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Teaching and Learning an Indigenous Language Through its Narratives: Māori in Aotearoa/New Zealand

INTRODUCTION [1]

In a society which is based on oral tradition, the contribution of those individuals who are vested by their society with significant knowledge of, and stature in the culture, is vital in the propagation of knowledge. These individuals, referred to as 'repositories' play an important role in Aoteaoroa /New Zealand in the preservation of Māori as a living and taught language.

One teaching method used widely in Aotearoa/New Zealand, the *Te Whanake* collection, while essentially a resource for teaching Māori as a second language to adults, also features narratives by well-known repositories of Māori knowledge across Aotearoa/New Zealand who saw the importance of the written word as a tool to aid in the survival of the Māori language, history and culture. Within the collection, the voices of these repositories echo the idiosyncrasies of the tribes to which they belong, thus providing a cross-sectional glimpse into various aspects of the Māori world.

In the Māori world, people with a deep knowledge of their tribal culture, history and traditions and with fluency in the language are highly respected by their own tribe and Māori people in general. They are regarded as repositories of this knowledge, much of which will have been handed down from earlier generations. Prior to colonisation, this knowledge was transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth. However, most modern Māori do not have the finely-honed memory necessary to maintain such an oral tradition because of changing traditions which de-emphasise the spoken transfer of cultural knowledge. Thus they must use modern technology to preserve this knowledge, whether this be the written word or audio or video recording equipment. The passing of people who do have a deep knowledge of their tribal culture, history and traditions is lamented, partly because with their death, so much of what they know is lost to Māoridom forever. To retain that knowledge for future generations is important. However, knowledge is passed on only if the person with the knowledge is confident that it will be used only in an appropriate manner, and for the benefit of the tribe or wider Māori community. Permission to publish some of this knowledge requires the confidence of people imparting the knowledge that it will benefit future generations of their people. Thus trust and

integrity are key ingredients in the relationship between the 'repository' and the recipient of the knowledge which will be shared.

The *Te Whanake* collection was developed in an exciting era near the beginning of what is commonly referred to as the Māori Renaissance, a cultural explosion of initiatives by Māori people of all ages across the country to reassert and reaffirm Māori identity. Central to this renaissance was the Māori language. Efforts to increase the use of the language have been made on a wide range of fronts, including in the fields of education (from early childhood to tertiary), of the visual and performing arts, of sport and recreation, and of the media, especially radio and television. The belief among Māori is that the language is the key to a deeper understanding of the culture and their world-view and values. As a result, there has been a strong revival in the use of Māori language in a wide variety of domains. Improving their ability to use Māori is an important aim of many Māori of all ages. Despite this revival, in 1995 only 59% of Māori adults spoke the language to some extent and only 16.6% spoke Māori with medium to high fluency.[2]

The primary focus of the author's research and writing has been on developing the collection to contribute to the collective effort towards Māori language revitalisation nationally with the intention that Māori remains a vibrant language used in a wide variety of contexts. The author also views the collection as providing a voice for Māori repositories who do not have the time to publish their knowledge as indigenous scholars because of the huge demands on their time from their own communities. This is a demonstration of the cultural concept of *tauutuutu* (reciprocity) in appreciation of the trust these repositories had in the author to publish their knowledge with accuracy and dignity.

The focus of this article is on the importance of the narratives by native speakers of Māori that have been included in the *Te Whanake* series. These narratives have either been written especially for specific parts of the various texts, or have been selected from sources not readily available for the themes of particular chapters. The quality of language, as well as the relevance to the themes, has been important in the selection.

Incorporating these narratives by native speakers of Māori implied an adherence to important ethical principles. I conclude this article by identifying these issues for the benefit of others who may wish to use language materials by speakers and writers of indigenous languages. These ethical procedures are discussed at the end of the article.

AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE STRUGGLE FOR THE SURVIVAL OF THE MĀORI LANGUAGE

The significance of the *Te Whanake* Collection in the 21st century as a tool for language survival is best understood by explaining the struggle the Māori language has had to survive the risk of extinction since the early 1800s.

