of their households belonged. Waikato with 165 members, more than three-quarters of the total, was the largest tribal group in the survey.

#### *Ability To Speak And Understand Maori*

The table on the next page shows that about one-fifth of the people surveyed spoke Maori fluently while nearly half of them understood the language well. More than three-quarters of these fluent speakers were over the age of 45, and there were no speakers of Maori under 25. A quarter of this age group, however, understood the language with ease, although nearly half of them knew only a little or no Maori at that time.



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



KNOWLEDGE OF SPOKEN MAORI IN NGARUAWAHIA (1976)

Age Group	Fluent Speakers		Understand Easily		Limited Understanding		No Knowledge	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
45 & over	32	80	39	98	0		1	2
25-44	7	25	19	68	4	14	5	18
15-24	0		18	46	5	13	16	41
2-14	0		18	18	34	35	46	47
Overall	39	19	94	46	43	21	68	33

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

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*The Maori Language In The Household*

English was the main language spoken in most households visited. There were 29 homes with dependent children, and in 27 of them people spoke only English. While Maori was sometimes spoken by parents in the other two homes, English was still the main language for everyday use.

In the 5 childless households people also spoke mostly or only in English.

*The Maori Language In The Community*

English was also the main language spoken in the community. Although more than half the people over 25 in the families we

visited could speak Maori well, the people most likely to do so were kaumatua over the age of 45. Most of them preferred to use Maori with Maori-speaking friends and neighbours, but the people they talked with in Ngaruawahia usually spoke only English.

The Maori language still remained important, however, in ceremonies on the marae and for speeches on important occasions such as weddings, birthdays and sports club hui.

If any two members of the Maori community in Ngaruawahia were to meet unexpectedly the chances were 1 in 10 that they could understand each other in Maori. If both people were adults over the age of 25, the chances were about 1 in 2. At the time of the survey none of the children could speak Maori fluently.

*Attitudes Towards The Language*

Many of the people interviewed were worried that fewer and fewer people knew Maori in the area, especially the younger people. Many parents were sorry that they weren't good enough at Maori to teach it to their own children. Parents who did try to teach Maori in the home often found that they were wasting their time as children were more interested in watching television or listening to the radio.

Grandparents, therefore, played an important role in passing on the Maori language to their mokopuna, while a lot of people wanted the language taught in schools.

Some people said that Maori was a language of the past, or one that belonged only on the marae. These people thought that, because everyone in Ngaruawahia understood English, knowing English better was more useful than knowing Maori, when it came to finding a job.



CONCLUSION

At the time of the survey, all those who spoke Maori in Ngaruawahia well were adults over the age of 25. More than three-quarters of this age group also understood the language well. Although none of the people under 25 spoke Maori fluently, a quarter of them understood the language well.

Although English was the main language spoken in most households and in the community, many parents thought that a knowledge of Maori was important. However, nearly all the programmes on television and radio were in English, and this made the teaching of Maori in the homes difficult and uninteresting.

