

# **PLANNING A MULTILINGUAL FUTURE IN A MONOLINGUAL CULTURE: CHALLENGES FOR INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE LEARNING IN NEW ZEALAND**

Martin East  
UNITEC Institute of Technology

## **Abstract**

In the process of globalisation, English has emerged as the de facto world language. It is also the first language of the majority of New Zealanders. From that perspective there is a significant preconception in New Zealand that English is the only essentially important language, even in an officially 'bilingual' nation. Arguments that support the dominance of English are strong. The viewpoint that "everyone speaks English" cannot, however, be justified by the evidence. Within New Zealand, there is wide linguistic and cultural diversity, which means that it is imperative to plan how best to meet the language needs of New Zealand's minority community groups. Trading internationally will increasingly bring New Zealanders into contact with people who do not speak English, which means that it is also crucial to plan how best to equip people with the skills in international languages that may give New Zealand greater competitive advantage. It is important to view the future in multilingual terms, whereby English alone, although clearly important, is becoming insufficient. This paper considers how New Zealand has responded vigorously to the desire of many people to learn English as a second or other language, but by contrast has not, as yet, responded effectively to both national and international linguistic diversity. Such diversity has implications for educational policy regarding the teaching of languages, but in New Zealand a comprehensive, explicit national policy has not been introduced. This issue now needs to be addressed.

## **Introduction**

New Zealand is a country that for many years has relied heavily on the position and dominance of English, and a country in which English is the first (and in most cases only) language of the overwhelming majority of New Zealanders. There has been talk in New Zealand for a good number of years about establishing an explicit and coherent language policy – one that will address the needs of living and working in a multilingual world – but thus far no coherent national policy has been developed.

The reality is that, within New Zealand, there is wide linguistic and cultural diversity. This is evidenced for example by the census statistics for 2001. Results recorded for languages spoken indicate that while English still overwhelmingly dominates the linguistic landscape of New Zealand, over one hundred and fifty other languages are represented among the population, with Māori (New Zealand's second official language) and Samoan being the two most common languages after English (Statistics New Zealand, 2002). From this perspective, the teaching and learning of New Zealand's

community languages – languages that are “spoken on a regular basis within a minority community in New Zealand” (Waite, 1992, p.23) – is an important issue.

New Zealand is also essentially a trading nation, to a very large extent dependent on establishing and maintaining effective relationships with trading partners all over the world (Callister, 1990; Crocombe, Enright, & Porter, 1991; Watts & Trlin, 1999). Callister (1990) suggests that an awareness of others’ cultures and customs (often closely linked to consumer preferences) and an ability to converse in the trading partners’ language, would help to strengthen New Zealand’s trading initiatives. From this perspective, the teaching and learning of international languages other than English – languages that have “cultural and economic importance for New Zealand at an international level” (Waite, 1992, p.23) – is also important.

Nevertheless, despite the realities that New Zealand is increasingly a multi-ethnic and multilingual society, that it has also officially been a ‘bilingual’ nation since 1987, and that learning the languages of New Zealand’s trading partners might give New Zealand greater competitive advantage, a mindset pervades that “surely they all speak English, don’t they?” (East, 2000). Indeed, Peddie (2003) asserts that a ‘common rhetoric’ in New Zealand communicates two firmly held beliefs. One is that ‘real New Zealanders’ are “white/Anglo English-speaking peoples, with some acceptance that Māori also have some stake – provided they do not want too much of ‘our’ resources or (even worse) some form of independence from ‘us’”. The other is that “when migrants come here they should not only accept ‘our’ culture, but should very definitely speak ‘our’ language – English.” (Peddie, 2003, p.8).

Addressing the issue of *community* languages in New Zealand, May (2002) charts a possible way forward for language and education policy in New Zealand in the face of the dominance of English, arguing that opportunities for education in community languages are at present extremely limited, and that opportunities for bilingual education should be extended. He suggests that there is a basic unwillingness to provide any significant form of institutional recognition of the languages and cultures of New Zealand’s increasing numbers of minority ethnic groups because “the imperatives of cultural and linguistic homogeneity continue to dominate the development and maintenance of public policy” (May, 2002, p.24). In other words, the dominance of English in New Zealand creates a situation in which community languages other than English are effectively side-lined. Māori, as a language with legal status, is the exception, but one that appears to have what May terms “significant limits” to its development (May, 2002, p.31) because of the pre-eminence of English.