Since the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840[3], and up to the latter part of the twentieth century, the dominant European population thought that once Māori were shown the superiority of the European way, they would reject their own language and culture, and adopt that of the dominant society. Instead, Māori have rejected assimilation; but despite this rejection, the battle to preserve the language has been arduous.

Missionaries introduced education to Aotearoa/New Zealand at the beginning of colonisation in 1816 and the Māori language was the language of instruction. The 1847 Education Ordinance Act gave rise to assimilation and the state education system provided the mechanism to advance this government policy. By the 1850s the European population had exceeded that of the Māori population and the decline in Māori numbers continued as a result of the Land Wars of the 1860s and deaths from introduced diseases. But it was not until the early 1900s with the banning of Māori language in schools that the language began to decline. The view of the Director of Education in 1930, Mr T B Strong, that "the natural abandonment of the native tongue involves no loss to the Māori" was shared by the dominant European society and, sadly, by some Māori. [4]

By the mid-1970s, the Māori language was in great danger of becoming extinct as a medium of everyday communication. Fluency was restricted to a small number of speakers, many of them middle-aged and older, who resided largely in rural areas. Fluent Māori speakers were outnumbered four to one by predominantly English-speaking people of Māori descent. The conclusion was obvious – the viability of the Māori language as a language of daily communication was in serious doubt. Drastic measures were needed to ensure its survival. It is against this background that one can begin to explain the origin of *kaupapa Māori* education. A range of immersion options were arranged. The Te Kōhanga Reo (immersion Māori language early childhood centre) movement was a Māori initiative. The idea of setting up preschool centres where the Māori language would be the medium of communication was advanced by a national gathering of Māori leaders. The first Te Kōhanga Reo centre was established in 1982 and by 1997 there were a total of 675 Te Kōhanga Reo centres catering to 13,505 children.[5] Funded initially by Māori communities, these centres eventually received financial help from the government. Kura *Kaupapa Māori* (immersion Māori language primary schools) followed, the first being established in 1985.[6] And finally, the first of Wānanga or tribal colleges/universities, Te Wānanga o Raukawa, began in Ōtaki in 1981 and two others have been established since then.[7] One of these, Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, has grown to be the tertiary institution with the largest number of students in Aotearoa/New Zealand with an enrolment of 29,677 in 2004.[8]

This educational intervention strategy is a reflection of Māori resurgence and the quest for self-determination. It is an example of Māori people in Aotearoa/New Zealand reclaiming power and autonomy; they were no longer willing to participate in the cultural reproduction of mainstream education. *Kaupapa Māori* initiatives have played a critical role over the last two decades in contributing to the establishment of a platform to support a generation of growth and development of the Māori language for the next twenty-five years. Sadly, there is a dearth of language resources available to enhance this development and resurgence in the language. The *Te Whanake* series has tried to remedy this and is a key resource in secondary schools and tertiary providers, including Wānanga, in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

THE *TE WHANAKE* COLLECTION

The *Te Whanake* collection of narratives and associated resources has been developed over twenty-five years of tertiary research and teaching in an effort to support Māori language teaching to adults, with the aim of seeing the language flourish. The collection is used widely in university

and other tertiary institutions in Aotearoa/New Zealand to help learners and teachers of Māori. It has now become the benchmark in Aotearoa used to assess the learner's level of ability in the Māori language in the tertiary education sector. This collection has been developed by researching second language teaching methodologies and devising a teaching methodology that is based on how developing bilinguals learn their second language, using appropriate methods which allow the incorporation of cultural values into formal classes. *Te Whanake* also gives voice to Māori repositories of knowledge, recalling their histories and traditions, while observing ethics appropriate for indigenous research and writing. It is this latter aspect which will be the main focus of this article.

Te Whanake is a collection of four graduated Māori language books, with accompanying resources, for adult and teenage learners of Māori, the indigenous language of Aotearoa/New Zealand.[9] As well as the four graduated Māori language books, there are audio tapes, CDs, videotapes, study guides, teachers' manuals and a dictionary/index.