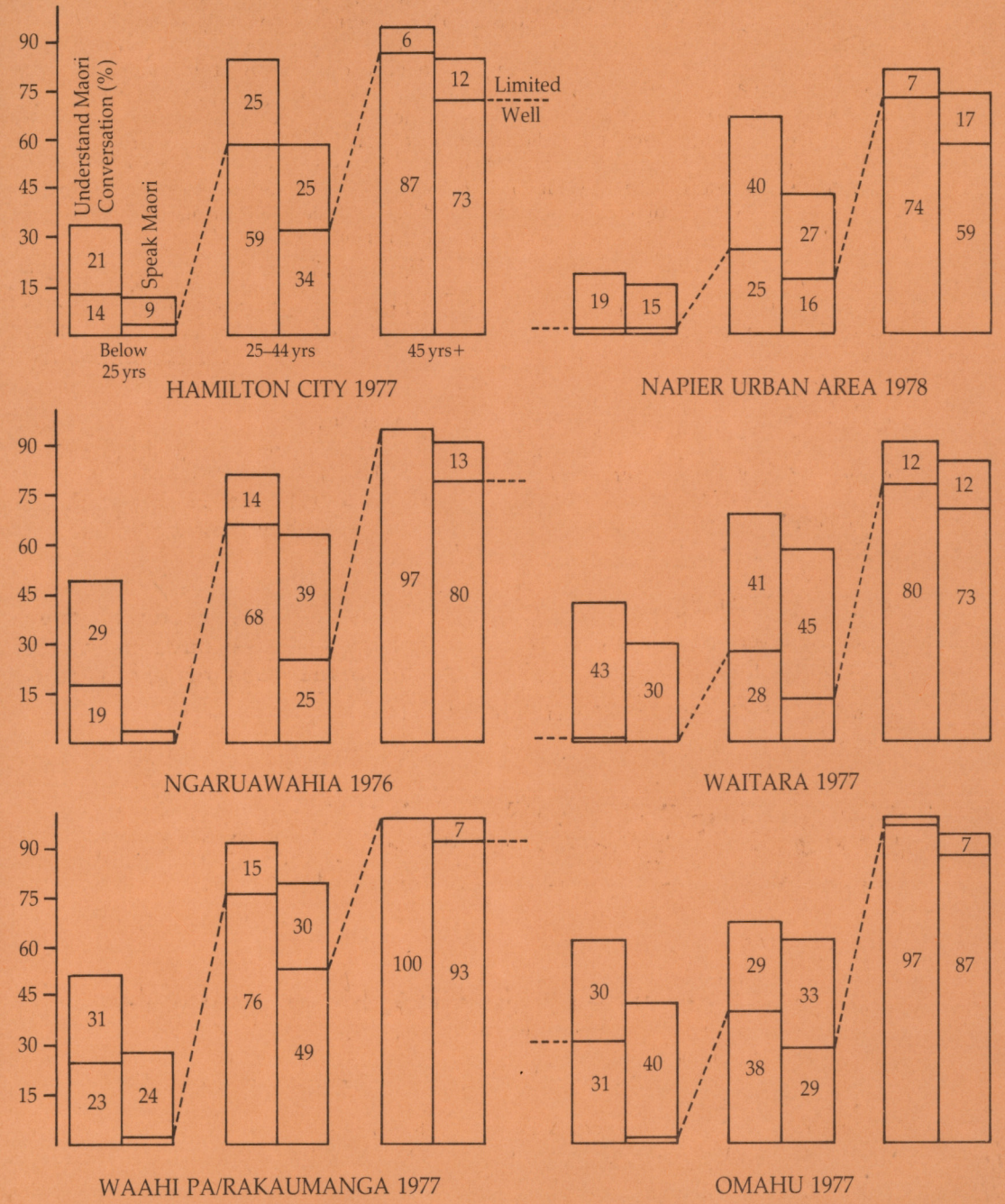
Many people thought that it was too late for young people today to learn the language, and that its chief use was in important ceremonies on the marae. Others were still hopeful that their children might get the chance to learn how to speak Maori really well.

Recently, the Department of Maori Affairs have promoted the language in such schemes as Te Kohanga Reo. These have been recognized as doing a lot to prevent the total loss of Maori as a language for everyday use in the area.

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

Our first thanks must go to the 6,500 Maori families who entrusted us with the information presented in this series of reports. Fieldwork for the survey was funded substantially by contributions from the Lottery Board of Control, Fletcher Holdings Limited, the Maori Purposes Fund, and the Maori Education Foundation. The coding and analysis of the data was supported initially by a grant from Fletcher Holdings Limited, and further financial assistance for these purposes has been provided by Mobil Oil N.Z. Limited, the Post Primary Teachers Association, the New Zealand Educational Institute and the Raukawa Trustees. The writing of these reports was made possible by the generosity of the J.R. McKenzie Trust.