With regard to the status of *international* languages for New Zealand, which this paper emphasises, it is evident that the backdrop of dominant English effectively means that opportunities for education in international languages other than English also continue to be limited. This paper considers how the position of English as a language of “genuine world status” (Crystal, 1997, p.139) has fuelled the desire of many people to learn it, and has established the teaching of English as a second or other language in New Zealand as a major ‘industry’. Bearing in mind the official status of English and Māori, it looks at the teaching of ESOL (English as a second or other language) and Māori, highlighting the contrast between these two languages with regard to uptake. It also explores the teaching of languages other than English and Māori, particularly in the schools sector of education, again drawing attention to the contrast not only between uptake for ESOL and international languages, but also between international and community languages. It outlines developments over recent years, suggesting some reasons why, despite some

very positive moves forward, a comprehensive and coherent national languages policy has not yet been developed in New Zealand.

### The case for a coherent languages policy in New Zealand

As a result of lack of policy or coherent planning, language teaching in New Zealand's schools has often been quite *ad hoc*. This was evidenced, for example, in the 1994 Evaluation Report of New Zealand's Education Review Office, *Second language learning* (ERO, 1994). Herriman and Burnaby suggest, however, that a policy is a "principled approach or plan" (Herriman & Burnaby, 1996, p.3), and that if it is not articulated officially, a policy exists by virtue of the linguistic status quo. Even *ad hoc* arrangements become policy implicitly, and such an approach suggests that a coherent strategy needs to be specified. Benton (1996) argues, for example, that in the schools sector an environment should be created where learning another language is a normal activity. He suggests that the choice of language is not so important at this stage, since there is no guarantee that any individuals will necessarily use the particular language they learn later in life – the issue is exposure to another way of viewing the world.

Dr. Jeffrey Waite was commissioned in 1991 by the New Zealand Ministry of Education to develop a report leading to a national languages policy. The report, submitted in 1992 under the title *Aotearoa: Speaking for ourselves*, still provides a benchmark for what a coherent national languages policy might seek to do. The executive summary states that it "...explores the need for a coherent and comprehensive New Zealand Languages Policy to provide a framework for rational decision-making about the wide range of language issues that confront our society" (Waite, 1992, p.5). The report made no specific recommendations – it was to be a springboard discussion document.

For Waite, the acceptance of English and Māori as the two official languages of New Zealand became the starting point for the diverse directions in which a language policy would need to go.