A significant part of the *Te Whanake* collection is the narratives by elders and experts from both the recent past and from the 19th Century. Many of the narratives used to develop language skills have been selected or written by fluent Māori speakers and writers especially for the collection. In order to show how the words of these people have been used in the collection I will discuss a small selection of these experts and describe what each has contributed.

Dr Hirini Melbourne

Dr Hirini Melbourne (1950-2003) of Ngāi Tāhoe and Ngāti Kahungunu when he was Associate Professor at The University of Waikato.

(Photograph used with permission of Campus Photography, The University of Waikato.)

Music is an important part of most Māori gatherings and it is important that music is included in Māori language programmes as it helps the process of learning the language. When I developed the third book in the collection, *Te Māhuri*, Hirini Melbourne wrote the narrative about traditional Māori musical instruments. He also features on some of the *Te Whanake* videotapes discussing and playing the traditional instruments.

Hirini Melbourne died at the beginning of 2003 at the young age of fifty-two. A native speaker of Māori and an academic at The University of Waikato, he was the single most important leader and researcher in the revival of the use of traditional Māori musical instruments. His method of researching and reviving the playing of the forgotten traditional musical instruments is an excellent example of indigenous research. He led a group of dedicated Māori music players and instrument makers, called *Haumanu*. By researching the written sources about the instruments and gathering snippets of oral information from a variety of people and Māori communities, Hirini and others have been able to revive the making and playing of the instruments.

Hirini was a composer, singer and player of, initially the guitar, but later of the traditional instruments as well. He always composed and sang his songs in Māori in a style that appeals to both young and old. He began composing and singing his music in a popular modern style at a time when few were doing so in Māori. Compositions and music at that stage were mainly in the traditional Māori genre or in English. The lyrics of his compositions cover a range of topics, from songs about birds, insects and the natural environment to protest songs about the destruction of the environment and songs about, and using, the traditional instruments.

Hirini was happy for me to use his recordings for the audio and videotaped materials of the *Te Whanake* series, and composed some songs specifically to complement the language topics in the collection.

Dr Wharehuia Milroy

Dr James Wharehuia Milroy QSO (1937-) from Ngāi Tūhoe, leader, orator, expert in Māori language and customs. Former Professor of Māori at The University of Waikato where he was awarded an honorary doctorate in 2005.

(Photograph used with permission of Campus Photography, The University of Waikato.)

Wharehuia Milroy has been the biggest contributor of narratives to the collection. His narratives are on a range of topics including: types of language – aphorisms, proverbs, tribal sayings, idioms, metaphors, similes, colloquialisms and prophetic sayings; dialectal differences; the life of Hoani Te Rangiāniwaniwa Rangihau, another great Māori orator; the nature of Māori humour; Māori spirituality; the importance of genealogical (w*hakapapa*) knowledge; the concept of *mana*; and Māori oratory (*whaikōrero*).

Wharehuia Milroy is a highly respected elder of the Tūhoe tribe. He comes from a very traditional Tūhoe tribal background. Traditionally, Māori relied on a highly developed oral tradition, which Wharehuia is continuing. Like his Tūhoe ancestors, he has a finely-tuned memory and is one of the most accomplished exponents of the art of *whaikōrero*, or Māori oratory, in the country. For a number of years Wharehuia contributed a weekly ten-minute programme in Māori on National Radio, commenting on issues of topical interest to Māori. At that time, my office at The University of Waikato was next to his, with a connecting door which we usually left open. On the day he was due to record his weekly comment, he would sometimes ask me to suggest a topic to talk about. I would suggest some topics, one of which he might choose. The next minute he was on the phone to the recording studio at National Radio recording his programme. For me, he was the Alistair Cook of Māori Radio. This ability to speak fluently and with depth on interesting topics without preparation or notes, an ability also possessed by others who have contributed to *Te Whanake*, never ceased to amaze me.

