

Using ICT to Enhance Maori Language Teaching

Joseph Selwyn Te Rito, Pareputiputi Nuku

E-mail: j.terito@auckland.ac.nz, pnuku@eit.ac.nz
The University of Auckland (New Zealand)

Abstract

Since the Maori Language Petition of 1972, the number of people speaking Maori, the indigenous language of New Zealand, has increased steadily after nearly dying out. Unsurprisingly, however, the quality of the language used by the new and youthful generations of speakers is in decline, as is the number of native-speakers. When Maori tribal radio station, Radio Kahungunu started up 21 years ago, its aim was to revitalize the Maori language. Native-speaking elders were taken into the radio station daily and their on-air sessions sound recorded. Today the station has over 2,000 such sound recordings in its archives.

The purposes of this paper are a) to describe a current research project utilizing 20 of these recordings as a resource for teaching the Maori language, and b) to show how ICT will be utilized to enhance both the research and the teaching processes. Each recording is about one hour long and features two elderly women conversing in Maori as part of a daily 9am-10am radio show. The two-year project is due for completion in August 2011 and is based at The University of Auckland. The lead presenter is Chairperson of Radio Kahungunu and principal investigator for the project while the co-presenter is an MA student attached to the project as a stipend-holder.

Specifically, the research objectives are to produce: a 'talking book' comprising the 20 digital recordings, transcriptions and translations; a vocabulary and linguistic analysis using Antconc Concordance software; and a template for a radio and/or online Maori language course using the two women's actual voices. Originally the intention was to publish a hard copy book and distribute it to tribal members along with a set of 20 CDs of the recordings or an MP3 player with the 20 recordings downloaded onto it. However, due to the high costs of achieving this, and in order to enable high accessibility to the resource by prospective learners, the completed book will be placed online, along with the associated recordings converted to MP3 files for downloading by learners. Hence learners will be able to listen to the recordings; read the Maori text; and refer to the translations, the annotated footnotes, and the vocabulary and linguistic analysis – through ICT applications.