

Languages in contact II

The use of Maori words in English

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Winifred Bauer completed a grammar of Maori as resident in the Stout Research Centre and has now finished a draft for non-linguists. This seminar was given on 14 June.

When languages come into contact, it is normal for there to be influence in both directions. There are usually borrowings both ways, and when speakers of one language learn the other, they usually show influence from their first one when they speak the second. All of this can be seen in the contact between English and Maori. Mary Boyce has addressed some contact issues from the point of view of Maori. This paper looks at two related issues concerning English borrowing from Maori. Many other interesting language contact issues, such as the function of the liberal sprinkling of Maori words in the English of some speakers (eg, 'After the *kai*, we're going to have intense *kōrero* with the *tāngata whenua*'), and the influence of Maori on the form of English expression of some Maori first-language speakers (eg, 'two breads and a meat', where a first language English speaker would use '[meat] sandwich') will have to await another occasion.

English speakers have always borrowed words freely from other languages with which they have come in contact. Many people have commented before on the inappropriateness of the label *borrowing* for this process, since nothing leaves the source language, and nothing will ever be returned to the source by the borrower. For this reason, although the term *borrowing* is well established in the linguistic literature, I am going to call it something different, which I hope will allow us to reflect rather more thoughtfully on the process. I will talk about *imitation* rather than *borrowing*. When English speakers borrow a Maori word like *rimu*, what they are really doing is imitating the Maori word.

Imitations (in all spheres, not just linguistic imitations) vary considerably in their fidelity to the original. When speakers of one language imitate a word of another language (whatever the languages involved), the **normal** method of imitation is to adapt

the sounds of the source word to those of the imitating language, to choose from the imitating language the sounds which are the closest approximation to those of the source language. Thus when English speakers imitate the French word *pâté*, they replace the French *p* and *t* with an English *p* and *t*, and the French vowels with the nearest English vowels, so that the final vowel, for instance, which is a monophthong in French, becomes a diphthong in English, because English does not have at the ends of words a monophthong close in sound to the French *é*. To use a painting analogy, imitators use the materials available in their own studios. English speakers imitate using the sounds of English. That is the normal process for linguistic imitations; that is what speakers do when nobody interferes with their language behaviour.

There are, however, occasions when speakers do not adapt to their own language when they imitate, or at least do not adapt fully. Thus English speakers imitating *Chenin Blanc* vary in their imitations between the fully adapted /ʃɛnɪn blæŋk/ and the French /ʃənɛ blā/. (In these transcriptions, the first rhymes *Chenin* with *Lenin*, and *blanc* is pronounced like *blank*. The second represents the French pronunciation.) The better the imitators speak French, the more likely they are to come close to the French pronunciation. That is the first factor working against adaptation. Secondly, if the imitator believes that there is kudos to be gained from a close imitation of the original, then adaptation is less likely. Thus if it is a sign of a good education that you speak excellent French, and if you want to impress on your interlocutor how well educated you are, then you are likely to imitate French carefully, and may, indeed, litter your conversation with French borrowings precisely for that purpose. Thirdly, if a language has prestige in your community at the time of your imitation, then a close imitation is one way for you to mark that prestige. In the past, Greek, Latin and French have all had prestige in relation to English; to speak these languages has been a sign of a good education, and the educated have therefore

often chosen to produce close imitations of words from those languages, rather than adapting them fully to English.

These patterns of adaptation can be seen in English imitations of Maori words. If we look back to the way in which Maori words were imitated in the early years of European settlement, we can see that the normal pattern prevailed. When Maori words were imitated, the Maori sounds were replaced by the closest equivalent English sounds, and at times the stress patterns of Maori words were changed to one which is more natural in English. Thus when Maori *wētā* was imitated, the *w* was little altered, since it is virtually identical in the two languages. Maori *t* is much further in sound from English *t*, but nevertheless, English has no closer sound, so an English *t* was used. However, English doesn't have a long *ē*. The three nearest possibilities in English are the sounds in *wet*, *wait*, and *wear* (and for some New Zealand speakers nowadays, the last of these is not at all close to the Maori vowel). The vowel in *wet* is short, but only moderately close in quality. The vowel in *wait* is a diphthong, whereas the Maori sound is a monophthong. The vowel in *wear* does not occur in English before *t*. Not surprisingly, the early settlers chose the sound in *wet* (as Janet Holmes pointed out, the spelling may have reinforced this choice). In Maori *wētā*, the stress is on the first syllable, but the second vowel is also long. In English it is impossible to have a long vowel unless it is at least partially stressed. In other words, long vowels in English go with stress. The second vowel of the Maori word thus posed a problem for English speakers. Although in quality the nearest vowel is that in *tar*, the use of this would automatically cause the stress to shift, giving *wē'ta*. (Stress is marked by the raised vertical line before the stressed syllable.) The alternative was to use a short vowel, which would not attract the stress. In the English of that time, there was only one short vowel of English which could occur at the ends of words, the one at the end of *butter*. As this was the only choice, the natural English imitation of Maori *wētā* was /wətə/, which is what most English speakers still say today.

