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The hierarchy of minority languages in New Zealand

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This article makes a case for the existence of a minority language hierarchy in New Zealand. Based on an analysis of language ideologies expressed in recent policy documents and interviews with policymakers and representatives of minority language communities, it presents the arguments forwarded in support of the promotion of different types of minority languages in New Zealand, as well as the reactions of representatives of other minority language communities to these arguments. The research suggests that the arguments in favour of minority language promotion are most widely accepted for the Māori language, followed by New Zealand Sign Language, then Pacific languages, and finally community languages. While representatives of groups at the lower levels of the hierarchy often accept arguments advanced in relation to languages nearer the top, this is not the case in the other direction. Recognition of connections between the language communities is scarce, with the group representatives tending to present themselves as operating in isolation from one another, rather than working towards common interests.

Keywords: minority languages; language policy; language ideologies; New Zealand

Introduction

This article considers the relationship between different types of minority languages in New Zealand, as perceived by policymakers and community language advocates. The impetus derives from two observations made in the research literature. The first is the notion of a language hierarchy applying to different language communities within nation states. Extra and Gorter (2008) claim that ‘the constellation of languages in Europe actually functions as a descending hierarchy’, proceeding from English as a *lingua franca* for transnational communication, to national or ‘official state’ languages, to regional minority languages, and finally to immigrant minority languages. This notion of a language hierarchy can arguably be extended beyond Europe, and a first aim of this article is to examine how it might apply to the post-colonial language situation of New Zealand. A second aim is to extend the notion of the language hierarchy to minority languages in particular, seeking potential further distinctions within this broader category. Does a hierarchy operate even within the ‘regional’ and ‘immigrant’ minority language categories?

Another observation in the literature is a lack of connection between researchers and policymakers working for different types of minority language communities. The salient distinction here is between national minority languages (also called indigenous or

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regional minority languages) and migrant minority languages (also called immigrant or community languages). Both types can be considered ‘minority languages’ in relation to the ‘majority language/s’ of a nation state, and Extra (2013, 13) highlights further common features, including their domestic and public vitality, the determinants of language maintenance versus language shift towards majority languages, the relationship between language, ethnicity and identity, and their status in schools. Despite these similarities, little research has directly approached national minority and migrant minority languages in an inclusive way. Extra and Gorter (2001, 3–4) noted this over a decade ago:

Despite the possibilities and challenges of comparing the status of regional minority and immigrant minority languages, amazingly few connections have been made in the sociolinguistic, educational and political domain. ... Contacts between researchers and policy makers working with different types of minority groups are still scarce. ... Overall, we see disjointed research paradigms and circles of researchers which have very little or no contact, although they could learn a lot from each other.¹

A third aim of this article, therefore, is to explore how representatives of different minority language communities in New Zealand view each other, and what connections they make in terms of relationships between the different types of minority languages. A key aspect is investigating the language ideologies (defined below) that are adopted by representatives of minority language communities to justify their position and aspirations in relation to other language groups.

Minority languages in New Zealand

The New Zealand language situation is characterised by the presence of a national (indigenous) minority language (te reo Māori, the Māori language), English as a dominant language resulting from colonisation, and a significant presence of migrant languages. English is not an official language by law, although it is de facto the dominant language in New Zealand. The Māori Language Act 1987 established te reo Māori as an official language and New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) became New Zealand’s second official language in 2006. There is no overarching national language policy, although calls for one have been made since at least the 1980s. A well-formulated proposal was published by the Ministry of Education in 1992 (Waite 1992). A Statement on Language Policy published by the Human Rights Commission in 2008 (New Zealand Human Rights Commission 2008) sought to provide an elementary interim framework to prioritise, implement, and monitor language policy development. In 2013, the Royal Society made a further strong call for the development of a national language policy (The Royal Society of New Zealand 2013). Despite the absence of such, significant policy activity has occurred in relation to particular languages, as described further below.

Much language policy activity in New Zealand occurs in relation to compulsory education. In the New Zealand Curriculum, te reo Māori and NZSL are accorded special mention as official languages. Alongside English, both of these may be studied as first or additional languages. They may also be the medium of instruction across all learning areas (Ministry of Education 2007). Migrant community languages are not specifically recognised but are included generally in the ‘learning languages’ area of the Curriculum. In this area, Pacific languages are described as having a special place, ‘because of New Zealand’s close relationships with the peoples of the Pacific’ (Ministry of Education 2007). The Ministry of

Education provides curriculum guidelines for five Pacific languages, four European languages (French, German, Spanish, and Latin), and two Asian languages (Chinese and Japanese; Te Kete Ipurangi 2015a).

Methodology

The methodology for this research involves an analysis of language ideologies (defined below) in relation to minority languages as expressed by representatives of minority language communities in New Zealand. Potentially relevant minority languages were identified by their salience in the New Zealand language policy landscape. They are te reo Māori (national minority language), NZSL (a second national minority language), Pacific languages (migrant minority languages), and 'community languages' (further migrant minority languages).

