

HE ITI, HE POUNAMU

Doctoral theses written in Māori

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Abstract

This article illuminates the embryonic academic practice of writing doctoral theses in te reo Māori, storying the experiences of graduates, supervisors, examiners and senior managers involved in this pathway. In keeping with Indigenous sensibilities, a narrative research approach is adopted, whereby analysis proceeds by carefully curating interview data to tell a compelling insider story of the reo Māori doctoral journey. This narrative research process respects the teaching power of stories, told in the voices of pioneers in this field, and brings forward a joyful counter-narrative to the dominant detrimental research stories about Māori university education.

Keywords

Indigenous doctoral studies, Kaupapa Māori, narrative research, te reo Māori

Introduction

This article reports an empirical study of the emergent academic practice of writing doctoral theses in te reo Māori, featuring the experiences of graduates, supervisors, examiners and senior administrators involved in this special pathway. These experiences are combined and sequenced

to narrate the reo Māori doctoral journey, from enrolment to oral examination, and draw attention to relevant factors, including particular university policies and processes. For example, in Aotearoa New Zealand, standard process for examining doctoral theses requires one international examiner, which is problematic, if not illogical, for theses written in Māori.

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This is my second article on this topic and builds on my initial scoping article (Stewart, 2018b), which delved into the complex background of the status of te reo Māori in the university sector. The restricted size of the community currently involved in reo Māori doctoral studies rules out standard research designs such as thematic analysis of interview data. Instead, edited interview extracts are combined into a “meta-narrative” that enables the rich data to speak powerfully but anonymously about current practice in this emergent field. This editing or curating process blurs the boundary between data collection and analysis, which is characteristic of narrative research (Chase, 2013; Stewart, Tamatea, & Mika, 2015) and compatible with Indigenous research methodologies (Chilisa, 2012). This narrative research

approach respects the radical teaching power of stories, in line with Indigenous sensibilities (King, 2003). Much more needs to be researched and written about te reo Māori in the university, but this article focuses on telling this story.

To start with some quantitative data, Table 1 lists the graduates, university and year of completion for all 20 existing reo Māori doctoral theses (updating the list in Stewart, 2018b). In the next section, I explain the research process leading to this article.

Research process

I collected 17 of the full-text theses presented in Table 1, which shows that reo Māori doctoral theses have been completed under the auspices

TABLE 1 List of reo Māori doctoral theses as at February 2019

	Year	Graduate	University
1	2000	Taiarahia Black	Massey
2	2001	Ian Christensen*	Massey
3	2004	Lachlan Paterson*	Otago
4	2005	Poia Rewi	Otago
5	2008	Darryn James Joseph	Massey
6	2009	Wayne James Ngata	Massey
7	2010	Dean Mahuta	AUT
8	2011	Korohera Ngāpo	Waikato
9	2012	Wahineata Smith	AUT
10	2013	Joseph Te Pōroa Malcolm	Massey
11	2013	Jennifer Martin	AUT
12	2013	Delyn M. Day	Otago
13	2014	Petina Bray Winiata	Massey
14	2014	Valance Smith	AUT
15	2015	Agnes Jean McFarland	Massey
16	2015	Hinurewa Ngāmuringa Poutū	Massey
17	2015	Gianna Margurite Arinia Leoni	Otago
18	2017	Vincent Olsen-Reeder	Victoria
19	2017	Jackie Whetumarama Tupaupiki	Waikato
20	2018	Ēnoka Murphy	Waikato

Note. AUT = Auckland University of Technology.

*These theses are presented in two versions, English and Māori.

of five of the eight universities in the country: Auckland University of Technology, Massey University, University of Otago, Victoria University of Wellington and University of Waikato. Reading the information in those theses led me to potential interview participants. Initial interviews led me to further participants, and as interviews proceeded, I approached particular individuals in efforts to achieve a national picture. Between March 2017 and October 2018 I completed 18 individual, face-to-face, semi-structured, conversational interviews, each about 30–60 minutes, in six centres between Auckland and Dunedin. This article does not quote from all 18 of the interviews, but every interview helped to build overall understanding of this small, specialised field of Indigenous higher education in Aotearoa New Zealand. In this sense, every interview resembled an “expert interview” (Bogner, Littig, & Menz, 2009) about writing a doctoral thesis in te reo. Expert interviews are a useful data collection method for efficiently gaining an overview of a small, specialised field of practice, such as Māori-medium doctoral studies.