In the same spirit, people of my parents' generation grew up talking unselfconsciously about Maoris living in places like Taupo, Taihape, and Raetihi, (/mauiz/, /taupou/, /tai'hæpi/, /ɹaɪ'thi/). Some of these pronunciations, however, go beyond adaptations to the nearest sound in English. This pronunciation of *Raetihi* is a case in point. The closest vowel for the first syllable here is the vowel in *rye*. The vowel in *tar*, which is normal in the pronunciation we are discussing, is a monophthong, not a diphthong. When we fail to choose

the closest equivalent, we produce pronunciations which we should perhaps describe as loosely based on, or derived freely from, the Maori. Similarly, the short pronunciation of *Paekakariki* as /paikɔk/ goes beyond imitation, and treats the material with great freedom. Some of these pronunciations undoubtedly developed as deviations from earlier close imitations, rather than poor imitations, but in cases like *Taupo*, there is nothing to suggest that the closest imitation (which would use the vowel in *pour*, rather than that in *Poe* in the second syllable) preceded this loosely derived pronunciation.

Maori does precisely the same things with the English words it imitates, as Mary Boyce has pointed out in her paper. English sounds are replaced by the closest equivalent from the sound inventory of Maori. Patterns which are impossible in Maori (such as groups of consonants, or consonants at the ends of words) are replaced by those which conform to Maori, so that English *clock* is imitated as *karaka*, where the *l* is replaced by *r*, the English vowel by the closest Maori vowel, the sounds represented by *c* and *l* are separated by a vowel, and another vowel is added at the end of the word. The stress falls on the first syllable in the Maori, although it is the second vowel which represents the stressed one of the English. At times, segments of English words are dropped, to make polysyllabic words shorter, and thus more akin to Maori (eg *inarapa* from *India-rubber*). In other words, Maori speakers imitate using the same principles as English speakers.

In the context of Maori, forms like *swingi*, 'swing' and *tivi*, 'TV', which are not fully adapted, are often evaluated negatively, as signs of the decay of Maori. But in English today, it is fully adapted pronunciations of Maori words in English which are evaluated negatively (by many people of both races), while pronunciations of Maori words which are minimally adapted (ie which are close imitations of the Maori) are considered desirable. Increasingly, Maori speakers find English adaptations of Maori words like *Taihape* (/tai'hæpi/) offensive, but English speakers are unperturbed by Maori adaptations of English words, like *Niu Tiren* (New Zealand). It is then pertinent to ask why the opposite view is taken in the two languages, and whether these differing attitudes are appropriate.

What has already been said about imitations of French and Latin points to one reason for the difference. The use of close imitations of another language is linked to its prestige. It must be emphasised here that no language is inherently prestigious: it is a result of its socio-political status, of the value which

a community places on it. Latin and French have traditionally been ranked as prestigious languages by European communities. By using close imitations of Maori words, by treating Maori like Latin and French, English speakers are according prestige to the Maori language. Thus the use of close imitations of Maori pronunciations makes a political statement: it says 'I value the Maori language highly'. And this puts a political value on the use of English adaptations: they are interpreted as saying 'I do not treat Maori as a prestigious language', regardless of the intention of the speaker. There is no neutral position.