The data included policy documents concerning the minority languages above and interviews with government policymakers and other representatives of the relevant minority language communities. It was decided to focus on policy documents and interviewees with a direct role in language policy development as policymakers need to explicitly consider the arguments underlying their work as part of the process of policy formulation, and are therefore a good source of data on language ideologies.

The policy documents selected for analysis were those seen as representing the main current public statements of policy in relation to each minority language, as produced by each language community's main representative organisation(s). The focus was on broad strategy documents, rather than policies in specific areas such as education. For some of the languages this involved official government strategy documents (in relation to te reo Māori and Pacific languages), for others the websites of community-based organisations (for NZSL and community languages). Analysis of the documents involved identifying the distinct arguments advanced in support of promoting the relevant minority language, as well as locating any references to other minority languages.

Eight interviews were undertaken in January 2013 with Chief Executives or managers of the following organisations: the Ministry of Māori Development, the Māori Language Commission, the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, Deaf Aotearoa New Zealand, the Office of Ethnic Affairs, Multicultural New Zealand, and the Community Languages Association of New Zealand, as well as a senior community leader/language advocate with longstanding involvement in policy development relating to Pacific languages. It was explained to interviewees that the research involved looking at how different organisations with a role in language policy saw the connections between national minority languages and migrant minority languages. They were asked to describe their organisation's language policy goals, the principles or arguments underlying these goals, the current developments most important for the language policy direction of their organisation, and the changes they would like to see in language policy. They were then asked to describe their stance towards other minority languages in turn, including what distinction, if any, they saw between promoting 'their' language and the other languages. They were also asked if they thought the government had a responsibility to promote other minority languages, how it should decide which languages to support, and who should fund promotion of these languages. While many of the questions related to language policy, a key goal was to elicit the language ideologies underlying the interviewees' characterisations of actual or desired language policies.

Theoretical framework: language policy and language ideologies

The theoretical framework for the research draws on theories relating to language policy and language ideologies.

Spolsky (2004, 2009) identifies three components of language policy: 'language practices, language ideology or beliefs and language management or planning' (2004, 186), which he claims should all be taken into account to obtain an overall view of language policy. While he sees the three components as subsets of language policy, I see them as subsets of a more general theory of language as social practice. I therefore use the term language policy instead of 'language management', which I view as a synonym. Spolsky defines language management as 'an attempt to modify the [language] values or practices of someone else' (2004, 186). Similarly, I view language policy as any attempt to influence the language use of others. While any person can be an agent of language policy, some individuals and groups claim special authority in this regard, notably national government organisations with a role in language policy development. This article focuses on such national agents, where they exist, but also takes into account language activist groups for languages for which no government responsibility has been assumed.

The term language ideologies has been conceptualised by theorists in widely different ways. Spolsky (2004, 186) regards them as synonymous with 'beliefs' about language. I adopt a more critical definition of them as positions on language adopted by individuals to advance their linguistic and non-linguistic interests. Five key features of this approach are outlined below (for a full discussion see de Bres 2013). A first important feature is the notion of *interest*. Kroskrity (2004, 501) claims that language ideologies 'represent the perception of language and discourse that is constructed in the interest of a specific social or cultural group' (be this policymakers, members of an ethnolinguistic group, or individuals of a particular gender, etc.). Similarly, Woolard (1998, 6) refers to 'a conceptualization of ideology as derived from, rooted in, reflective of, or responsive to the experience or interests of a particular social position'. A second feature is that language ideologies are inherently *normative*. Although often masquerading as common-sense descriptions of matters relating to language, they promote an evaluative and prescriptive view of language; they involve 'beliefs about the way the world is, the way it should be, and the way it has to be with respect to language' (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 2006). A third feature is that ideologies represent a *strategic resource* that individuals can employ to position and reinforce their interests. By selectively adopting and promoting particular conceptions of language (through formal policies or everyday interactions), individuals can advance conceptions that benefit them, potentially at the expense of others. Ideologies are thus used as tools in the negotiation of power relationships and in the pursuit or exercise of power (Woolard 1998). Fourth, in some cases language ideologies can develop into a widely shared understanding of the relationship between language and society, so that one can talk of *dominant language ideologies*. Due to processes of naturalisation, these ideologies can become hegemonic, being accepted even by those whose interests they do not actually serve. While many dominant ideologies claim the pre-eminence of majority languages (e.g. the one nation, one language ideology; Woolard 1998), dominant language ideologies can also circulate in more limited spheres, e.g. minority language communities. The extent to which representatives of certain communities are able to promote their own language interests may depend on how entrenched dominant language ideologies are in a given setting. The presence of dominant language ideologies does not mean these ideologies are

uncontested: a fifth feature of language ideologies is that they are always *subject to contestation and challenge*. Briggs (1998, 249) claims that:

Contestation is not simply a feature of some ideologies ... or a process that emerges in special circumstances that lead people to begin questioning taken-for-granted ideologies; to the contrary, contestation is a crucial facet of how particular ideologies and practices come to be dominant.

