



Language Revitalisation

KOTAHITANGA IN TE REO MĀORI REVITALISATION

Stacey Morrison

Te Arawa, Ngāi Tahu

Championing te reo Māori as a source of unifying strength for all New Zealanders is a passion for TV and radio broadcaster Stacey Morrison of Ngāi Tahu and Te Arawa. She is part of a multi-faceted approach to reo revitalisation through media, books and education and a community approach to engagement and language planning.

At Massey University, as a member of Te Pūtahi-a-Toi/The School of Māori Knowledge, Stacey helped launch Toro Mai, a global initiative to connect worldwide audiences with te reo Māori and Tikanga Māori, online and without cost. Stacey co-authored Māori at Home with husband Scotty and is about to release a new Māori language book for tamariki and their whānau. Stacey is an advisor, facilitator and teacher for Te Reo Matahiapo.

Abstract

Te Reo Matahiapo is a new Māori language revitalisation programme, funded by the Māori language revitalisation agency Te Mātāwai, which has a vision to restore te reo Māori as a nurturing first language. Based in Auckland, it brings together three Urban Māori organisations: Manukau Urban Māori Authority (MUMA), Manurewa Marae and Te Whānau o Waipareira Trust. Te Reo Matahiapo will be strengthened by a collaborative approach across the three organisations, however the rollout of kaupapa will be distinct to each community. Providing opportunities to address common barriers such as whakamā, or embarrassment and language trauma from past experiences, activities can be approached with fun and whanaungatanga. The development of new, whānau-based indicators will provide meaningful information and data, ensuring that whānau and community narratives are captured. In coming together as three Māori organisations, co-designing with our communities, and being led by whānau, Te Reo Matahiapo is an example of how sharing experiences and resources can strengthen approach, and boost results and healing of language trauma.

Key words: te reo Māori, language, Collective Impact, trauma, kotahitanga

Te Reo Matahāpo

At this critical point in the history of Māori language revitalisation, the notion of kotahitanga (unity) has not often been seen as a potential tool of catalyst. As a concept, kotahitanga embraces diversity, a unified approach, which aims to offer a legacy of ongoing vitality for te reo Māori. The 'Te Reo Matahāpo' reo vitalisation project is founded on this principle, and the idea of maximising outcomes through Collective Impact. Collective Impact (CI) gathers resources and uses research and data to help an organisation's activity or investment through the establishment of a common agenda, shared and agreed measures as well as systematic alignment of efforts. In the case of Te Reo Matahāpo, it also ensures impact across our biggest city and the world's largest Māori population.

Te Reo Matahāpo is the new Māori language revitalisation programme. Based in Auckland, it brings together three Urban Māori organisations: Manukau Urban Māori Authority (MUMA), Manurewa Marae and Te Whānau o Waipareira Trust. The opportunity to create such a collective has risen from the Māori language revitalisation agency Te Mātāwai, in the Te Reo Tūkutu tranche, which includes Urban Māori. Te Mātāwai's overarching vision is: Kia ūkaipō anō te reo Māori: Te reo Māori is restored as a nurturing first language. This vision is as bold as it needs to be, and recognises that unless te reo Māori is spoken in our homes, and there is intergenerational transmission of Māori from parents and grandparents to tamariki, we will not truly revitalise and save te reo Māori from the endangered state it currently sits in.

Te Reo Matahāpo's goal is to make meaningful impact on reo capabilities and use for Urban Māori living in Auckland. Capability is a logical place to start setting reo goals, but the use of te reo Māori is, in my view, even more important. Many of our people can hold a conversation in te reo Māori, however, they are not using it on an everyday basis, and especially within their homes. Māori is the main language of only 2.6% of our homes according to the census in 2013¹ and although 20.5% of us said we use Māori regularly, it is difficult to determine what this means in terms of fluency, quality, and 'intergenerational transmission'.

As much as Kōhanga Reo, Kura Kaupapa, Te Ataarangi and other academic movements have been critical to the revitalisation of te reo Māori in the last forty years, our homes are the true strongholds of revitalisation that we urgently need to strengthen. Te Reo Matahāpo communities can play a significant role in building an environment where engagement with te reo Māori, increased capacity in te reo Māori, and use of te reo Māori leads to more Māori being spoken in our homes. An element of a positive environment for reo revitalisation is an established relationship and trust. Such as Auckland whānau have with MUMA, Waipareira and Manurewa Marae, which will mean they're more likely to engage with the reo programmes they offer. The flexibility of timing and style of delivery of these programmes enables whānau to engage, where other reo opportunities may be out of their reach. Formal Māori language study and night classes simply can't fit in to the schedule of many whānau, and high demand for these courses can be another barrier to engagement.

¹ Statistics New Zealand (2013). Te Kupenga. Retrieved from: http://archive.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/people_and_communities/maori/TeKupenga_HOTP13/Commentary.aspx#use

Collective Impact

Kotahitanga in the Collective Impact model for Te Reo Matahāpo ensures collaboration and most efficient use of resources across the three organisations. For example, in key areas such as: large connectivity events bringing whānau from the wider community together, community-focused reo resources, research and evaluation, and project management support. With good practice we can collaborate when it's valuable, so as not to duplicate effort and make good use of resources.

Within this collaboration, maintaining and protecting the mana motuhake (distinct identity) of each hāpori is essential, allowing whānau to co-design reo experiences that will best work for them, and that resonate for them. Urban Māori in Auckland have diverse cultural needs and expectations. As this relates to te reo revitalisation, Te Reo Matahāpo organisations are unified in their approach, likewise the idea that a generic or uniform approach is unlikely to resonate with all communities. The nature of reo classes, events, and usage strategies will be strengthened by a collaborative approach across the three organisations, but ultimately the rollout of kaupapa will be distinct to each community.