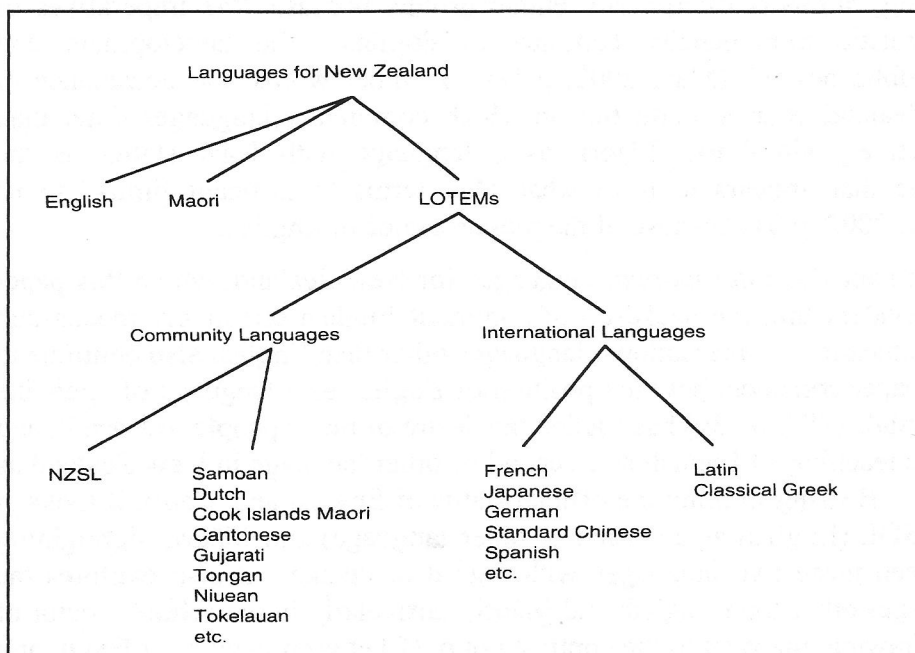


Figure 1: Categorisation of languages used in the Waite report (Waite, 1992, p.24)

Figure 1 illustrates how Waite expressed this diversity, and the categorisation of languages as used in his report: English and Māori had a central place. All other languages were classified separately as LOTEMs (languages other than English and Māori), and had no official status.

After the report had been completed 10,000 copies were distributed for comment. Only 129 separate submissions were received in response, however, along with 94 duplicated submissions from a TESOL organisation and 349 signatures on a petition arguing for more prominence for Latin (Benton, 1996, Peddie, 2003). The report overall received positive support, but there was no clear agreement on the general priorities proposed, and little agreement about how to prioritise international languages.

At the time of the report, Robert Kaplan (1992) perceived that New Zealand stood at a crossroad. It could move to become a multilingual member of the world community by developing a coherent languages policy, or it could choose, in his view, to isolate itself from greater international involvement by failing to develop such a policy. In either case, he was convinced that multilingualism is an important feature of education in the world today. This is a feature for which forward planning is required.

The situation today, more than ten years after Waite's report, is, however, much as it was when Waite categorised languages, with the only significant change being the New Zealand government's intention to recognise New Zealand sign language (NZSL) as the third 'official' language (New Zealand Government, 2003), giving it legal status that has thus far only been enjoyed by English and Māori.

What, then, is the current state of play in New Zealand's schools with regard to English (considered as a second or other language), Māori and LOTEMs? And what implications does this state of play have for language policy development for LOTEMs?

### ESOL in New Zealand's schools

It is clear that the success of the teaching of English as a second or other language in New Zealand has been fuelled by the demand for learning the lingua franca of much of the world. Indeed, the popularity of and demand for English-medium education in New Zealand increased markedly between 1997 and 2001 (apart from a noticeable decrease in numbers in 1998 and 1999, arguably due to the downturn in the Asian economy). The number of so-called FFP (foreign fee paying) students in the different sectors of education in 2001 is given in Table 1.

**Table 1: Number of FFP students in New Zealand in 2001 (Ministry of Education, 2002)**

Schools		State Tertiary			Private Tertiary	English Language Schools	Total
Primary	Secondary	Universities	Polytechnics	Colleges of Education			
1,823	8,732	8,247	4,337	65	3,289	26,203	52,696

The figure of 52,696 in 2001 represents a 36% increase in FFP students over 2000 numbers (38,753) and an 86% increase over 1999 numbers (28,340). In the space of the three years 1999 to 2001, New Zealand has therefore witnessed massive growth in this group of students. The fact that 50% of FFP students were attending private English



language schools in 2001 suggests that New Zealand is being responsive to ‘market forces’ in this area. It is also important to note that the actual numbers of people studying English as a second or other language are in fact larger than these figures indicate. These statistics do not take into account the teaching of English as an additional language to immigrants and permanent residents.

Furthermore, the schools sector (both primary and secondary) has seen a correspondingly large increase in FFP students. Schools data for the period 1997 to 2001 is given in Table 2.

**Table 2: FFP students in New Zealand’s schools (Ministry of Education, 2001a)**

Year	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
FFP student numbers	5,468	4,729	5,044	7,191	10,555

These figures also show a growth trend in the period 1999 to 2001, with numbers of FFP students more than doubling. It was also evident that the majority of FFP students in 2001 were Asian. Asians accounted for 92% of both primary and secondary school FFP students (and 83% of public tertiary FFPs). China was the most common country of citizenship of FFP students in 2001. Although national data on subject choice for secondary FFP students have not been universally collected, data that are available suggest that ESOL is, not surprisingly, a very strongly preferred subject for secondary FFP students.

