



Māori

A Linguistic Introduction

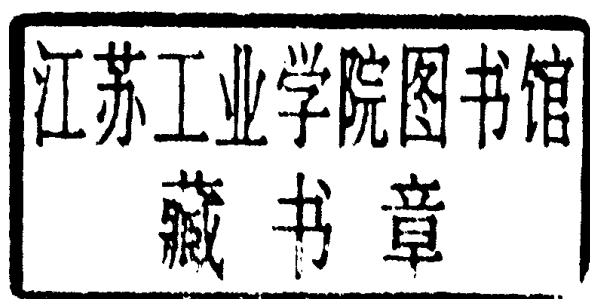
Ray Harlow

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521808613

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First published 2007

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-521-80861-3 hardback

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Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks are due to Terry Crowley, Julie Barbour, Margaret Maclagan, Jenny King, Peter Keegan, Jeanette King, Ann Harlow, who have read drafts of parts of this book and made very valuable comments.

My unending gratitude goes to my many Māori friends and colleagues, whose open-hearted hospitality and generosity throughout my years of study of Māori have made my involvement with their beautiful language an experience of great richness.

Kei aku rangatira, kei aku hoa, e kore rawa e mutu te mihi ki a koutou mō koutou i tautoko, i awhi i a au i roto i tēnei mahi āku. Tēnā koutou katoa.

Abbreviations

1Sg., 2Du., 3Pl., etc.	person and number (singular, dual, plural) in pronouns
Agt.	agentive
AN	Austronesian
Aph.	anaphoric particle
Caus.	causative prefix
CE	Central Eastern Polynesian
Comp.	complementiser
Det.	determiner
Dir.	directional particle
DP	determiner phrase
EP	Eastern Polynesian
Foc.	focus marker
Incl./Excl.	inclusive/exclusive in pronouns
Loc.	locative particle
MAONZE	Māori and New Zealand English research project
Neg.	negative
Nom.	nominalisation suffix
NP	Nuclear Polynesian, noun phrase
Nuc	nucleus
Obj.	object marker
OC	Oceanic
P	preposition
PAN	Proto-Austronesian
Pass.	passive suffix
PCE	Proto-Central Eastern Polynesian
PEP	Proto-Eastern Polynesian
Pers.	personal article
Pl.	plural
PMP	Proto-Malayo-Polynesian
PN	Polynesian
PNP	Proto-Nuclear Polynesian

POC	Proto-Oceanic
POP	postposed periphery
Poss.	possessive
PPN	Proto-Polynesian
Pred.	predicate marker
PrP.	preposed periphery
PTA	Proto-Tahitic
Sg.	singular
Subj.	subject
TA	tense/aspect marker
Top.	topic marker
TTW	Te Taura whiri i te Reo Māori ‘The Māori Language Commission’
VP	verb phrase

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Introduction

Māori is the indigenous language of New Zealand. Like all languages, it is in some respects unique, and in others quite typical. It is a member of one of the largest language families in the world, was brought to New Zealand by Polynesian voyagers, and so shares features with other members of its family. However, it has also its own history through its isolation in the most southerly regions of the South Pacific. Like many other minority languages, it has suffered through contact and competition with a major language, and its present situation and the issues involved in attempts to ensure its survival and revitalisation thus show similarities with those affecting many other languages around the world. At the same time, the circumstances surrounding all such disadvantaged languages are not identical, and there are unique aspects, and unique responses, to the place of Māori in New Zealand society.

In this book, aspects of Māori, its history, structure and present sociolinguistic situation, will be discussed in a way which is intended to provide the general reader with a good overview. In addition, however, the book aims to provide discussion of, and full bibliographical references for, the now considerable body of literature which exists on Māori. Some of this discussion will necessitate use of the technical apparatus of modern linguistics, which may make some sections rather less accessible to readers other than professional linguists and senior students of the subject. Overall, it is in the first instance this latter audience that the book is intended for, especially linguists interested in Oceanic languages and language maintenance issues. The primary, not to say unique, focus, will be the Māori language, but it is hoped that readers with interests in other languages will find much that is interesting, familiar even, and that resonates with those interests.