Once language ideologies are established as dominant, contestation continues to play a role, given that dominant ideologies, as social constructions rather than ‘truths’ about language, must continually be reproduced lest they lose their sway in the face of conflicting ideological positions: this means that ‘even “dominant” ideologies are dynamically responsive to ever-changing forms of opposition’ (Kroskrity 2000, 13).

In light of the above, it was expected in the current research that policy documents and representatives of minority language communities would tend to invoke normative positions about language that worked in the interests of their specific language group, and that the ideologies would likely fit into some overall pattern, revealing a dominant ideological system acknowledged to some degree by all parties, with varying degrees of contestation.

The hierarchy of minority languages in New Zealand

The analysis of interviews and policy documents suggests that there is indeed a hierarchy of minority languages in New Zealand, proceeding from te reo Māori at the top, through New Zealand Sign language, then Pacific languages, to other migrant languages at the bottom. English is not included here, as it is the clearly dominant language in New Zealand and cannot be viewed as a minority language; a more comprehensive language hierarchy would include English at the top, followed by the minority languages discussed here. The language ideological perspectives of policy documents and representatives of each of these groups are presented below, following the descending order of the hierarchy. Each section begins with a description of the language policy situation of the relevant language. The focus is then on identifying which ideological arguments are used to justify the value of a group’s language, and how the groups negotiate their place in the hierarchy.

Te reo Māori

After the colonisation of New Zealand in the nineteenth century, te reo Māori underwent language shift in favour of English. Language regeneration activity has occurred since the 1970s, led by Māori communities and more recently supported by government language policy. The 2013 census showed that Māori people made up 14.9% of the population (598,605 people). Te reo Māori was the second most widely spoken language in New Zealand after English (148,395 people), but those who reported being able to speak it only amounted to 3.7% of the population, compared to 4.1% in 2006 (Statistics New Zealand 2013).

The New Zealand Government has recognised that it has a responsibility under the Treaty of Waitangi (signed in 1840) to protect and promote te reo Māori, and has been active in this field since the 1980s. The two main government organisations responsible for promoting the language are Te Puni Kōkiri (TPK; the Ministry of Māori Development) and Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori (TTW; the Māori Language Commission). Notably,

status planning in relation to te reo Māori has included the passing of the Māori Language Act 1987, establishing te reo Māori as an official language and creating the Māori Language Commission to promote it, and the development of a government-wide strategy for the language in the mid-1990s. Government support has also been provided for a number of initiatives in education (e.g. Māori medium education from preschool to tertiary) and the media (e.g. funding for Māori medium radio stations from the 1980s, and a Māori Television Service from 2003).

The original Māori Language Strategy was adopted in 2003 with a 25-year horizon. A proposed new strategy was released for consultation in December 2013 (Te Puni Kōkiri 2003). The Māori Language Strategy 2003 states that (Te Puni Kōkiri 2003, 3):

The Māori language is a *taonga* guaranteed to Māori by the Treaty of Waitangi. It underpins Māori cultural development which, in turn, supports Māori social and economic development and contributes to a unique New Zealand identity.

This statement includes various arguments for the promotion of te reo Māori:

- *Spiritual*: it is a *taonga* (treasure) of the Māori people.
- *Constitutional*: the government is obliged to protect it under the Treaty of Waitangi.
- *Cultural identity*: it contributes to the cultural development of Māori.
- *Socio-economic*: it fosters the social and economic development of Māori.
- *National identity*: it contributes to New Zealand identity.

The interviewee from TPK reiterated many of these arguments, stating that the promotion of te reo Māori was justified from a ‘philosophical’ point of view (as a *taonga* of the Māori people), for cultural reasons (contributing to cultural development) and for socio-economic reasons (people secure in their culture tend to have better social outcomes). He also highlighted the *legal* argument (te reo Māori is an official language) and the argument of language *endangerment* (it is at risk of language death) as reasons for government action.

Interestingly, the argument of *indigeneity* (te reo Māori is indigenous to New Zealand) is not explicit in the above arguments, but it was this argument that was the most salient to interviewees representing other minority language groups. The interviewee from the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (henceforth MPIA) claimed it was essential to promote te reo Māori as the language of the *tangata whenua* (people of the land). He claimed that New Zealand must acknowledge te reo Māori as the ‘first language’ of New Zealand and one of the ‘national languages’. The argument for promoting the Māori language was therefore ‘completely different’ to that for promoting other languages. Similarly, the interviewee from the Office of Ethnic Affairs (henceforth OEA) stated that ‘[te reo] Māori takes precedence due to the *tangata whenua* status of Māori’, the interviewee from the Community Languages Association of New Zealand (henceforth CLANZ) claimed that te reo Māori should be recognised given its status as ‘the language of the land’, and the interviewee from Multicultural New Zealand (henceforth MNZ) noted that his organisation respected the ‘principle of indigeneity’ as the basis for Māori language claims. For the interviewee from Deaf Aotearoa New Zealand (henceforth DANZ), the indigenous argument represented an ‘automatic’ justification for promoting the Māori language: ‘for Māori, naturally it is the native language so automatically it needs to be recognised’.