Several clear trends emerge:

- FFP students do not come to New Zealand just to learn English – they are involved with the study of a wide variety of subjects at both secondary and tertiary level.
- Nevertheless, the demand for ESOL courses to underpin other study, continues, overall, to grow.
- Despite this overall growth, the ‘market’ can be volatile. This was witnessed by the decline in numbers between 1998 and 1999, as a result of the downturn in the Asian economy. It is also apparent (although statistics are not yet available) in the downturn in numbers of FFP students in 2003 as a consequence of three conspiring factors: the SARS virus (thereby preventing many students, particularly from China, from leaving their home countries), the strengthening of the New Zealand dollar (thereby making New Zealand, relatively speaking, a more expensive place to be), and scare-mongering reports in the Chinese media (People's Daily, 2003) about the potential dangers of studying in New Zealand.

It seems clear, then, that although the volatility of this sector of education can make planning for the teaching of ESOL quite precarious, the future of this sector is in no immediate danger of collapse, essentially because of the perceived strength of English on the world’s stage. A coherent and comprehensive language policy in New Zealand can only serve to strengthen this sector.

## Māori in New Zealand's schools

In contrast to the situation enjoyed by English, the teaching and learning of Māori as the second official language of New Zealand is a very different picture. Table 3 shows the numbers of students studying te reo Māori in secondary schools over the five-year period 1997 to 2001, and relates these to the total secondary school populations during those years.

**Table 3: Numbers of pupils taking te reo Māori, 1997 – 2001 (Ministry of Education, 2001a, 2001b)**

year	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
number of students taking te reo Māori	22,325	21,462	20,189	20,720	20,555
total school population	240,417	245,315	246,213	245,528	249,866
% of school population	9.3%	8.7%	8.2%	8.4%	8.2%

These figures indicate that overall less than one in ten students studied te reo Māori. It is also evident that within the time-frame 1997 to 2001 the secondary school population rose by over 9000 students, whereas the number studying te reo Māori was over 1500 fewer in 2001 than in 1997. As the school population has grown, the number of school pupils studying te reo Māori has effectively shrunk.

Table 4 shows the number of students in any given secondary school year, from Year 9 (13 years of age and beyond) to Year 13+ (17 years old and beyond), who were studying te reo Māori, as at July 2001 (Ministry of Education, 2001a).

**Table 4: Numbers of pupils taking te reo Māori in Years 9-13, 2001 (Ministry of Education, 2001a)**

year of schooling	Year 9		Year 10		Year 11		Year 12		Year 13+	
sex	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
number of students taking te reo Māori	4,896	5,177	2,229	2,996	1,111	1,885	462	987	296	516
% of school population	4%		2.1%		1.2%		0.6%		0.3%	

The figures indicate a distinct downward trend as pupils progress through their schooling. On the one hand, this is not surprising given that virtually all school subjects are subject to attrition as pupils progress from one year to the next and as the demands of subjects become greater. On the other hand, it is noticeable that, by the time students reached Year 11 (the first major milestone in terms of external school examinations), just over 1% of the school population was studying te reo Māori. When pupils reached Year 13 (the time when final school examinations would be taken), the numbers had reduced to less than one in every 200 taking Māori. Another alarming trend, observed by Peddie

(2003), is that while the Māori population continues to grow, significantly lower numbers of students were enrolled into Māori -immersion pre-schools in 2001 than was the case ten years previously, perhaps indicating that fewer students are seeking immersion or bilingual programmes in primary schools and that fewer younger Māori are learning their language. Peddie (2003, p.22) suggests that, overall, nearly 75% of all Māori students were not studying their language to an extent that would allow them to reach a reasonable level of competence. Furthermore, the 9% of students studying te reo Māori at secondary level, recorded in Tables 3 and 4, includes those learning te reo Māori in any type of programme.