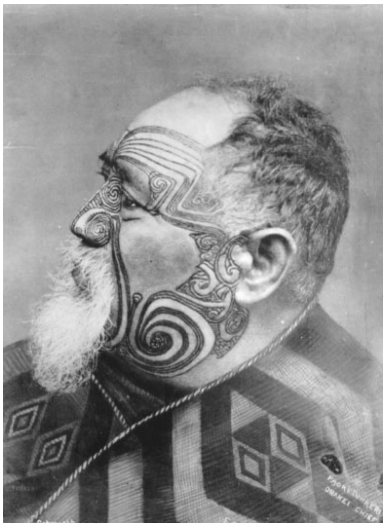
All of the topics within the *Te Whanake* collection to which Wharehuia contributed were initially narrated by Wharehuia and recorded on audio tape. These were then transcribed by me and then returned to him to check and amend where necessary. This has been an effective way of writing narratives that might never have been written down by Wharehuia. With his commitment to his tribal group, Ngāi Tūhoe, other Māori, and the constant demands from a wide range of people and organisations because of his knowledge of Māori language and culture, he has little time to write. The system I have just outlined proved very effective in capturing a little of this man's wealth of knowledge of Māori language, culture and history.

He has been recorded a number of times on a national television programme called *Waka Huia*. This is a programme in Māori which records traditional knowledge by tribal experts fluent in the language. *Waka Huia* is an hour-long weekly programme which has been broadcast for over 27 years. Appropriate extracts from a few of these programmes have been used on the videos of *Te Whanake*. Unfortunately, it has been difficult to access these *Waka Huia* programmes from Television New Zealand. Although it is Māori who have contributed their knowledge to the programmes, the financial costs to re-use them for educational purposes are prohibitive. The long saga to finally convince TVNZ to provide the video extracts for the *Te Whanake* videotapes at minimal cost has been repeated recently when I decided that the videos needed to be converted to DVDs. The battle to reduce the cost is an ongoing one.

Hoani Te Rangiāniwaniwa Rangihau

Like Wharehuia, Hoani Te Rangiāniwaniwa Rangihau (1919-1986) was a brilliant orator and speaker of Māori and English. He was a renowned *haka* and Māori performing arts exponent; the leader of his tribal group, Ngāi Tūhoe; a charismatic leader; and an authority on Māori language and custom. He has contributed narratives on such topics as: *kupu whakaari* (prophetic sayings of charismatic leaders); the beginnings of the Ringatū Church, a Māori Christian sect emphasising traditional Māori values; and the qualities of a *kapa haka* (performing arts) leader.

An illustration of one way that this man imparted his knowledge can be shown in the following anecdote. In 1979 I was asked to judge at a regional secondary schools Māori traditional performing arts competition. My role was to mark one aspect of the competition, that of the male leader in each group's performance. At that stage I had never been a judge of a Māori traditional performing arts competition, so I was very reluctant to undertake the task. I approached Hoani Rangihau to seek his backing to turn down the offer to judge. Instead he asked me to fetch a tape recorder and then proceeded to describe in detail in Māori all the qualities to look for in a male leader of the Māori traditional performing arts. I have no doubt that he was imparting this knowledge, not just for my immediate benefit, but for a wider audience. This is why I have transcribed most of what I recorded that day in 1979 and included it in the chapter in *Te Whanake 4 Te Kōhure* on the traditional Māori performing arts. Needless to say, I ended up being one of the judges at the competition.



Paora Tūhaere

Paora Tūhaere (?1825-1892), Ngāti Whātua leader who worked to reconcile the King Movement of the Waikato and the government after the wars of the 1860s.

(Photograph: Frederick Pulman. Used with the permission of the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. Reference #:96688 ½.)

Not all the narratives in the *Te Whanake* collection come from the second half of the 20th century. A number of the narratives used are by people who lived in the 19th century. One of these narratives is by the Ngāti Whātua leader, Paora Tūhaere, who died in 1892.

Paora Tūhaere and his hapū (subtribe) lived in the heart of what is now Auckland city. He attempted to retain ownership of the last of his tribe's land and was the principal leader in establishing Te Kotahitanga, a movement aimed at self-determination for Māori, while maintaining friendly relations with the government.