While all interviewees accepted the argument of indigeneity for promoting te reo Māori, some argued for a relativisation of this principle. The Pacific languages advocate stated that while the argument of indigeneity was important, it should not be used to exclude other groups. He claimed that one (according to him, unfair) argument used by Māori to downplay the importance of Pacific languages was that Pacific peoples could always go back to their home country to speak their language. The CLANZ interviewee claimed that promoting migrant languages was just as important as promoting te reo Māori, albeit for different reasons. Despite these qualifying remarks, there was no basic contestation of the justification for promoting te reo Māori on the basis of its indigenous status, this argument being strongly accepted by the representatives of minority language communities interviewed. This is a strong argument for placing te reo Māori at the top of the minority language hierarchy.

New Zealand Sign Language

NZSL is the language used by members of New Zealand's Deaf community. The term Deaf (with a capital letter) is used to refer to a distinctive linguistic and cultural group, typically characterised by prelingual profound or severe hearing loss, special education and who have a preference for communicating in NZSL. The term deaf (with a small letter) is used as a more generic term for people who have limited hearing, whether they belong to the Deaf community or not.² The 2013 census indicated that 20,235 people used NZSL, down from 24,087 in 2006.

The NZSL Act 2006, which made NZSL New Zealand's second official language, confers the right to use NZSL in court proceedings, and provides for competence standards in legal interpreting. It also provides that the Deaf community should be consulted on matters concerning NZSL (including, for example, promotion of the use of NZSL) and that government services and information should be made accessible to the Deaf community through the use of appropriate means (including the use of NZSL). In 2008, New Zealand ratified the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which recognises sign languages as equal to spoken languages and requires governments to progressively strengthen their status. In 2013 the Human Rights Commission released a report of its year-long inquiry into issues surrounding the use of NZSL since becoming an official language. It contains 15 recommendations to reduce continued barriers faced by Deaf people and other NZSL users, in the areas of education, access to interpreters, and promotion and maintenance of NZSL (New Zealand Human Rights Commission 2013). One recommendation is to establish an NZSL Statutory Board to develop a strategy for the promotion and maintenance of NZSL, advise, guide and monitor government agencies' use and promotion of NZSL and provide NZSL expertise into a potential broader national languages policy for New Zealand.

The Office of Disability Issues is responsible for NZSL policy at governmental level, but no government language strategy similar to the Māori Language Strategy exists for NZSL, and the main representative organisations continue to be located within the community. One such organisation is DANZ, a not-for-profit organisation that provides services to Deaf people, including advice on legal matters, education and employment, and works to increase awareness of Deaf people's lives, promote NZSL and strengthen Deaf people's rights (Deaf Aotearoa New Zealand 2013). It runs an annual NZSL Week to raise awareness.

The DANZ website presents Deaf people as a cultural group like other ethnolinguistic groups: 'Deaf culture is quite unique. Deaf people see themselves as a separate cultural

group within the overall national culture – just as Māori do, or Indians, or Chinese’. This cultural identity is portrayed as partly formed by language: ‘How does Deaf culture develop? By sharing a common language – NZSL’. The website highlights the official language status of NZSL (‘NZSL is one of New Zealand’s official languages’) and orients to the indigenous nature of NZSL as a basis for its official status:

So why aren’t other languages ‘recognised’ in the same way? Other languages – Samoan, Tongan, Mandarin, Cantonese etc – have recognition in their country of origin. Like Māori, NZSL is strictly home-grown.

A range of arguments are used here to justify the promotion of NZSL:

- *Indigeneity*: NZSL is indigenous and unique to New Zealand.
- *Cultural identity*: NZSL is a formative aspect of Deaf identity.
- *Legal*: NZSL is an official language.

While the principle of *access* in relation to disability rights is not highlighted on the DANZ website, the DANZ interviewee used this argument alongside the legal argument of NZSL’s official status. The Human Rights Commission’s report similarly emphasises ‘a strong practical need for [NZSL’s] official status. This is because without access to NZSL many deaf people have limited or no access to New Zealand’s two spoken “official languages”, English and te reo Māori’ (New Zealand Human Rights Commission 2013, 23–24).

The Human Rights Commission report frequently draws links between NZSL and te reo Māori. For example:

Both languages have official language status. The cornerstone for protecting both te reo and NZSL is ensuring that each language can be accessed, transmitted and learnt within families and through education ... There are concerns about the maintenance of NZSL, as there are about te reo Māori ... For indigenous peoples across the world, the protection and maintenance of language is vital to identity and wellbeing ... Similarly, access to NZSL is pivotal to deaf people’s ability to learn, communicate and participate in society. (New Zealand Human Rights Commission 2013, 75–76)

It is striking that the comparison between NZSL and te reo Māori is not reciprocated by policymakers responsible for Māori language promotion. The onus seems to be on promoters of NZSL to justify their official status alongside that of te reo Māori; this is one reason supporting the second place of NZSL in the minority language hierarchy.