Māori belongs to the Polynesian subgroup of the huge Austronesian language family,¹ which consists of over 700 languages, and is spread geographically from Madagascar in the West to Rapanui (Easter Island) in the East, and from Hawai'i in the North to New Zealand in the South. Māori is thus the most southerly member of this family. Its closest relations are the languages of the Cook Islands, Tahitian and other languages of French Polynesia. Brought to New Zealand some 800–1,000 years ago by voyagers from Central

Polynesia, it is spoken now, at least to some level of fluency, by perhaps as many as 160,000 people, about 4 per cent of New Zealand's population of around 4 million. Spread as it has been over a country the size of New Zealand, it has developed some regional variation, though not to the point of mutual unintelligibility.

The figure of 160,000 is a respectable one. However, Māori must count as an endangered language, since in very large part natural intergenerational transmission has ceased. The majority of modern speakers of Māori are either of the generations born and brought up before or during the Second World War or younger people who have acquired Māori as a second language. Herein lies one of the aspects of Māori which is of relatively much greater interest to linguists than its 'size' might merit. For Māori, over the last thirty or so years, has been the subject of innovative language maintenance and revitalisation efforts, most of them the result of the initiative and drive of the Māori community itself.

Institutions such as *kōhanga reo*, 'language nests', the preschools which not only provide a Māori language environment, but also are administered and conducted entirely along Māori cultural lines, have served as models for similar enterprises in other minority language situations. The extension of this environment into primary, secondary, and even to some extent tertiary, education has excited interest among policy makers and researchers from around the world.²

Apart from its presence in education, Māori now enjoys a significant place in public policy and the media in New Zealand; however, the situation is still a long way from what would arguably be an appropriate status for New Zealand's only indigenous language.

At the same time, Māori, as well as being a relatively conservative language within its subgroup, and thus a good witness for many features of Eastern Polynesian, is of some interest also in linguistic typology and general descriptive linguistics. There can be few linguists who have not encountered some discussion of the morphology of the passive in Māori. Māori is a VSO language, exemplifying very well many of the relevant generalisations in the Greenbergian paradigm. On the other hand, its four relativisation strategies provide problems for proposed generalisations in that area of syntax.³

The chapters which follow aim at presenting to the reader an overview of the history, grammar and situation of Māori. Chapter 1 reviews the steady stream of writing on Māori which began nearly 200 years ago, making Māori one of the best recorded of the Polynesian languages, and presents a brief view of the language arts, both traditional and more modern, which find their expression through Māori. Such descriptive writings and the 'Classical Literature' of Māori provide a picture of its development over the last 150 to 200 years; chapter 2 sketches the history of Māori, drawing not only on what such sources reveal,

but also on what sorts of developments, particularly in the sound system, can be traced from the ancestral language of the Austronesian family to modern Māori by means of the methods of reconstruction available in historical linguistics. Linguistic evidence contributes as well to the reconstruction of the movements which brought Austronesian speakers from the homeland of the family down into the South Pacific.

Since some of the regional diversity observable in Māori may be due to differences which existed in Eastern Polynesia before migrations to New Zealand, chapter 3 follows on from an account of the history of Māori with a survey of what can be said about its dialects. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 are those which present the structure of modern Māori, dealing with phonology, morphology and syntax respectively. It is in these chapters, more than anywhere else, that there will be some use of formulations and terminology which will be unfamiliar to general readers. This is necessitated by the fact that, as said, aspects of Māori have been the subject of research within theoretical linguistics, and these chapters will report on this work at the appropriate points. Nonetheless, these chapters endeavour to present a coherent and accessible picture of these aspects of Māori structure which can be read continuously by omitting more technical discussion where it occurs.

Finally, chapter 7 will concentrate on aspects of the sociolinguistic situation of Māori, partly historically, but primarily in the present, and the language maintenance measures being undertaken to try to ensure its survival and revitalisation. Contact with English over the last nearly-200 years has had a profound effect on Māori; the language itself has changed under this influence, but, most importantly, and particularly in the last 50 years, there has been vast language shift among the Māori population, to the point where, as mentioned above, the language is endangered, and very considerable efforts are being made to attempt to stem the tide of the shift and to preserve this unique yet typical expression of the human spirit.

NOTES

1. See Tryon (1994a) on the Austronesian language family, its composition, structure and vocabulary.
2. In November 2000, a conference, 'Bilingualism at the Ends of the Earth', held at the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand, as part of a collaboration between the University and the Xunta de Galicia, Santiago, Spain, attracted from all over the world participants with an interest in what is happening in New Zealand bilingual and immersion education. An international conference, 'Language, Education and Diversity', held in Hamilton in November 2003, at which a high proportion of papers addressed issues in Māori-medium education, similarly attracted very wide interest. Proceedings of these conferences are published as Barnard and Harlow (2001) and May *et al.* (2005) respectively.