The participants fell into four categories: 9 doctoral graduates who wrote their doctoral thesis in te reo, and one who could have, but did not; 10 supervisors and 8 examiners of reo Māori doctoral theses; and 9 deans or senior managers—with some interviewees counting in two, three or all four of these categories. Each of the deans had experience with some aspect of oversight of reo Māori doctoral degrees at one of the five awarding universities, in one or more of the following roles: professor, head of school, doctoral oral convenor, dean of postgraduate research or member of Te Kāhui Amokura, the Committee on Māori of Te Pōkai Tara-Universities New Zealand, which has one representative from each of the eight universities (Universities NZ—Te Pōkai Tara, 2019).

I carefully edited the interview transcripts to remove identifying details and conceal gender, sometimes using “they” and “their” instead of gendered singular pronouns, and returned the

results to interviewees for checking. This editing process converts raw interview extracts into narratives or pūrākau (Lee, 2009), protecting the privacy of individuals and institutions, while converting the data into a powerful narrative form.

Ethics approval

I obtained formal ethics approval to conduct the interviews from the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee. Relevant considerations were voluntary participation, informed consent and protecting participant privacy. My ethics application included the following statement:

Given the small size of the Māori-medium community and the small number of dissertations and theses yet produced in te reo Māori, there are close networks amongst the people involved. Therefore, there is a chance that insider readers of the final research articles and other reports may be able to guess the identities of some participants. However, no definite details that could confirm guesses will be reported, and the raw data will be held securely and not accessible by anyone but the researcher.

The first reo Māori doctoral thesis

This section is non-anonymised, since the identities of the graduate, supervisor and university are on public record. It gives a brief account of the first doctoral thesis ever written in te reo.

At Massey University in the late 1990s, the right combination of people (student, supervisor and senior administrators) and university policies or “institutional will” came together to achieve the breakthrough first doctoral thesis ever written in te reo, by Professor Tairahia Black, who graduated in 2000 (Black, 2000). Black gives credit to Professor Mason Durie, who had the mana and the trust and support

of Massey University to implement such an innovation:

Taiarahia Black: I enrolled for my PhD in 1997 and my supervisor was Mason Durie. I started off by writing three chapters in English, but I really wanted to write in te reo, and we discussed this possibility at length. Mason understood the significance of writing a doctoral thesis in the reo: it would be an important step to establish the experience, scholarship and knowledge of the methodology and discipline of te reo Māori, and to increase the profile of Māori scholarship. I recall one occasion when we went to see the director of the doctoral research committee, who said, “Massey has agreed to have a Hainamana write his thesis in Hainamana, why can’t we have a reo Māori one?” That was how it started.

I give credit to Massey University because they agreed to create the professor chair of te reo Māori. When I went there in the 1980s, they agreed to some of the perspectives that I was bringing, so Massey has a big part to play in this, and the people on staff and in the community too. But it was Emeritus Professor Sir Mason Durie who built a lot of these sort of activities. Mason’s kōrero to us was always, why not? “Let’s do this”—that was the Mason Durie line.

Today, almost 20 years since completing his doctoral thesis, Black has found that the critical theoretical te reo methodology it established is being used by a wide range of master’s and doctoral students around the country. The key research question of his thesis is, “What is Māori scholarship, what does it offer and why is it important?” Black’s analyses of the benefits of the knowledge found in traditional Tūhoe waiata have been acclaimed in many seminars, papers and publications. For example, material from Black’s thesis has been used in research for Waitangi Tribunal claims, and in

projects relating to the histories of Te Kooti, Ngāi Tūhoe, Ngāti Awa, Te Whakatōhea, Te Whānau ā Apanui, Ngāti Kahungunu and others.

To date, Massey University has produced more reo Māori doctoral theses than any other university, but as with any university department, changes over time mean that output inevitably ebbs and flows, especially in such a small, specialised field. Massey University policy for te reo Māori doctoral study includes the use of recognition of prior learning to enable senior Māori leaders to qualify more quickly to enrol in doctoral studies. At the Palmerston North campus, Massey staff in Māori Studies are housed together with those in Māori Education, Māori Art and Māori Health in their own space, Te Pūtahi-a-Toi. This centralising structure provides a critical mass of Māori academic staff that is potentially beneficial for Māori practice in teaching and learning, research and scholarship. Other examples of cross-university Māori groupings are the Toi huarewa Māori staff network at Victoria University and Te Rūnanga, the Māori council at the University of Auckland.