The arguments for promoting NZSL that were most salient among representatives of other minority language groups were the official status of NZSL and the principle of access associated with disability rights. The OEA interviewee, for example, referred to NZSL as ‘an official language for people with disabilities in New Zealand’. The CLANZ interviewee noted that ‘by not doing anything for the NZSL community we would be disadvantaging a group that is already disadvantaged’ and saw this as a justification for NZSL being an official language. There was a hint of resistance to NZSL’s official language status among the representatives of Pacific languages interviewed. While accepting the official status of NZSL, the MPIA interviewee noted that some Samoans had called for Samoan to be an official language of New Zealand, given that it was the third most widely spoken language after English and te reo Māori, and considerably ahead of NZSL in terms of speakers. None of the interviewees spontaneously highlighted

indigeneity as an argument applying to NZSL, although, when asked if he saw such a link between te reo Māori and NZSL, the TPK interviewee accepted the argument of NZSL being unique to New Zealand, ‘in some sense born in New Zealand’, and its status as an official language, commenting ‘that’s fine’.

Pacific languages

As a result of migration to New Zealand, particularly since the 1960s, a range of Pacific languages are spoken in New Zealand. These include Samoan, Tongan, Fijian, Tuvaluan, Niuean, Tokelauan, and Cook Islands Māori. Some are endangered (Niuean, Tokelauan, and Cook Islands Māori), and the others show high rates of shift to English. Pacific peoples made up 7.4% of the population in 2013 and Samoan was the third most commonly spoken language (86,406 people).

Language policy for Pacific languages is less well developed than for te reo Māori, but the MPIA has been increasingly active in this area over the past decade. ‘Strengthening Pacific languages’ is one of the four main priorities of MPIA, its mission statement in this area being ‘we support communities to promote and maintain Pacific languages in New Zealand’. As this statement suggests, the government has tended to focus on encouraging Pacific communities to lead language promotion themselves. According to the MPIA interviewee, government language policy activities began in the early/mid 2000s with the ‘Mind Your Language’ project, which focused on the three most endangered languages – Niuean, Cook Islands Māori, and Tokelauan. When the funding for this project ceased, work expanded to include other languages, partly as a result of research showing that some other groups, despite being larger, also had high rates of language loss. This led to the adoption of the Pacific Languages Framework in 2012 (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs 2012). The framework addresses the declining use of Pacific languages, provides a rationale for focusing on certain areas, and aims to raise the languages’ profile. It is also intended as a guide to action within government departments, e.g. in education. One key element is the development of community action plans with representatives of the seven language groups. While MPIA aims to support communities in developing these plans, implementation is intended to be community-led, the Framework noting that ‘leadership and ownership of the protection and promotion of Pacific languages lies with Pacific communities’ and ‘the role of Government agencies is primarily to support Pacific communities to achieve their language aspirations’ (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs 2012, 4). The framework has a modest fund to assist with this, but MPIA also tries to help Pacific groups connect with other sources of funding. One initiative to come out of the framework is MPIA support for annual language weeks for each of the Pacific communities, modelled on the longstanding Māori Language Week. The Ministry of Education has also worked with community representatives to develop curriculum guidelines, resource materials, and national qualifications to aid teaching and learning of Pacific languages in early childhood centres and schools (see Te Kete Ipurangi 2015b).

The Pacific Languages Framework uses a range of arguments to justify the promotion of Pacific languages in New Zealand. These include (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs 2012, 4):

- *Endangerment*: ‘the number of fluent Pacific language speakers is declining’.
- *Cultural identity*: ‘Pacific languages are an integral part of Pacific culture [and] are vital for the expression of Pacific identity’.

- *National identity*: ‘Pacific languages are an important part of New Zealand’s culturally diverse identity’.
- *Integration*: ‘Pacific peoples’ sense of personal and cultural belonging in New Zealand will be enhanced by the support given to Pacific languages’.
- *Socio-economic*: ‘Vibrant Pacific languages are a necessary part of efforts to improve social and economic well-being, and to strengthen Pacific families and communities’.

These arguments were all raised by the MPIA interviewee and the Pacific languages advocate.

In stating their case for Pacific language promotion, these interviewees made a distinction between types of Pacific languages. An argument provided for promoting Niuean, Tokelauan, and Cook Islands Māori in particular was *constitutional* in nature, given that these countries are part of the New Zealand realm and their people have access to New Zealand citizenship. The interviewees saw this, alongside the very small numbers of speakers of these languages, as justifying a New Zealand Government responsibility for promoting them. This argument has also been made in other language policy contexts, for example the Human Rights Commission’s Statement on Language Policy, but was explicitly refuted in Parliament’s 2013 inquiry into Pacific languages in early childhood education (Education and Science Committee 2013), where the majority of the Committee denied any constitutional or legal responsibility for promoting Pacific languages:

The Government has no legal obligations to promote Pasifika [Pacific] languages, although it is obliged not to do anything deliberately to prevent communities from using Pasifika languages. It has no additional obligations regarding the languages of the countries that constitute the New Zealand realm (Tokelau, Niue, and the Cook Islands), and no legal obligation to promote the provision of Pasifika-language education.