His narrative was written by him in 1868 or 1869, and the unpublished manuscript is held in the Auckland Public Library. I discovered the manuscript in the 1960s as a third year student at the University of Auckland, when completing my first degree. The eighteen page manuscript described the origins and migration south, over a period of several generations, of his Ngāti Whātua people from the northern end of the North Island to the Auckland district. The narrative contains interesting details about traditional tribal life, warfare, place names and tribal migrations. It is particularly important in describing the people who lived on the Auckland isthmus prior to the arrival of Europeans. This narrative is included in one of the chapters of *Te Whanake 4 Te Kōhure*, a chapter that is aimed at developing students' reading skills in Māori by providing texts that require them to gain an insight into traditional rights to ownership of land, traditional tribal life and social interaction.

Permission to publish the major part of this narrative needed to be obtained from the Ngāti Whātua people.

Hinemoa Ruby Grey

Such permission also had to be sought for the narrative by Hinemoa Ruby Grey, recorded for the television programme *Waka Huia*, which was also used on one of the videos for *Te Whanake*. This hour-long programme describes the history of Ngāti Whātua since colonisation.

Hinemoa Ruby Grey was the female leader of Ngāti Whātua, the same tribal group as Paora Tūhaere's, and the original owners of the Auckland isthmus on which the city now stands. Prior to her death a few years ago, Hinemoa Ruby Grey was one of the acknowledged leaders of this tribe. Hinemoa Grey's narrative continues the story of Ngāti Whātua from that of Paora

Tūhaere, describing the difficulties faced by the tribe as a result of urbanisation over several generations. The effects of urbanisation on this tribe were such that they had lost most of their land and there were few native speakers of Māori left. However, Hinemoa Ruby Grey was a fluent speaker of Māori.

Later in this article I will discuss how permission to use both Paora Tūhaere's and Hinemoa Ruby Grey's narratives for the *Te Whanake* collection was obtained.

Dr Tīmoti Kāretu

Dr Tīmoti Sam Kāretu (1937-) from Ngāi Tūhoe and Ngāti Kahungunu, teacher and scholar of Māori language and performing arts.

(Photograph: John Moorfield)

The final contributor to *Te Whanake* I wish to discuss is Tīmoti Kāretu, who was the inaugural Professor and Chairperson of Māori at The University of Waikato when I was a lecturer there. He was awarded an honorary Doctorate by Victoria University of Wellington in 2003. After leaving the University he became the Commissioner for Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, the Māori Language Commission, for a number of years. He has been a strong, uncompromising proponent of the use of the Māori language and a composer of songs of traditional genre, as well as a performer and judge of the traditional Māori performing arts competitions.

He has written the narrative on *waiata* and *haka* for the chapter in *Te Whanake 4 Te Kōhure* on the traditional Māori performing arts. He also provided the narrative about Kumeroa Ngoingoi Pēwhairangi, a charismatic Māori woman leader, and composer of some well-known songs in Māori.

Te Kumeroa Ngoingoi Pēwhairangi (1921-1985) from Te Whānau-a-Ruataupare of Ngāti Porou, leader, songwriter, shearer, teacher, cultural adviser and co-founder of the Te Ātārangi language learning method.

(Photograph: Tānia M Ka'ai)

I have discussed this sample of contributors of narratives to the *Te Whanake* collection to give the reader some understanding of the way their contributions have been made. However, gaining access to such indigenous narratives requires much more than a single direct approach by a stranger. There are some aspects that seem to have been essential for the narratives to be included in the *Te Whanake* series. Perhaps there are important messages from my experiences for those wishing to engage in the collection and publication of indigenous narratives.

ETHICS IN USING NARRATIVES BY INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

When developing the *Te Whanake* collection, many distinctive ethical considerations came into play related to conducting research and collecting narratives from indigenous peoples, such as Māori. The first book of the collection was not written with publication in mind, but rather to produce a text that suited the cultural background and the needs of my own students learning Māori. It was respected Māori mentors who later encouraged publication for a wider audience. This highlights an important consideration when publishing on topics about indigenous people, namely to have the approval of those people. This is achieved through interaction and trust. Support and approval were unlikely to have been given if there had been a perception that there was no benefit to Māori. It is almost certain that the *Te Whanake* collection would never have been produced and published without that support.