People and organisations in New Zealand engaged in revitalisation efforts have very good connections with similar groups in other parts of the world, especially Hawai'i and native American communities, as well as parts of Europe, and reciprocal visits and exchanges of information and ideas, especially with respect to New Zealand's initiatives in Māori-medium education, are common.

3. See chapter 6 for discussion and references on these points.

1 Māori literature and literature on Māori

Māori is not the Polynesian language for which we have the oldest written records; that honour goes to Niuatoputapu and East Futunan.¹ However, it is the subject of substantial documentation over the last 200 and more years. Over the same period, Māori has become a written language, not only through such documentation, but also through the transcription of its rich oral tradition and its use in the nineteenth century, and again increasingly in the present, in domains which are typically literate.

Chapter 4 will sketch the development of the writing system now used for Māori. What this chapter will present is an account of the documentation of Māori since first contact with Europeans, and of the nature of Māori literature, traditionally oral, but in recent times forming an ever increasing, and ever diversifying, written corpus.

Literature on Māori

As noted, Māori is one of the best-documented of the Polynesian languages with written sources on the language dating from the earliest contact period.² Word lists compiled during James Cook's first voyage (1769–70) are simply the first of many such documents (see chapters 3 and 4). The first fuller documentation of the language was also the first publication in or on Māori (Kendall 1815). This was an attempt to provide a resource for Thomas Kendall's missionary colleagues and contains alphabets (rejoicing in the title *Na Letteree*), word lists and expressions. The second publication (Kendall 1820) benefited greatly from the input of Samuel Lee, a linguist at Cambridge, and contains rather more grammatical description.³ These early 'textbooks' were followed by numerous others, of which the most important in the nineteenth century were Maunsell (1842), W. L. Williams (1862) and Aubert (1885). The twentieth century saw the production of considerable numbers of textbooks, the most important and influential being those by Biggs (1969), Waititi (1970, 1974) and Moorfield (1988, 1989, 1992, 1996). The Biggs work is still very much in the grammar-and-translation style of earlier works, but Waititi's and Moorfield's reflect much more modern methodologies.

All these works contain partial grammars, but it has not been until the 1990s that full reference grammars have appeared. Bauer (1993) is a grammar of Māori within the framework of the Routledge (originally Lingua) Descriptive Series. As such, it is a mine of information on every detail of Māori grammar, but often very hard to find one's way in because of the prescribed lay-out. Much more 'user-friendly' but similarly full of information is Bauer (1997). My own grammar (Harlow 2001) is not so exhaustive as either of Bauer's, but is aimed primarily at senior (BA and Honours-level) students of Māori, and intends to provide them with an account of all the construction types they will encounter in reading or speech.

Māori lexicography has progressed in parallel with the more descriptive works. The first major successor to the early word lists was the first edition of the Williams' Māori-English dictionaries (see W. L. Williams 1844). To this day, the most recent edition (H. W. Williams 1971) remains the major resource on Māori, though over the years it has been joined by a range of generally rather smaller dictionaries, including some English-Māori ones.⁴ The most important addition to Māori lexicography in recent years has been H. M. Ngata's (1993) *English-Māori Dictionary*, the online version of which allows look-up in either direction (see chapter 7).

Despite this range of material, serious linguistic research on Māori really only began with Biggs' doctoral thesis (published as Biggs 1961), though Johansen (1948) had contained an insightful discussion of a number of points of grammar. Since then though there have been further doctoral⁵ and Master's⁶ theses, and a considerable body of published research on aspects of Māori grammar now exists in the linguistic literature, to which full reference is made at the relevant points in ensuing chapters.

Literature in Māori

Like all other Polynesian languages, except Easter Island,⁷ Māori had no written form until the introduction of writing by missionaries, early in the nineteenth century. However, as in preliterate societies throughout history, there was, and to some extent still is, a rich orally transmitted and performed 'literature'. A wide range of poetic or chanted genres existed and continues to exist, and the range of prose genres includes tribal and local histories, genealogies (*whakapapa*), cosmogonies, 'folkstories',⁸ and traditional knowledge.

Within modern Māori culture, a number of traditional oral genres have remained very much alive, and, in the case of poetic genres, new ones have been added. Apart from *karanga* 'call, especially a call of welcome' and *whaikōrero* 'oratory', composition these days is largely in writing, but performance is almost entirely oral.