



Te reo o te rangatahi

Summary

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Abstract

Te Wāhanga—NZCER was commissioned by Te Mātāwai to undertake an exploratory research project into rangatahi exposure to, and use of, te reo Māori. We used a kaupapa Māori mixed-methods approach. The study involved 19 rangatahi, aged between 13 and 23 years, from four regions. The study took place from January 2019 to February 2020. The study focused on aspects of rangatahi use of, and exposure to, te reo Māori (ā-waha, ā-tuhi, ā-tinana), and their motivations for using te reo Māori.

Natural language was gathered in a range of contexts through video and audio recording rangatahi, interviewing rangatahi, still photography and self report by rangatahi, and through an internet search of reo Māori content online. These mixed data-gathering methods resulted in the collection of rich datasets of reo ā-tuhi, reo ā-tinana, fieldnotes and reflections, and a small reo ā-waha corpus of spoken reo Māori from rangatahi, images, and video and audio recordings. Analyses using qualitative and quantitative approaches gave results and findings that are not generalisable to the broader population. Rather, these results and findings provide valuable insights into how rangatahi are being exposed to te reo Māori and how they are using the language, and indicate ways in which rangatahi can be further supported.

Findings direct attention to people—including rangatahi themselves—and their roles and actions that contribute to an environment where rangatahi hear, see, and use te reo Māori. There were indications that rangatahi proficiency, desire, and motivation to use te reo Māori had its grounding both in strong reo-Māori immersion environments at home and at kura, and in a critical awareness that rangatahi had of their role in reo Māori revitalisation.

Rangatahi in the study were sufficiently proficient to talk about everyday topics, and to meet their day-to-day language needs. They were also using te reo ā-tuhi and ā-tinana to interact and make meaning. They mostly heard te reo Māori from, and used it with, whānau, friends, and kaiako in places where the tikanga to kōrero Māori was set. Private spaces where everyone spoke te reo Māori with one another were the highest reo Māori density contexts. In public spaces, reo Māori density was reduced by ambient English. Our findings that rangatahi in the study were using te reo Māori proficiently, and were being innovative with te reo Māori, are good news. Through use and innovation, rangatahi are contributing to te reo Māori being a vibrant and living language. This is a heartening sign for reo Māori revitalisation. Word play and innovation is fun and is a feature of the language of young people around the world. It can motivate people to use te reo Māori, and improve attitudes towards te reo.



Summary:

Supporting rangatahi to use te reo Māori

This summary is for language advocates, planners, whānau, and others who want to support rangatahi to use te reo Māori. It looks at how rangatahi were exposed to te reo Māori, how they used te reo Māori, and what motivated them to use te reo Māori.

How were rangatahi exposed to te reo Māori and how did they use it?

Rangatahi are seeing, hearing, and using te reo Māori in many forms in public, and in private.

Rangatahi are being exposed to more English than Māori in public.

Te reo ā-waha—spoken language

Rangatahi spoke te reo Māori naturally, both to communicate and to express themselves in day-to-day situations. They heard and spoke Māori in public (online and face to face) and in private.

- The most common places rangatahi used te reo Māori were at home and at kura.
- In public places, rangatahi heard more English than Māori.
- Rangatahi mostly heard te reo Māori from a few people, including kaiako, whanaunga, and friends.
- Rangatahi used te reo Māori for complex communicative functions such as whanaungatanga, whakawhitiwhiti whakaaro, wānanga take, auahatanga, and for other ways of communicating.

When rangatahi had someone to kōrero Māori with, they could use te reo Māori wherever they were.

When rangatahi had someone to kōrero Māori with, they could use te reo Māori anywhere. It was easier for rangatahi to speak Māori if the tikanga was to kōrero Māori and they were committed to using the language. Pou reo (language champions) were very important in setting tikanga to kōrero Māori. On the flip side, switching to English became easy if others chose to speak English.

Te Reo ā-tuhi—text and images

In public places, rangatahi were exposed to more English text and imagery than Māori. The type of things rangatahi saw in public or at home included:

- Māori text on signs, clothing, books, banners, posters, products, and lyric sheets
- signs with either Māori-only text, English-only text, or text in both languages
- Māori images including art, whakairo, taonga, pātaka, and māra kūmara.



Kaupapa Māori events such as Te Matatini and Matariki featured the most reo ā-tuhi. Event organisers, stall holders, and event participants made te reo Māori visible. However, most reo ā-tuhi in these places was temporary rather than permanent. This suggests that te reo Māori was not widely valued as a normal everyday language outside of special events.