The interviewees were aware of government resistance in this regard and said that was why they had felt it necessary to focus on other potentially more persuasive arguments, including:

- *Demographic*: Pacific people are numerous in New Zealand.
- *Geography*: New Zealand is a Pacific nation.
- *Indigeneity*: Pacific languages are indigenous to the Pacific region.
- *History*: New Zealand has a long historic relationship with some Pacific countries and has responsibilities as a former colonial power.
- *Economic*: increased achievement by Pacific peoples (associated with greater use of their languages) will bring economic value to New Zealand.
- *Cognitive*: bilingualism has cognitive benefits.

The Pacific languages advocate expressed frustration at the lack of traction of many of these arguments in government circles. They also received a more nuanced reception from representatives of other minority language groups compared to the arguments for te reo Māori and NZSL. The MNZ interviewee, the CLANZ interviewee, and the OEA interviewee variously recognised Pacific languages as having a special place among migrant languages in New Zealand, regarded the government as having a role in supporting Pacific languages as a result of its ex-colonial/administrative relationships

with Pacific countries, and saw promoting Pacific languages as important for improving socio-economic outcomes for Pacific people. The TPK interviewee, however, said he was 'not personally convinced' by arguments that Pacific languages were indigenous to the Pacific and should be promoted for positive social outcomes for Pacific people, because the government has a finite set of resources, there are several Pacific languages in New Zealand, and even those that have a New Zealand connection (being part of the realm) are in various stages of health. He expressed doubts that in this scenario it was feasible to provide services and infrastructures for all the languages. The TTW interviewee saw as a key difference between te reo Māori and Pacific languages that Pacific languages could continue to be used in the Pacific Islands, whereas te reo Māori was close to extinction in New Zealand. The DANZ interviewee supported the notion of promoting Pacific languages for cultural reasons and cognitive benefits, but said she would 'definitely' prioritise promoting NZSL and te reo Māori on the basis of their official language status. The mixed responses to arguments in support of Pacific languages justify placing them at the third level in the hierarchy, arguably with the languages of the New Zealand realm placed above the others.

Community languages

A wide range of further migrant languages are spoken in New Zealand. The percentage of people born elsewhere reached 25.2% of the population in 2013, rising from 22.9% in 2006. The most common ethnic groupings besides European, Māori, and Pacific peoples were Asian (471,711, 11.8%), Middle Eastern, Latin American, and African (46,953, 1.2%). Asian ethnic groups are growing particularly fast, almost doubling in size from 6.6% of the population in 2001.

Government language policy is very limited in relation to (non-Pacific) migrant languages. The OEA is the government body in charge of engaging with and representing ethnic communities in New Zealand (defined as all non-European, non-Māori, non-Pacific people) but it has no mandate in relation to language beyond providing an extensive telephone interpreting service. Representative organisations with an interest in language policy remain largely within ethnic communities. Two organisations active in this area are MNZ (the Federation of Multicultural Councils of New Zealand), which promotes cultural and linguistic diversity, and the CLANZ, which supports communities in learning and maintaining languages. Both advocate for the development of a government strategy for community languages, similar to those developed for te reo Māori and Pacific languages. In this endeavour, they are supported by the New Zealand Human Rights Commission, which has for some time recommended the development of a national language policy that would take into account 'community and heritage languages' alongside other languages (New Zealand Human Rights Commission 2008). In its review of New Zealand in February 2014, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern at the 'inadequate funding to support the preservation of community languages' and called on the Government to 'take specific measures aimed at preserving community languages and ensuring that adequate funding is allocated to such programmes' (New Zealand Federation of Multicultural Councils 2014).

Unlike te reo Māori, NZSL, and Pacific languages, community languages do not receive special mention in the New Zealand Curriculum. The Ministry of Education provides curriculum guidelines for two Asian languages (one Japanese, which is not a major migrant language in New Zealand) and four European languages (including Latin),

none of which are major migrant languages in New Zealand (Te Kete Ipurangi 2015a). This reflects a general pattern for language promotion and support in education not to be based on significant migrant language communities in New Zealand, but rather on historical or economic considerations. Within the curriculum, these languages are treated as ‘foreign’ languages rather than as the languages of specific communities within New Zealand.

The arguments presented by community language representatives for promoting community languages were as follows:

- *Demographic*: rising levels of migration mean the number of speakers of community languages is growing.
- *Educational*: promoting language diversity builds the language capabilities of New Zealand.
- *Economic*: community language maintenance has economic benefits.
- *Cultural identity*: language maintenance allows people to be comfortable in multiple cultures.
- *Integration*: recognising the multicultural nature of New Zealand society leads to better relationships with migrants.
- *Endangerment*: language shift is occurring and if language maintenance is not fostered language diversity will decline

The CLANZ interviewee said she often found it hard to express the rationale for promoting community languages, perhaps reflecting that these arguments are less widely accepted than for languages further up the hierarchy. She said ‘we are probably where [Māori] were about fifty years ago and Pacific languages about twenty years ago’. She said she had made many attempts to gain government support for community language initiatives in education, but the government was unreceptive: ‘no one wants to listen’.