There are also programmes and events each of these organisations run that, with strategy and resource, can be developed to incorporate Māori language where they haven't before. Familiar and loved activities such as waka ama, can, when matched with a reo strategy, help bring te reo Māori into a context that is instantly relevant and enjoyable for these whānau, which are two positive associations likely to create an increase in Māori language usage. Reo hubs such as these build a capacity and confidence in people who may not have necessarily engaged with formal te reo Māori lessons, which can be intimidating.

Challenges

A challenge I've encountered in co-design for reo revitalisation however is a disconnection between what we believe we need to progress our fluency, and what we actually need. For instance, people may ask for one-on-one training, when in fact learning in a group, having more people to speak Māori with and experiencing the whanaungatanga that comes along with a class would be more beneficial. The appeal of one-on-one training in that person's mind, may be to avoid the whakamā, or embarrassment, of making mistakes in front of others, or not being able to keep up with the group. Another issue students face is that the New Zealand schooling system generally doesn't focus on linguistic terms, and so we don't know grammatical terms like 'past, present, and continuous' in English, let alone what they might mean when it comes to learning Māori. Terms like 'statives and passive verbs' quickly bamboozle us, and put us off learning. That problem can be mitigated by a less grammatical, and more oral approach, but there's still a maze of challenges our adult Māori language learners are battling.

The biggest impediment is certainly whakamā – embarrassment. Learning any language as an adult is humbling, and hard, but learning the language of your ancestors, that should have been yours as a birthright, that was actively taken from your whānau, brings up knots of frustration that are very hard to unpack. These are manifestations of our language trauma – the trauma and mamae (pain) that resides in us because of acts such as our kaumātua being beaten at school for speaking Māori, the status of te reo Māori being battered by media and educators as being primitive and having no value in New Zealand society, and sometimes

because our own people have made us feel inadequate about our reo skills.

The effects of language trauma can be hard to identify. Kura Whakarauora (language planning courses) in particular have given me insights on this, with particular thanks to the kōrero of our colleague Professor Rawinia Higgins. There's often tears, as whānau share stories of the deep shame they've felt about not being able to speak Māori, of the hurtful experiences they've had when trying to learn, and of feeling a reluctance to even approach learning te reo, because they're scared they're going to fail, and fail their whānau as a result.

He aha te rongoā mō taua mamae? What is the remedy for this pain? Ko te aroha. It is compassion. Compassion for ourselves, for the devastating path our language has been forced down, and aroha for each other, when we are brave enough to be vulnerable, and approach learning te reo Māori, even when language trauma rears its hurtful head.

Engaging in a supportive environment, with people you trust (such as those created by the organisations of Te Reo Matahiapo) will help, and lead to more willing engagement with te reo too. I also believe fun and whanaungatanga can be underestimated and dismissed in assessment but we need to capture how fun experiences can offer baby steps to engaging, especially with formal learning, and having positive reo learning experiences is a panacea for the language trauma that resides in so many of our people. When we are having fun, we can almost forget we're learning, and importantly, find ourselves interacting with others in Māori language as we never have before.

Research And Evaluation

The research and evaluation approach for Te Reo Matahiapo is kaupapa Māori based and, as such, can encompass aspects, and impacts of this programme with a holistic view of reo learning experiences for our people, including how issues such as language trauma can impact engagement. This unique evaluation model could also reflect the role that environment and hapori play in how well whānau engage with reo programmes.

A Shared Measurement System (SMS) is a vital component of any partnership initiative, especially in terms of partners coming to a collective agreement and practicing kotahitanga in how they will measure and report success. To build this model, Te Reo Matahiapo is engaging with whānau and experts and I am hopeful for the development of new, nuanced, community/whānau-based indicators that will provide meaningful information and data, ensuring that whānau and community narratives are captured. I expect this measurement system to provide valuable insights into measurable growth in language capacity and factors that impact engagement for whānau, including barriers, approach and environment.

Conclusion

To make sustained, genuine change in the Māori language used in our communities, we need consistency and reliability in the delivery of reo programmes through a long-term approach. Te Reo Matahiapo has an over-arching five-year vision to utilise the combined strength of our three Urban Māori organisations based in Tāmaki Makaurau to consolidate and further embed genuine reo transformation in our communities, led by, and in partnership with our hapori. In the first six months of this project, foundations are being set, and providing results, and funding for year two of Te Reo Matahiapo has been supported by Te Mātāwai. Co-design ensures buy-in from our community, as we meet their needs, and deliver reo-enhancing kaupapa with the aim of increased engagement, reo use and ultimately te tukuihotanga o te reo – intergenerational use and transmission of te reo Māori in our whānau and communities.

Kotahitanga, and taiao Māori are central to the success of Te Reo Matahiapo. Kotahitanga is key to our collective healing of language trauma, the way it manifests in whakamā, and resistance to engaging in te reo Māori learning. In coming together as three Māori organisations, co-designing with our communities, and being led by whānau, Te Reo Matahiapo is an example of how sharing experiences and resources can strengthen approach, and boost results and healing of language trauma. The agility of this model is also paramount, so that whānau can express the kaupapa that are of most interest to them, for example waka ama, and then te reo Māori can be brought into that environment. This is also another important factor, for when we are engaged, feel safe and connected, we are in a positive mindset that counters language trauma and emphasises fun and positive experiences associated with te reo Māori. Each hapori engaged with Te Reo Matahiapo has an approach as unique as they are. The diversity of approach is protected, and valued, as is the unity in focus to reach our goal: Kia ūkaipō anō te reo Māori – restoring te reo Māori as a nurturing first language for our people.