A second difference between the situations of English and Maori lies in the fact that the latter is a threatened language, and the former is not. English can afford to incorporate unadapted Maori forms; they will not have a significant effect on English. In contrast, Maori is threatened by the use of unadapted English forms. Research on language decay and death (such as that reported in Dorian (1989)) indicates that the use of forms from the 'repressor' language regularly leads to the abandonment of the use of the threatened language in favour of the repressor, and ultimately to the replacement of features of it with those of the repressor. Maori cannot afford to lose any more ground; if it cannot avoid imitation, it must adapt.

The difference in attitudes to adaptations is almost certainly related to the difference in the strength of the two languages. The majority of English speakers very seldom hear Maori adaptations of English words, but Maori speakers constantly hear English adaptations of Maori words. English speakers know that the Maori adaptations of English will not oust the originals. Maori speakers may well fear that English adaptations will oust the originals as second language learners become an increasingly large proportion of Maori speakers.

There is also a significant difference in the capacity of the two groups of speakers to produce imitations. Many English speakers have never heard the original which they wish to imitate. The same is not true of Maori speakers. This dissociation from the original is responsible for some of the most deviant pronunciations of Maori words, like – and this is a genuine example – /teivɔŋə/ for *taonga*. English speakers who know better can provide a mirror of the original for those who remain ignorant to follow.

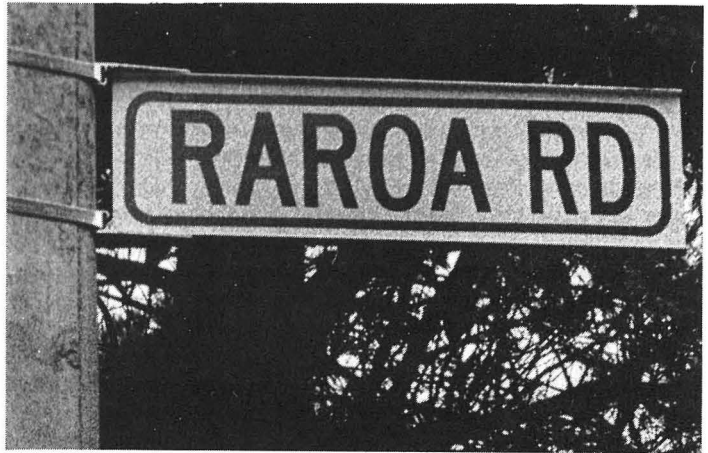
Thus if we ask whether it does the Maori language any good to have English speakers accord Maori prestige in this way, the answer is probably in the affirmative, although it is difficult to be sure. Maori people certainly seem to agree that they feel better about it, and that alone may be sufficient to justify it. If young

people feel that Maori is a prestigious language, they may be more inclined to learn it, or to take the trouble to learn it well. Unadapted Maori pronunciations in English might also have a more direct effect on learners by influencing their acquisition of Maori pronunciation. If English speakers produce pronunciations closer to Maori, then learners may do likewise, thus improving their learning of the Maori language. Unadapted pronunciations may thus be a small way in which English speakers can contribute to its maintenance.

However, in the word 'unadapted' in the last sentence lies a problem: most English speakers cannot produce unadapted Maori pronunciations. Again it is useful to compare with imitations from Latin or French. The prestige of Latin and French derives in large part from the fact that knowing them well equates with educational success. Those who accord prestige to these languages are able to produce close imitations of those languages because they are fluent users of them. That is not true of Maori. Many English speakers (of both races) who attempt close imitations of Maori are not fluent speakers of it, and their attempts at close imitation thus often fall wide of the mark. Consider what has happened in recent years to the pronunciation of *Taihape*. When I was young it was pronounced /tai'hæpi/. Nowadays, it is often pronounced /tai'hæpei/. This is not much closer to the Maori /'taihepe/. One problem with this word (and many others) is that very few English speakers can manage a short *e* in final position, without making it a diphthong. Users of this new imitation have dissociated themselves from the older (politically stigmatized) pronunciation, and replaced it with a form equally distant from Maori, but as yet unstigmatized. The vowel system of Maori is so far from that of English, that the closest approximations of most English speakers to Maori vowels are still not good imitations. This greatly reduces the value to Maori language maintenance of such imitations. It is easy to specify what will overcome this problem: teaching young New Zealanders to pronounce Maori before they reach puberty (with its attendant reduction in language acquisition ability), and providing them with good models. But it is easier said than done.