Both the CLANZ interviewee and the MNZ interviewee saw OEA as the government department that should lead policy in terms of community language promotion, with a key aim being the development of a community languages framework similar to the Pacific Languages Framework developed by MPIA. The OEA interviewee, however, rejected outright the notion of any government responsibility in relation to community language maintenance, saying that OEA had no mandate for promoting language maintenance, no funding to do so, and that it was in any case best for communities themselves to be in charge of maintaining their languages. She acknowledged that OEA’s role as a ‘conduit and connector’ with communities did lead it to engage with language issues to some extent, given the importance of languages to these communities, but said that its focus here was on providing advice on how to connect with funders outside of government. When asked what arguments there were in favour of community language maintenance, the only argument she acknowledged was that language maintenance by migrants could have economic benefits for New Zealand. The OEA interviewee also pushed back against the idea of a national language policy, stating that this was not something she saw as happening soon and that OEA would not see itself as the ‘pen holder’ for such a strategy, which she felt would be better placed within the remit of the Ministry of Education, if at all.

There were generally also low levels of support for community language promotion among representatives of other minority language communities. According to the TPK interviewee, the arguments in favour of promoting Asian languages were ‘even less convincing’ than those for promoting Pacific languages, given that speakers of these

languages could get resources from their home countries or the Internet to support language maintenance, unlike Māori. This interviewee said that, whereas government support was justified for New Zealand's official languages and the government potentially had some obligations to languages that were part of the realm of New Zealand, it was 'up to them' for other communities if they wanted to maintain their languages. He claimed that language advocates within migrant communities struggled to muster a significant argument for promoting their languages, did not have a good understanding of the machinery of government and were 'very unclear on what a national language policy would do and why the government would be interested'.

Moreover, whereas the community language representatives all supported the notion of government support for Pacific language maintenance and saw the work of MPIA in this regard as a supporting argument for their own language goals, Pacific language representatives were much more circumspect about the prospect of government support for other migrant languages. The MPIA interviewee claimed that, while there was a 'clear rationale' for promoting Pacific languages in New Zealand, this was 'completely different' for Asian communities, who had a totally different background and history. Both this interviewee and the Pacific languages advocate, furthermore, saw the presence of Asian languages in New Zealand as likely to put pressure on Pacific languages. The Pacific languages advocate felt that Pacific peoples were becoming outnumbered by Asian people and that this presented a 'risk' for Pacific languages, given that Asian languages would become more influential and had a more positive reputation than Pacific languages, due to their being perceived as more 'useful' for trade. This interviewee expressed the view that Pacific languages had 'already been swamped by the indigenous argument' in relation to te reo Māori and that this was now going to repeat itself in relation to languages from other parts of the world.

The TTW interviewee was an exception to this pattern of low levels of support for community languages, instead expressing strong support for the promotion of community languages alongside te reo Māori, for reasons of fostering cultural and linguistic diversity in New Zealand. According to her, Māori need not feel threatened by the presence of migrant languages, given that 'Māori will always remain the *tangata whenua*'. On the contrary, she felt that, if migrants were more able to express their linguistic and cultural identity in New Zealand, this would create a space where Māori might also find a more accepting place for cultural expression. Moreover, she aligned with the argument of integration, noting that respecting the linguistic identity of migrants would lead to better relationships and observing that 'the *tangata whenua* also have an interest in social cohesion'.

Community languages are placed at the bottom of the minority language hierarchy, given a lack of any significant government policy activity in their favour and a low level of conviction among most of the representatives of other language communities interviewed as to the value of their claims.

Discussion

The results of this research confirm the observation of Milroy and Milroy (2012, 163) that:

All social actors view the sociolinguistic world from the perspective characteristic of their group. *There is no absolutely neutral perspective – no view from nowhere.*

As predicted based on the critical conception of language ideologies adopted here (where language ideologies are defined as positions on language adopted by individuals to advance their linguistic and non-linguistic interests), all representatives of minority language communities advanced conceptions of language that were in the interests of their own community. Although in policy documents arguments in favour of the language(s) in question were not explicitly advanced to the exclusion of the interests of other language groups (other minority language groups generally not being mentioned), in interviews tensions often emerged in relation to the promotion of one language to the perceived detriment of others.

Each group used a set of arguments to justify the value of promoting their language in New Zealand, but, importantly, not all arguments were used by all groups. Figure 1 summarises the arguments used by groups at different levels of the hierarchy to advance their interests.