Related to this is the requirement that the first beneficiaries of indigenous knowledge must be the direct indigenous descendants of such knowledge. Indigenous peoples are the guardians of their customary knowledge and have the right to protect and control dissemination of that knowledge. To adopt an attitude as a researcher and writer that one is merely a vehicle for the expression of Māori knowledge in an academic context, provides a sound basis from which to work among Māori communities. The obvious benefit to Māori from the *Te Whanake* collection is the help it provides for learning the language, as well as the cultural and historical knowledge contained in the narratives.

Researchers and writers need to observe indigenous protocols in the context of gathering the narratives or in conducting research. They need to allow for this in collecting the material. This includes a set time-frame, not only to negotiate access to the sources of indigenous knowledge and to collect the material, but also to take into consideration those cultural events and practices which are mostly unplanned. In the Māori world, this may include formal welcomes, *tangihanga* (burial rites) and other such family or tribal gatherings. The researcher and writer must be prepared to participate, if that is the expectation of the indigenous community. An example of this for the *Te Whanake* collection is when permission was being sought to use the Paora Tūhaere narrative and the video narrative by Hinemoa Ruby Grey about the Ngāti Whātua tribe's history mentioned earlier. Both of these people were leaders of their tribe, one in the second half of the 19th century and the other in the 1970s and 1980s. Permission was gained via a friend who belonged to and was respected by Ngāti Whātua and who spoke at a tribal gathering requesting their support to use the material.

It is of course important that the sources of the writing are acknowledged. In the past this has not always been done, an example from Aotearoa/New Zealand being the texts in Māori collected

by Sir George Grey, in the mid 19th Century. While most of his material was written by Māori, especially Wiremu Maihi Te Rangikāheke, none of these authors were acknowledged by Grey in his publications.

The researcher and writer, on completion of the research document or publication, should present a copy to the indigenous community from which the information was obtained and to each person who supported the production of the resource. In my case, I have always given copies of the publications to such people.

I have been extremely fortunate and privileged in having access to some of the most knowledgeable people of the Māori world, some of whom are now deceased. Some have been university colleagues and thus I have had ready access to them and their knowledge. I have no doubt that people like Hoani Te Rangiāniwaniwa Rangihau, Dr Hirini Melbourne and Dr Wharehuia Milroy imparted some of their knowledge to me with the expectation that I would in turn pass on that knowledge to others through my teaching and writing. Some have been mentors who have paved the way for me to continue my work unhindered. Through that support they have deflected any criticism from their own people about access to Māori knowledge being given to a non-Māori. I continue to try to repay the debt I owe those people.

1 The author acknowledges Tānia M Ka'ai, Dean and Professor of Te Tumu, the School of Māori, Pacific and Indigenous Studies at the University of Otago, who helped write this introduction.
2 Te Puni Kōkiri. *The National Māori Language Survey* (Te Puni Kōkiri: Wellington, 1996), 34.
3 The Treaty of Waitangi is the founding document of Aotearoa/New Zealand. It was established as a partnership between the British Crown and Māori as the indigenous people. It was signed on 6 February 1840 and has been the focus of controversy ever since. This has stemmed from the fact that two versions of the Treaty were produced. The Māori text, which was signed by both Māori and the Crown, was translated from the English text by a non-indigenous missionary. The translation was not at all a correct interpretation of the English text. It is the English text which has been used by the Crown as the definitive version and this is the cause of contention to this day between Māori and non-Māori.
4 See www.waitangi-tribunal.govt.nz/doclibrary/ public/wai262/knowledgecultural_pr/Chapt03.pdf
5 "Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori", *He Taonga Te Reo*. (Wellington, n.d.), 2-3.
6 "Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori", *He Taonga Te Reo*. (Wellington, n.d.), 2.
7 "Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori", *He Taonga Te Reo*. (Wellington, n.d.), 2.
8 *Waikato Time*s, 18 March, 2006, D2 18.
9 For further information about the *Te Whanake* resources refer to the bilingual website http://www.tewhanake.maori.nz as last visited on 15 April 2006.

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