Te reo ā-tinana—body language

Rangatahi communicated in Māori through their body language, which included: hugging, kissing, hongī, shaking hands, hand gestures, whistling, and pūkana and other eye movements.

Frequency, topics, vocabulary, grammar, and language change

Rangatahi use te reo Māori to talk about everyday topics.

Rangatahi were mostly using the same kind of high-frequency words that proficient adult speakers of modern Māori use to talk about a range of everyday topics.

Rangatahi are using te reo Māori in sophisticated and innovative ways.

Rangatahi use of grammar was mostly accurate. They were contributing to te reo Māori being a vibrant and living language by using it innovatively. They were playing with the language, creating new words, and using all the language they know to communicate (translanguaging).

Kōrero Māori—kōrero Pākehā? What bilingualism looks like

Rangatahi switched between Māori and English often. Here are some of the reasons why.

Rangatahi switched from speaking Māori into English when:

- English-language pause fillers (for example, oh, um, yeah) unconsciously “popped out”
- they did not know how to say a word in Māori/no equivalent term in Māori
- using or creating English or bilingual words or phrases popular with their age group
- using English proper nouns (for example, names of things, titles)
- responding to a person who has spoken to them in English
- they wanted to communicate quickly
- they wanted to explain something
- people to whom they were speaking did not speak Māori.



Rangatahi switched from speaking English into Māori when:

- they were in contexts where others expect te reo Māori to be used
- they had someone to kōrero Māori with
- they felt a personal commitment to kōrero Māori
- someone took responsibility for nudging them into speaking Māori
- they wanted to speak privately around non-Māori speakers
- using reo Māori proper nouns (for example, names of things, titles)
- reo Māori pause fillers (for example, āe) unconsciously popped out
- they wanted to communicate quickly.

What motivated rangatahi to use te reo Māori?

Rangatahi had high aspirations for te reo Māori. Here are some of the things that motivated them to use te reo Māori.

Mana—prestige

They see te reo Māori as an important and integral part of their world.

Pūkenga—personal growth

They want to themselves and for others to become capable and proficient reo Māori speakers.

Whakapapa—responsibility to future generations

They feel a responsibility to pass te reo Māori on to future generations.

Rangatiratanga—leadership

They have a desire to actively support strong reo Māori communities.



Using te reo Māori in public

The community has an important role in creating environments where te reo Māori is seen as normal and becomes easy to use.

What made it easier for rangatahi to use te reo Māori in public?

Reo ā-tuhi

An environment with visual cues (images and text) which signal that “this is a Māori space”, including:

- temporary and permanent bilingual Māori and English signage at a venue
- reo Māori on signage and products in stalls at events
- tā moko, and text and images worn or held by people—including, for example, taonga, T-shirts, and kete.

Reo ā-waha

People set expectations and encourage reo Māori use by:

- making te reo Māori an integral part of a kaupapa
- making public announcements in Māori
- acting as pou reo, by starting and having conversations with others in te reo Māori
- creating immersion domains (even small spaces!) where the expectation is that people will speak Māori.

What made it harder for rangatahi to use te reo Māori in public?

Barriers

Most bilingual signage in venues or locations was not permanent. In one public garden there were no visual or aural instances of te reo Māori at all. When signage is permanent it means that something is valued and normal.

Some people who could speak Māori chose to speak English. Supportive language environments, and most importantly people, can do a lot to encourage rangatahi to choose to speak Māori.



Using te reo Māori at home

Whānau can do a lot to normalise reo Māori at home. They can support tamariki and rangatahi to have the knowledge and confidence to use te reo Māori wherever they go.

What made it easier for rangatahi to use te reo Māori at home?
<p>Whānau supported rangatahi to use te reo Māori by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• showing rangatahi that te reo Māori was important to whānau• creating immersion spaces• speaking Māori to rangatahi and others• acting as pou reo who always use te reo Māori with the entire whānau• prompting rangatahi to switch from English to Māori• encouraging rangatahi to kōrero Māori with one another• having Māori images and language resources present in homes• participating in sports and other activities where te reo Māori is used• participating in Māori-medium education.
What made it harder for rangatahi to use te reo Māori at home?
<p>Barriers</p> <p>It can be hard to create immersion environments at home when not all members of a whānau are able to speak Māori, or when adults speak Māori to rangatahi, but default to English with others. Having any members of a whānau who can act as pou reo is still really helpful and important. Having language resources and access to Māori-medium education are also important.</p>

