

LAYPERSON'S SUMMARY

Language Planning and Policy: Factors that impact on successful language planning and policy



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'Kia ita!'

Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori

MĀORI LANGUAGE COMMISSION



This summary primarily focuses on language planning and policy (LPP) for te reo Māori and other indigenous languages. Researchers define LPP in various ways, but generally, language planning is seen as deliberate and systematic changes to a language. Another term which closely resembles the definition of LPP is language management. Bernard Spolsky (2004) defines language management as: "conscious and explicit efforts by language managers to control [language] choices" (p. 1)

What are the major categories of language planning and policy?

In general, LPP can be divided into three main categories;

1. *Status planning*: Focuses on decisions made for language choice and use at different levels of society, from the official decisions at a governmental level to an individual level: How do you choose the words you use, every minute of every day?
2. *Corpus planning*. How do experts write dictionaries, produce grammars or literacy manuals? Generally, involves language experts and the decisions they make about the ways to standardise and speak a language.
3. *Acquisition planning*. Focuses on the teaching and learning of languages, whether they're dominant languages or minority languages and generally involves the school sector.

Language planning may occur: at the *macro-level* (the state- top-down, government policies); at the *meso-level* where planning is sometimes government policy but with a narrower focus (the language needs for a particular business, for example); or the *micro-level* – community-based ‘bottom-up’ language planning (including, for example, individual school plans, community or whānau groups and individual households).

Aotearoa New Zealand

Māori language revitalisation in the last 40 years in Aotearoa New Zealand contains all three types of language planning. After the 1986 Waitangi Tribunal decision that te reo Māori is a taonga, or treasure, the language was made official and supported at the governmental level – particularly in education and the media (status planning). The Tribunal decision also led to the establishment of Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori (the Māori Language Commission). Te Taura Whiri was responsible for much of the early vocabulary development in relation to the use of

te reo Māori in key public domains (corpus planning). More recently, Te Taura Whiri has focused on supporting inter-generational language transmission which is critical to the long-term health of te reo Māori (acquisition planning). Agencies (e.g. Ministry of Education), organisations (e.g. Wānanga and Te Ātaarangi) and whānau and iwi groups have also been responsible for acquisition planning.

What is Language Planning?

Language planning activities have been going on for centuries around the world and can be considered as old as language itself. However, the emergence of LPP as an area of research is fairly recent, emerging in the 1950s-1960s in response to solving language problems in new, developing and postcolonial nations. LPP has been considered in changing ways, over time, which is detailed below.

1950s-1960s: emergence

Formal language planning started in Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and the Middle East. During this early LPP phase, researchers and policy makers were primarily preoccupied with laws and regulations and planning issues concerned with how to codify and standardise the lexicon and syntax (corpus planning) of languages in postcolonial contexts. Much of the focus during this early period of language planning was thus on the ‘rationalising’ of languages to promote a national language for the purposes of modernisation and related nation building (status planning). This cemented a view that majority languages were important for public use, while other languages, including indigenous languages, were seen as primarily for private (family/community) use – a distinction described in sociolinguistics as diglossia. Diglossic contexts inevitably lead to language shift and loss over time for indigenous languages, as majority languages come to be seen in these contexts as languages of greater value and use – resulting in what Liddicoat (2013) has described as linguistic “hierarchies of prestige” (p. 5).

1970s–1980s: A critical reorientation

The early LPP assumptions about majority languages began to be questioned as *critical theory* approaches were used to explain language planning in the context of broader cultural, political, historical and economic influences. This led to a growing awareness of inequalities in society and how dominant groups used their power to marginalise less dominant, often indigenous groups, along with their languages. This resulted in research carried out in new language domains, moving the focus from the government and governmental agencies to the family and

the workplace, with the particular aim of revitalising Indigenous and minority languages and expanding their (language) domains of use.

