Towards a theory of motivation: describing commitment to the Māori language

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Motivations for learning heritage languages

second language acquisition (SLA) models:

- **Integrative** motivation (want to identify with group)
- **Instrumentive** motivation (academic, economic or social benefit)
‘[SLA theories] fall short when examined in and applied to Native American contexts ... it is unmistakable that a new way of thinking about language revitalization is necessary’

(White 2006: 104)
ILA motivation

- Indigenous Language Acquisition
- Second language adults
- Conscious decision
Present study

- Questionnaire
- Pilot study
- 104 respondents (9 are non-Maori)
- Questions about motivation
  - Self-generated
  - Ranking task
  - Opinion task
- Commitment index
Gender

Participants by gender

ICLDC - Honolulu 2009
Occupation

Number

Occupation

teacher
student
other

ICLDC - Honolulu 2009
Age

ICLDC - Honolulu 2009
Language ability

**Very well:**
can talk naturally and confidently about any domestic and community subject with few grammatical mistakes

**Well:**
can talk about domestic and community subjects, occasionally struggles to convey an idea and may switch to English, occasional grammatical mistakes, but can be readily understood

ICLDC - Honolulu 2009
8 point scale:
• language ability / 2
• language use in home / 2
• language use outside of the home / 2
• commitment / 2
Commitment index (CI)

ICLDC - Honolulu 2009
Language use in the home

ICLDC - Honolulu 2009
Spearman’s rho = 0.4356218
p < 0.001

Language use

ICLDC - Honolulu 2009
Language use in the home

Wilcoxon p = 0.01087

ICLDC - Honolulu 2009
Children in the house

ICLDC - Honolulu 2009
Question 1

• List the three main reasons why you are committed to speaking the Māori language
Sample reasons given

- To teach my children their language
- For the survival of te reo Maori
- For my own self identity
- So I can understand when I go to hui
- For the survival of my hapu and iwi
- To double my job opportunities
- For my own wellbeing
- The language is beautiful – it’s a treasure
- To teach other people
Focus of commitment

towards:

• **self (identity, work, wellbeing)**
  • For my own self identity
  • To double my job opportunities
  • So I can understand when I go to hui
  • For my own wellbeing

• **others (family, hapu, community)**
  • To teach my children their language
  • For the survival of my hapu and iwi

• **the language**
  • For the survival of te reo Maori
  • The language is beautiful – it’s a treasure
reported reasons – overall

ICLDC - Honolulu 2009
reported reasons – gender

ICLDC - Honolulu 2009
reported reasons – age

ICLDC - Honolulu 2009
reported reasons – children

ICLDC - Honolulu 2009
reported reasons – commitment index

ICLDC - Honolulu 2009
Self-determination theory

Behaviour change will occur and persist if autonomously motivated (Williams et al. 1996)
ILA motivation

Focus of commitment towards:
• self (identity, work, wellbeing)
• others (family, hapu, community)
• the language
Responsibility towards the self is the most important motivator

- “I am Maori, so I want to speak Maori”
- work
- spiritual wellbeing (as per King 2009)
Intergenerational role important – responsibility towards others:

- Passing language on to children from ancestors in a community context (as per Fishman 1991)
ILA motivation

Role in revitalising the language:

- don’t want the language to die
- “the language is beautiful”
- but feeling part of a language revitalisation movement is not important (King, 2009)
ILA commitment

towards:

• self (identity, work, wellbeing)
• others (family, hapu, community, tipuna)
• the language