These factors all suggest that it is desirable from the point of view of Maori for English speakers to use close imitations of Maori words. On the other side of the coin, it must be stressed that using them is an unnatural thing for English speakers to do. It is difficult to change in mid-sentence from one sound system to another. English speakers have to concen-

trate really hard to say *Raroa Road* giving the first word Maori *rs* and Maori vowels, and the second word an English *r* and English vowels. It is not uncommon to hear the process go wrong, to hear, for instance, the Maori sounds carried forward into English words where they certainly don't belong. To shift between systems successfully requires the speaker to pay a great deal of attention to the pronunciation, to the form rather than the content of the message. This is not always appropriate. One of the most important



defining characteristics of informal conversation is that little attention is paid to form. By introducing Maori pronunciations into informal English conversation, a speaker necessarily increases the formality level. This suggests that it is more reasonable, more appropriate to expect English speakers to produce closer imitations in formal than in informal contexts. But even in formal contexts, if a speaker is, for example, making an unprepared speech, and concentrating on the content, they may simply be unable to divert sufficient attention to the form to produce close imitations. And if you stop to ask directions to Raetihi, you will have to judge what pronunciation your interlocutor will be likely to understand, since in such situations conveying the content of the message must take precedence over using the politically correct form. What I am arguing here, is that it will be appropriate even for those English speakers who most seriously wish to promote the prestige of Maori to use a range of imitations in different situations, and that they should not feel that they are letting the side down by doing so. Rather, they are allowing their sensitivity to the linguistic situation to influence their decision about what is appropriate usage, rather than just their political convictions.

Thus in terms of pronunciation, a range of positions is possible. At one end of the continuum is the use of fully adapted forms, including those based loosely on Maori, with pronunciations for *Taupo* and *Paekakariki* like /taupou/ and /paikøk/. The next point along the line is to avoid such loose treatments, but to use fully adapted forms, giving pronunciations like /taupɔ/ and /paikɔkɔiiki/. At the other end of the continuum, speakers attempt the closest imitation they can – but there will be a lot of variation in the imitations, depending on the skill of

the English speaker at Maori, and the model they imitate. There is also room for many compromise positions in between. I am suggesting that English speakers may wish to operate at different places along this line depending on the context of their speech. In informal contexts, it may be appropriate to say *Raroa Road* with English *rs*, but /rɔɔ/ rather than /rouɔ/ in the second syllable, for instance. In more formal contexts, attempting a closer imitation may be more appropriate. Each individual has to decide for themselves firstly what they can manage linguistically, secondly what is appropriate in the particular linguistic situation, and thirdly what they want to communicate politically.

Related to the issue of pronunciation is that of whether Maori words should have macrons to mark the vowel length when they are written in English: should we write 'Maori words' or 'Māori words'? The Māori Language Commission advocates the use of macrons even in the context of English. In other words, they do not wish English writers to adapt written imitations fully to English. The chief argument for this position is that vowel length is an important element in the correct pronunciation of Maori, and stress is largely predictable if you know which vowels are long. As a subsidiary argument, the Māori Language Commission points to the fact that vowel length distinguishes many pairs of words in Maori, and they say you need to mark the vowel length to show which word is intended: *wētā* is an insect, *weta* is 'excrement'. I myself do not accept this second argument. In English, *weta* cannot mean 'excrement', because this is not a word used in English. Maori speakers may enjoy the joke which derives from the possibility of the mis-reading, but it is just a cross-linguistic joke, a bonus for the bilingual, much on a par with the laugh we get when we

Young Maoris shine at golf

MAORIS thrive in netball, rugby and rugby league. Now it's golf's turn. More Maoris are using their natural rhythm, timing and swing to blast golf balls around local and overseas courses.

International golfers Michael Campbell, Philip Taitaurangi and others are the youngsters' role models.

Keep an eye open for the names Kylie Wilson, Saali Herewini, Tina Howard, Ben Cribb, Marcus Lloyd and Linda

scheme and to do that we needed a sponsor.

"By a fluke, I met a guy in a butcher shop who was general manager of Maxfli, a subsidiary of Dunlop. So I lassoed him and that was the start of our association. He provided a facility to have balls supplied to the kids."

"That's since extended to golf clubs and bags."