As shown in Figure 1, two arguments were used by representatives of all language groups: those of *endangerment* and *cultural identity*. This is not surprising, as identification as a cultural-linguistic group and perception of endangerment are arguably basic prerequisites for self-identification as a minority language community. *Indigeneity* was claimed by three groups (Māori, NZSL, and Pacific) but all other arguments were advanced by two or fewer groups. Sometimes this was due to demonstrable facts about the languages concerned (e.g. legal status), in other cases it seemed to represent an attempt by groups at the lower end of the hierarchy to muster as many potentially convincing arguments as possible. This was less required for groups at the top end of the hierarchy, who had more widely accepted arguments upon which to base their claims. Overall, the fact that some arguments appeared to be ‘available’ only to some groups suggests an ideological landscape where certain language communities can make claims that are not acceptable coming from others. This unequal level of access to legitimating arguments supports the existence of a language hierarchy in relation to minority languages in New Zealand.

Moreover, interesting dynamics operated between the arguments advanced. There was a striking pattern for groups at each level of the hierarchy to accept the arguments of groups at higher levels and to resist the arguments of groups at lower levels.³ Some groups tried to ‘jump’ levels by arguing for the application of arguments at higher levels

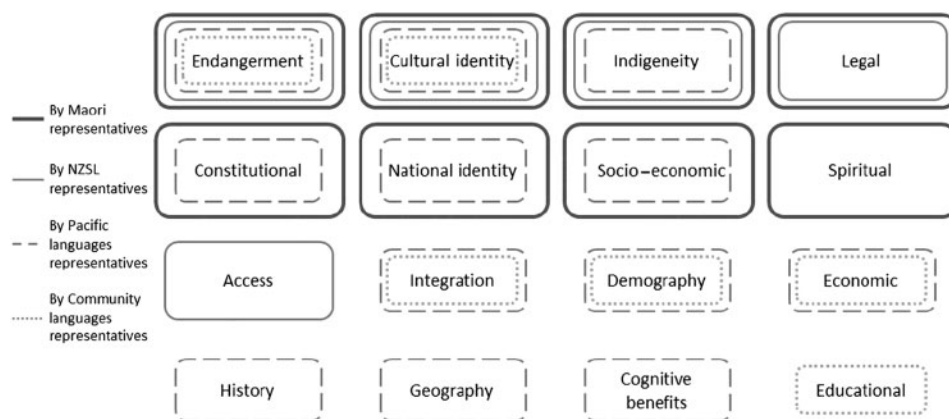


Figure 1. Arguments used by minority language groups in New Zealand.

to their own languages. The lower their level in the hierarchy, the harder language representatives reportedly found it to convince others of the validity of their views. Despite some degree of contestation at all levels, this suggests that the minority language hierarchy described here itself represents an overarching dominant language ideology in New Zealand. If so, it is also hegemonic, in the sense that those at lower levels of the hierarchy tend to accept the position of those at top, with particular consensus on the special position of te reo Māori as an indigenous language.

The hierarchy is also evident in the level of government support for language communities at different levels. Policymakers responsible for Māori language promotion referred to an extensive government infrastructure for te reo Māori, including significant levels of funding for language promotion in a range of areas. At each level of the hierarchy less government support was evident, proceeding to the situation for community language groups where the OEA denied outright any responsibility for supporting migrant language maintenance. These lower levels of government support found a parallel in the lesser claims of minority language groups at the lower ends of the hierarchy, where desired language policies tended to be limited to the area of funding for community language education, rather than seeking broader mechanisms of language promotion.

Conclusion

This article has reported on research investigating connections between different types of minority language communities in New Zealand, focusing on the language ideologies adopted by representatives of national and migrant minority language communities. It has shown that minority language communities of all types tend to further language ideological positions in line with their own group interests, often at the expense of those of other groups. The results support the existence of a minority language hierarchy in New Zealand, with te reo Māori at the top, followed by New Zealand Sign Language, then Pacific languages, and finally other migrant languages. This hierarchy is well entrenched, with different arguments applied to justify the position of minority languages at different levels of the hierarchy, and the arguments of those at the top accepted by those at the bottom, but not vice versa.

Future research could examine whether a similar minority language hierarchy to that found in New Zealand applies to other contexts where a national minority language and migrant languages coexist. Is the hierarchy the same in other multicultural societies with an indigenous population, such as Australia or Canada, where migrant communities have historically been privileged over indigenous communities in terms of language policy? Do sign languages in other nation states claim a high position in the hierarchy, in the absence of official recognition? Which arguments extend between national and migrant minority languages (e.g. claims to indigeneity) and which are reserved for one type of language only? Research on these and other questions could help paint a more detailed picture of the ideological context in which contemporary minority language communities exist.

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Notes

1. Similar considerations were later drawn by Nelde (2007, 74), who observed that: 'there is limited cooperation between indigenous [national minority] and non-indigenous (immigrant) groups in demanding linguistic rights. This is replicated to some extent in the scholarship surrounding these groups ... The need of this kind of cooperation, however, should be obvious, as comparable disadvantages require common solutions ... In contact linguistics, only very few researchers have investigated both types of linguistic minorities together in spite of the positive effects that might be entailed by common action'.
2. I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for providing this characterisation.
3. The exception in this regard was the TTW interviewee, who expressed very positive attitudes towards community language promotion.

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