

Neke Interview 2: Hēmi Kelly

1. How did you get into translation?

Translation is part and parcel of learning a language. It was a natural progression for me. In 2012, I was asked to attend the Institute of Excellence in Te Reo Māori, where for a year I was taught the fundamental skills of translation, among other aspects of the language and culture. In 2015, I attended translation workshops with the Māori Language Commission, where those skills were developed and refined and in May of that year the Commission awarded me my license. Through working closely with others in this community, who I consider to be exceptional translators, I continue to learn and improve my own practice.

2. What is it about translation that interests you the most?

What interests me the most is the challenge in taking a sentence or phrase and transplanting the concept that it carries into the target language without omitting from, or adding to it. Instead, producing a piece of text that seems so natural in the target language that it isn't viewed as a translation. The original concept remains and is understood completely through a different lens. That is easier said than done but it is the challenge that excites me. I also love words; researching words, selecting the precise words and then structuring them in a way that is appealing and aesthetically pleasing.

3. Where do you see Translation Studies heading in the future?

In my view, English-Māori and Māori-English translation is in a more prosperous place than it has ever been. Māori translation exists now in almost every sector of our society. In the last decade we have seen a number of firsts in this area, including *Moana*, the first Disney film translated into Māori. The future is bright.



4. What role do you think technology plays in Translation Studies?

I wouldn't be able to complete my work without the aid of technology but there is a lot of room for development, especially with minoritised and indigenous languages. Last year I worked with a team on the development of the Microsoft Translator Hub for Māori language. The greatest challenge is sourcing enough translated text to upload into the software so that it can produce an accurate, or near accurate translation. The body of translated text is relatively minute compared to other languages who have been writing for centuries. The Māori language has only been in writing for less than 200 years. Projects of this nature will continue to develop over time and technology will inevitable play a greater role in translation studies.

5. How important do you think it is for a scholar to be a practitioner and vice versa?

Regardless of whether or not one is a scholar, a practitioner, or both, what is imperative is that those practicing are trained and continue to up skill and engage with the community where they work.

5+1. What are you currently working on in terms of research or translation project?

I have just finished translating a document for a commercial law firm, alongside other similar documents. This is all necessary work but what I look forward to the most is my own work. Looking forward, I will soon be writing a paper about aspects of Māori translation for this year's NZSTI annual conference in May and I will also be starting a translation of a new novel.

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Hēmi Kelly (Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Tahu, Ngāti Whāoa) is a full-time lecturer in te reo Maori at the Auckland University of Technology, and a licensed translator and graduate of Te Panekiretanga o Te Reo/The Institute of Excellence in the Maori Language. In 2017, Hemi translated Witi Ihimaera's novella in *Sleeps Standing*. In 2018, he published his first book, *A Maori Word a Day*.