Mr Pirihī now heads the Maxfli Major Junior Golf Development Programme. His directors are Mick Brown, New Zealand's principal youth court judge, and an

gest sponsor, provides the smart outfits the players wear.

"As a consequence of that involvement we've now set up Pickering New Zealand," says Mr Pirihī, who is a 50 per cent shareholder.

Despite the sponsorship successes, Mr Pirihī works on an annual shoestring budget of about \$60,000 to \$80,000. "With \$300,000 we could really make these kids stand up and be noticed," he says. "Somewhere within Maoridom that money must be there."

The programme now funds promising

In Maori, on the other hand, number is almost never marked on nouns themselves. Number is regularly marked in determiners, so that almost all nouns in Maori sentences are accompanied by an indication of whether they are singular or plural. Thus *tēnei kumara* is 'this kumara', *ēnei kumara* is 'these kumaras';

learn that there is a drink in Japan called 'pokari sweat'. We come back then, to the fact that marking vowel length will help to improve the standard of Maori pronunciation by English speakers – provided, of course, that they know how to use the information! Individual users then have to balance this possible benefit for Maori against the frequently encountered difficulties in reproducing macrons on type-writers, computers, and printers. Again, there are compromise positions on some occasions: in a scientific paper about *wetas*, it might be appropriate to acknowledge that *weta* comes from Maori *wētā* at the start of the paper, thus providing the information about vowel length in Maori, (which, as I pointed out above, can't be imitated within the English system), and then using *weta* as the English form. But the decision is for the individual to make.

The issue of the incorporation of Maori words into English grammatically doesn't leave as much room for compromise solutions as the pronunciation. In particular, I want to talk about the use of *Maori* vs *Maoris* to refer to more than one. A few words about number marking in English and Maori are necessary to begin with.

Number in English is marked primarily on nouns by the use of the -s suffix. There are many irregular nouns in English which form plurals in other ways, but the norm for new nouns entering the language is that they take the regular plural suffix, and irregular plurals have a tendency to regularise over time. English also marks number in some determiners (determiners are words like *a*, *the*, *some*, *this*, *any*), but not all. In particular, the definite article, *the*, does not mark number, and this is the most frequent determiner in English. In the present tense, English also marks number on some verbs: *the boy knows* vs *the boys know*.

the difference in the determiners shows the difference in number.

When Maori imitates English words, they are fully adapted to the grammatical system of Maori. Maori suffixes can be added to them, so when Maori imitated 'governor' as *kāwana*, it added a Maori nominalizing suffix *-tanga* to create an equivalent for 'government': *kāwanatanga*. And Maori uses its own determiners to mark number on such imitations, and does not use the English forms. Thus we have *tēnei tēpu* 'this table' *ēnei tēpu* 'these tables'. Maori does not have the distinction between countable and uncountable nouns which English has: in English we can say 'this table, these tables' but not 'this salt, these salts' (unless we mean types of salt). But when Maori imitates the word *salt* it can take a plural determiner to show number: *Kei hea ngā tote?* literally 'Where are the salts?', for 'Where is the salt?'. This is what normally happens to words imitated from another language: they become fully adapted grammatically to the imitating language.

Thus the natural thing for English to do with imitations from Maori is to adapt them fully to English: to mark plural as it is normally marked, by use of the plural suffix. Yet this appears not to be acceptable to many Maori speakers. Some object to the use of the plural only on the word Maori itself, others to the use of the plural on any imitation of a Maori word.

One of the arguments put forward to support this position is that English has some nouns which don't have a different form for singular and plural anyway, and so Maori words can simply follow that pattern. If English can say *this sheep*, *these sheep*, why not *this Maori*, *these Maori*? From the point of view of English, the argument is not quite so simple. The group of nouns like *sheep* is very small, and its members are

almost exclusively hutable and/or edible. English speakers may not be consciously aware of this fact, but their unconscious understanding of this might indeed make them hesitate to classify Maori people in this way! In other words, although the grammatical system of English does indeed have a class with no change for plural, it is used for particular kinds of objects only. If we add all Maori imitations to it, we lose the coherence of the class; we alter - albeit in a minor way - the grammatical system of English. (On the other hand, New Zealand speakers who fail to distinguish in pronunciation between *woman* and *women* appear to have added women to the class recently!)