1980s–present: Language ecology and multilingualism

Research turned to thinking about language environments, with a broader focus on multilingualism and endangered languages. Due to the unequal power relationships resulting in languages moving up or down a hierarchy of preference, indigenous and minority languages were seen as having rights and deserving the same protections as majority languages. This led to an increase in research with a focus on indigenous language revitalisation in areas such as Aotearoa New Zealand, Hawaii, the Quechua in southern Peru, Ireland, and Wales.

Top-down and bottom-up approaches to LPP

In the 1950s-1960s, the focus was on top-down or government-led decisions in language planning and policy. Over time, research found that the most successful language planning and policy was balanced between top-down and bottom-up, or community led decisions, particularly in the case of indigenous languages.

What factors have been identified as most effective in macro-language-planning particularly in relation to the public service and wider society?

Macro-language-planning strategies are critical in the successful revitalisation of Indigenous languages over time internationally, as well as within Aotearoa New Zealand. Key macro-language-planning strategies include the following:

1. Status, corpus and acquisition planning all need to be thought about simultaneously in macro-LPP development as part of a comprehensive strategy in support of Indigenous languages.
2. A balance is needed between top-down and bottom-up language revitalisation strategies. Think of the current debates in Aotearoa New Zealand about the role of the school and the media (top-down) and iwi-focused whānau transmission (bottom-up) initiatives promoted by Te Mātāwai, for example. Both are needed if Māori language revitalisation strategies are to continue to be effective over time.

3. Indigenous and minority language revitalisation needs a dual focus on both the public and private uses of language. Public use normalises the language in society, challenging the positioning of Indigenous and minority languages as being of little value and use. Private use is crucial to intergenerational family transmission and community language use. Again, both are needed for successful ongoing language revitalisation as well as an acknowledgement of the links between language revitalisation and economic development.
4. Key language planning tools, especially language surveys, are needed to refine the approach and to inform future planning for both Indigenous and majority languages. The form that these surveys take, along with a focus on attitudes and beliefs, are important, as is the evaluation of actual language use.
5. Changing wider attitudes in support of Indigenous language revitalisation and language use also requires a targeted information and dissemination strategy on, for example, the value of te reo Māori, and bilingualism in English and te reo Māori, in the New Zealand context. This is particularly important in achieving wider tolerability and higher levels of language competence, particularly among majority language speakers, for Indigenous LPP developments.

Summary and recommendations for Aotearoa New Zealand

1. New Zealand needs to develop a policy strategy that has te reo Māori (and English) at its centre but with a place for Pasifika language communities and other migrant language communities. Aotearoa New Zealand has been an English, monolingual society for too long. There should be use a movement towards bilingualism and, then, multilingualism.
2. Māori language revitalisation must not lose sight of the ongoing importance of education and the media, as well as related uses of technology to complement the current emphases on whānau and iwi language revitalisation. Te Mātāwai should continue to focus its efforts on the former, Te Taura Whiri i te reo Māori on the latter.
3. Urban living and the growing numbers of young, urban Māori need to be a focus for Māori language policy, particularly with respect to engagement via technology and social media. Te reo Māori must become a national language, heard and spoken everywhere.
4. New research is needed to fill current gaps in the literature:

- a. What is important and significant about dialects or should we be teaching a standardised form of te reo Māori?
- b. How and where are youth using te reo Māori? When and why are they choosing to switch to te reo Māori? What could help this to happen more frequently? How can technology and social media help with te reo Māori and related language learning and use?
- c. What factors have been identified as most effective in language planning particularly in relation to business and organisations?
- d. How can the number of language learners of te reo Māori be increased across the population? How proficient do we want language learners to become?
- e. What is the place of Pākehā and wider non-Māori groups in Aotearoa in Māori language revitalisation? As Arapera Ngaha (2011) says, “I close now with this consideration for the children of this land, both Māori and non-Māori, who ... in time to come will not ask ‘Why do we have to learn Māori?’ But will instead ask ‘Why ever not?’” (p. 256).