May (2002) argues for the expansion of Māori -medium language education “based on the *rights* of a national minority to *maintain* their language and culture *in the same way that* majority national groups are able to maintain theirs” (May, 2002, p.31, my emphasis). The decline in numbers of students learning Māori in an immersion context would appear to indicate a move away from such an expansion, despite the “demonstrated academic benefits of long-term bilingual/biliteracy education” (McCaffery & Tuafuti, 2003, p.81) for language-minority learners. The contrasting figures for the uptake of ESOL with te reo Māori evidence what May terms “the ongoing valorisation of English as both the pre-eminent national and international language” (May, 2002, p.32).

### **LOTEMS in New Zealand’s schools**

A lack of a coherent or explicit policy, and the underlying assumptions regarding English, are also in evidence when taking a look at the teaching of languages *other* than English and Māori in New Zealand’s schools. When considering the position of international languages in the school system, the picture, as with Māori, is not optimistic, and reflects the downside of the perceived strength of English. On the one hand, it is evident that the New Zealand government has taken several important steps to facilitate a multilingual future, and to promote the learning of LOTEms, by introducing some key strategies to enhance the study of such languages:

In June 1995, the government allocated \$4.8 million, over three years, to provide opportunities for second language learning for Year 7 to 10 pupils (Ministry of Education, 1997) with the aims of extending the teaching of second languages in schools and of improving the quality of programmes. This became known as the ‘Second Language Learning Project’ (SLLP), and its impact was evaluated in 1997 (Peddie, Gunn, & Lewis, 1998).

Following on from this initiative, the government continues to make funds available to schools with Year 7 to 10 students through a yearly contestable pool to which schools can apply (Ministry of Education, 2003a).

The government has continued to support the regional language advisory service, providing leadership and assistance in managing international languages - targeted now towards schools that receive money from the contestable pool.

There has been a growing move to teach international languages to students in intermediate Years 7 and 8. International language teaching resources have been released in Spanish and Japanese (in 1998), and French and German (in 2000), to provide non-specialist teachers in primary and intermediate schools with the opportunity to introduce a basic, structured, beginners’ course in an international language. These multi-media courses do not require, on the part of the teacher, any specialist prior

knowledge. This means that language courses can still be delivered in cases where specialist staff are unavailable, and offers potential for more students to study a language than might otherwise have been possible.

Most significantly, the release of the Ministry of Education's curriculum stocktake report (Ministry of Education, 2003b) publicises the recommendation that learning an additional language (including English and te reo Māori as second languages) should become a separate and distinct learning area in the Year 7 to 10 school curriculum. This would force schools to offer an additional language at these levels. This recommendation signals that at last additional languages have been recognised as requiring their own distinct space in the school curriculum – to be called 'learning languages' – rather than being placed together with English and Māori as first languages in the broader curriculum area 'language and languages', thereby leading to frequent marginalisation. Rationales for the suggested change include the following arguments:

- Learning languages is seen as central to helping students to develop greater understanding of the cultures of others.
- Relative to most other countries, New Zealand has very low levels of language learning.
- Language education helps to foster bicultural and multicultural awareness.

### **Lotems: What the schools data tell us**

New Zealand is making positive moves forward. Nevertheless, the lack of overall policy or strategic direction that has dominated New Zealand's education system for so long becomes apparent when considering data available on language uptake in New Zealand's schools. Figures published by New Zealand's Ministry of Education (2001a) for school pupils studying a language other than English and Māori reveal a less than positive picture with regard to facilitating a multilingual future for New Zealand's young people, and suggest that the initiatives taken thus far are making little, if any, impact.

Table 5 below shows the actual numbers of secondary school students studying a LOTEM over the five-year period 1997 to 2001, relating these to the total secondary school populations during those years.

These figures provide a 'snap-shot' view of the numbers of students studying a language at the time of data collection (July of each year). None of these figures is mutually exclusive. It is possible that a number of students will have been studying more than one language at the time of data collection.