There are other nationality names, such as *French*, *Chinese* which can be used without an -s to refer to the nationality as a whole, but there are many restrictions on the way such nouns can be used. In many instances, they have to be preceded by the definite article: 'The French speak French' but not 'French speak French'. There appears to be variation between individual members of this class of nationality nouns. It is very doubtful whether it is acceptable in English to say 'There are many French in Belgium', but it seems to me acceptable to say 'There are many Chinese in Malaysia'. If we add *Maori* to this class in English, we expect to be able to say (following the present rules of English) 'The Maori came to New Zealand in canoes', and possibly 'There are many Maori in Sydney', but not 'Maori should speak Maori to Maori'. Adding *Maori* to this class, then does not solve the problem in all contexts, and it certainly does not solve the problem for imitations of other Maori words.

It is worth asking whether the failure to make the singular/plural distinction in English matters. Ambiguities leading to misunderstanding will be very rare. (They are possible: the question 'Should Maori be taught compulsorily in school?' can be understood two ways if you try!) But for many English speakers, it feels ungrammatical to disobey the normal rules of their language, it feels ungrammatical to say 'For many Maori, Maori is a second language'. And that feeling has as least as much right to be respected as the Maori feeling that the word *Maori* shouldn't have an -s.

So where does this leave us? As with the pronunciation, there is not just one answer for all speakers at all times. There are avoidance strategies for the word *Maori* itself: it is often possible to use *Maori people*, rather than just *Maori* or *Maoris*. But there is a real tension between endeavouring to respect Maori feeling on this issue and respecting the conventions of the English language. Why do I, as an English speaker, not feel offended when I hear Maori speakers talk of *ngā tote* 'the salts', but Maori speakers feel offended when

I say *the kumaras*? We return to the fact that my language, English, is not threatened in any way by the use of *ngā tote*. It is an interesting question whether the Maori language is threatened by my use of *the kumaras*. I have seen/heard no evidence that learners of Maori transport the English -s into Maori when they learn the language. The linguistic case for refraining from adding -s to Maori imitations seems to me far less clear than the case for improving our imitations of Maori pronunciation. But the decision of the individual is again as much a socio-political one as linguistic.

If consistency is desired on any individual occasion, then the following sets of practices go together. Either you adapt Maori words fully, giving them English sounds, you write them without macrons, you give them English plurals, and you do not put them in italics, because you are treating them as English words, imitations of the Maori. Or you pronounce them as close to the *Māori* as possible, you write them with macrons, you do not give them English plurals, and you write them in italics, because you are saying that they are not English words; you are interpolating *Māori* words into your English.

It is not my place to tell English speakers what they should do. That must be an individual decision for each speaker. What I hope I have done is to disentangle the linguistic issues from the socio-political ones, so that individuals can make a more informed choice for their own usage.

REFERENCE

Dorian, N.C. (ed) (1989). *Investigating Obsolescence: Studies in Language Contraction and Death: Studies in the Social and Cultural Foundations of Language*, Vol 7. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

TRANSCRIPTION SYMBOLS

The following list identifies the sounds represented by the symbols used in the English transcriptions above which are likely to be unfamiliar. There is no simple way to indicate the sound represented by symbols used in the transcription of Maori or French, but in all cases, the most important point is the difference between them and the English. This can be seen if it is understood that in a transcription, every different symbol represents a different sound.

- /tʃ/ - the sound represented by the *ch* in *choose*
- /ŋ/ - the sound represented by the *ng* in *sing*
- /ɹ/ - the sound represented by the *r* in *ran*
- /æ/ - the sound represented by the *a* in *pan*
- /ai/ - the sound represented by the *y* in *by*
- /au/ - the sound represented by the *ow* in *now*
- /ɑ/ - the sound represented by the *ar* in *car*
- /ei/ - the sound represented by the *ai* in *rain*
- /i/ - the sound represented by the *i* in *pin*
- /i/ - the sound represented by the *ee* in *need*
- /ou/ - the sound represented by the *o* in *go*
- /ɔ/ - the sound represented by the *oor* in *door*
- /ɒ/ - the sound represented by the *o* in *dog*
- /ʌ/ - the sound represented by the *u* in *cup*
- /ə/ - the sound represented by the *er* in *letters*