It is clear that, in each of these years, only around one in four school students in the secondary school population studied a language other than English and Māori. At first sight it may appear that the numbers are remaining stable. It is, however, a concern that the overall percentage of students studying a LOTEM has been so low. Despite the rise in the secondary school population, the number of students studying a LOTEM was about 200 fewer in 2001 than it had been in 1997. As with Māori, the number of school pupils studying a LOTEM has effectively shrunk in comparison with the growth in the school population. Once more, the contrasting directional trends for the uptake of ESOL with other international languages evidence the continuing pre-eminent status of English nationally and internationally.



**Table 5: Numbers of pupils taking a language other than English, 1997 – 2001 (Ministry of Education, 2001a, 2001b)**

		1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Pacific Languages	Samoan	475	432	649	895	926
	Cook Islands Māori	51	26	38	57	79
	Tongan	80	17	17	31	72
	Niuean	13	9	24	24	0
	Tokelauan	0	14	0	14	184
European Languages	French	21,166	21,676	23,705	24,272	23,816
	German	8,550	7,912	7,762	8,240	7,496
	Spanish	2,158	2,580	3,318	3,858	4,407
	Russian	8	59	0	0	60
Asian Languages	Japanese	25,399	22,376	22,155	21,529	19,981
	Chinese Languages	948	988	1,021	1,262	1,767
	Indonesian	142	130	232	87	50
	Korean					60
Other	Latin	2,345	2,352	2,276	2,444	2,285
	total	61,335	58,571	61,197	62,713	61,123
	total school population	240,417	245,315	24,6213	245,528	249,866
	% of school population	25.5%	23.9%	24.9%	25.5%	24.5%

Peddie (2003) raises another cause for concern in these figures. Many students in Year 9 do not receive a year-long course, which means that of the 25% apparently receiving second language teaching, only 10-15% of secondary school students are *in fact* getting more than a very minimal exposure to learning a second language. Many of these students, after the minimal 'taster', do not continue with the study of a language past that point. It is also clear that, for example, Samoan as a community language is learnt by a small proportion of the school population at secondary level in relation to, for example, French or Japanese. This is despite the fact that Samoan is, according to 2001 census data, the third most spoken language in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2002). Learning of Samoan at this level has increased, but the figures appear to evidence the extremely limited opportunities for learning this community language in the secondary school setting.

Indeed, the distribution of students to the different groups of languages in the period 1997 to 2001 indicates that the overwhelming majority of secondary school students who did study a language other than English or Māori studied either a European language (average 56%) or an Asian language (average 39%). On average, less than 4% and 1.5% studied respectively Latin or a Pacific language. Table 6 shows the number of students in

any given secondary school year, from Year 9 (13 years of age and beyond) to Year 13+ (17 years old and beyond), who were studying a European or an Asian language as at July 2001 (Ministry of Education, 2001a).

**Table 6: Numbers of pupils taking a language other than English in Years 9-13, 2001 (Ministry of Education, 2001a)**

Languages	Year of schooling									
	Year 9		Year 10		Year 11		Year 12		Year 13+	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Chinese Languages	330	367	114	138	74	98	98	90	269	189
French	5,192	7,817	1,920	3,696	727	2,089	330	1,110	216	719
German	1,268	2,191	595	1,200	273	798	211	526	117	317
Indonesian	0	0	3	8	6	8	6	10	4	5
Japanese	4,438	5,099	1,912	2,763	1,054	1,653	662	1,111	467	822
Russian	0	0	0	0	0	0	28	11	13	8
Spanish	774	832	405	500	239	535	139	574	98	311
% of school population	11.3 %		5.3 %		3 %		2%		1.4%	

The downward trend evident with the study of Māori as pupils progress through their schooling is apparent with these international languages. By the time students reached Year 11, 3% of the school population was studying an international language other than English and Māori. When pupils reached Year 13, the numbers had reduced to three students in every 200 taking an international language. If the international languages are considered individually, it is evident that, at best, only one in every 200 students in the overall school population was taking a particular language (in this case, Japanese) in 2001. These trends will have a 'knock-on' effect into the tertiary sector and beyond, and will diminish the pool of qualified linguists who are able, in turn, to pass on their skills to succeeding generations. Indeed, an independent evaluation of New Zealand's 'Second Language Learning Project' undertaken by the University of Auckland in mid-1997 (Peddie et al., 1998) revealed that, at primary level (Years 7 and 8), there were very few trained language teachers except in contexts where schools covered both the primary and the secondary age ranges, in which case a secondary-trained language teacher may also be teaching in Years 7 and 8 (although, as explained earlier, an attempt has been made to address this problem through the introduction of resources for Years 7 and 8 that do not require specialist knowledge).

### **Problems to be overcome**

The numbers and trends over recent years in New Zealand's schools indicate that forward planning for a multilingual future may need to be more proactive and directive than it currently is. Despite arguments for the development of a more directive languages policy, however, there appear to be several reasons why such a policy has not materialised.

A tacit assumption underlying policy decisions is indeed the widely held belief that English is the only essentially important language (Benton, 1996, May, 2002). There may also be a lack of widespread perception of the need for people in New Zealand to 'upgrade' their skills in the light of changes in New Zealand's relationship with the rest of the world, not only generally but also linguistically. It has been argued, both in and beyond the professional journals (Johnson, 1998; Kaplan, 1992; Spence, 1999), that the New Zealand government has demonstrated indifference and lack of awareness to language issues (although the positive reception of the curriculum stocktake shows that governmental attitudes may well be changing).

Peddie (1997) argues that underlying fears may well exist regarding the relative balances between different languages. Especially in the case of Māori he suggests that racist fears may emerge if that language is seen to be promoted, or indeed made compulsory, over others. Herriman and Burnaby (1996) comment that language status, rights and resources can often be seen as win-lose relationships: if one language is given status in policy, others are seen to have lost status. Rights afforded to some individuals can be regarded as diminishing the rights of others. Resources provided for one activity may give rise to demands for resources for other activities. There is, they suggest, a need for a balanced view of all the country's languages needs and wants.

Economically, to seriously tackle the problem (by for example making a language other than English compulsory) would require considerable financial resources. In a climate of financial constraint in which the government does not necessarily perceive the importance of the issue, these are not likely to be forthcoming (Kaplan, 1992; Peddie, 1993, 1997).

## Conclusion

In New Zealand, the provision of ESOL courses has grown significantly. Despite the negative impacts of the Asian economic crisis a few years ago, and the more recent SARS epidemic, strong New Zealand dollar and bad press in China, it is unlikely that demand for ESOL provision is under any serious longer term threat. Māori, by contrast, is learnt by only around 9% of the school population, despite its status in law as an official language of New Zealand – although its status in law means that its continued existence is not under any immediate threat.

With regard to languages other than English and Māori (languages that do not have any official status) the future is considerably more uncertain. The curriculum stocktake recommendation (Ministry of Education, 2003b) has given the positive signal of an entitlement to studying an additional language in Years 7 to 10. The recommendation includes the opportunity to learn an international language, English and Māori as second languages, or a community language. It is acknowledged, however, that the recommendation stops short of making an additional language compulsory for any students in these school years. It is also important to recognise that although this recommendation has received the approval of New Zealand's cabinet, its introduction can only occur when the Minister of Education is satisfied that the necessary conditions are in place (for example, with regard to sufficient resourcing and teachers) for it to be successfully implemented (White, personal communication, 2003). The curriculum stocktake signals the potential introduction of a minimum level of entitlement for New Zealand's school pupils. This is to be welcomed, but bearing in mind the difficulties to be overcome before it will be enacted it arguably does not go far enough.

Peddie asserts that in the New Zealand context “there is no clear and rational strategy to ensure that comprehensive and effective language programmes are put in place.” (Peddie, 2003, p.33). He suggests that strategies in the New Zealand context may include both a clear statement by the government and by the Ministry of Education about the importance of languages in the primary school sector, and the definite introduction of the eighth ‘essential learning area’ (learning languages) as an outcome of the curriculum stocktake. It appears that although New Zealand is taking some positive steps towards such strategising, progress in the context of a largely ‘monolingually minded’ culture is slow. There still appears to be a long way to go.

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