The following section presents narrativised findings of the interview research, telling a collective narrative about reo Māori doctoral theses, in sections corresponding to the sequential stages of the journey. Multiple narratives within one section are numbered for reading coherence (e.g., Graduate 1, Graduate 2, etc.), unrelated to personal identity. Edited interview extracts are attributed by perspective: Graduate, Supervisor, Examiner, Dean or Convenor.

Storying the reo Māori doctoral journey

This is an insider story of writing a doctoral thesis in te reo, in the voices of the participants . . . e te kaipānui, nau mai, haere mai ki tēnei ao . . .

Deciding to undertake a doctoral thesis in te reo

Graduate 1: I was always going to write my thesis in Māori because that's my passion, and because I was sick of being questioned about what I was doing, or hearing that te reo Māori is not valuable or important, that you can't do anything with it. I was interested in trying to tell the other side of the story: why don't we look at some of the positive aspects, the ways these kura have contributed? Partly it was political, to show that you can do these things through the medium of te reo Māori. But another part of it was in relation to language revitalisation. Initially I was discouraged, when I first started thinking about doing a PhD. I was told if you write it in Māori, you're not going to have any audience, no publications, no international recognition and so on. But that wasn't why I was doing the PhD. It wasn't for international recognition; it was based on wanting to tell that positive story. To write in te reo was in alignment with the kaupapa of my topic. It would seem hypocritical not to: it just wouldn't work for me. I couldn't see myself writing about my topic in English.

Graduate 2: We looked at the te reo policy when we were enrolling, but I didn't know or think much about it. At the time there were three of us embarking on the PhD journey, so I enrolled because I didn't want to be the only one not doing a PhD. My motivation to enrol was because my mates were doing it, so I thought I better do this. It was an opportunity for me to test my ability in te reo at this level. It was a challenge, also part of a social responsibility for te reo. There's not a lot of academic text resources available in te reo and I wanted to be part of contributing towards that kete mātauranga i roto i te reo. Also, my topic was something I enjoyed and was comfortable in. It gave me an opportunity and a platform to

be creative. That was a lot of the passion and the motivation to get across the line.

Graduate 3: I wrote all my qualifications in te reo Māori except for my PhD because the university policy at the time was that I had to provide a translation. I challenged that based on all the obvious reasons, official language, etc., but they said it needs to be examined internationally, so needs to be able to be read. I then asked if I was going to get two PhDs, but that didn't go down well at all. I tried to explain how it's one thing to conceptualise something in te reo Māori but then having to reconceptualise how that would be framed in English is almost like writing another doctorate, so unless the offer was for two doctorates I would write in English. Shortly afterwards, the policy changed to allow doctoral theses in te reo only, but by then it was too late for me.

Graduate 4: With all the ones here, it came from their own heart that they wanted to write in te reo. It was a personal/political decision. I know for myself and one or two others, we were really wanting to keep learning Māori. By researching a topic and writing the thesis in Māori it's a way of keeping your reo fresh and moving forward. I did it in both Māori and English because at that stage the university wouldn't allow it to be just in Māori, so I had to do it in both. My intention was to do it just in Māori, but the university requires an international examiner, and it's hard to find somebody overseas who can read a Māori thesis, let alone know about the topic. Sometimes I'd write in Māori first, sometimes in English first, going backwards and forwards between the two. It added an extra year perhaps, certainly six months onto the whole procedure.

Graduate 5: One of the reasons I chose to write in Māori was because I was a lecturer in te reo, and part of the thesis looks at the expansion and normalisation of the use of te reo Māori in varying domains, including the

universities. I saw it as a responsibility, really, to write in te reo Māori. I chose to write in English because I wanted what I was saying to be accessible to a larger audience. The two versions of the thesis are sometimes quite similar and sometimes a little bit different in terms of what is expressed and how it's expressed. Sometimes I wrote in Māori first and then thought about how I was going to say that in English; sometimes the other way around. Writing in both languages was a labour of love, a passion. It wasn't an economic decision; it wasn't about getting it over and done with as soon as possible. Probably for most people writing in te reo Māori, especially if it's on a non-Māori kaupapa, it's because they're language activists.

Graduate 6: To me it's a matter of why not write in te reo. It's an official language. It's your and my heritage language. It's a beautiful language. A lot more of our Māori understandings can be expressed in Māori better than they can in any other language. It shows the Māori language is getting into more nooks and crannies of being normal. That would show a shift in attitude nationally, to have moved from this neutral position to being proactive, or moved away from being opposing to accepting in its passive state. There are fewer inhibitors of Māori language if the youth can go all the way through a Pākehā system, through every level and te reo is accepted at every level, then yes, there is value in my language. All the things we go through—at kōhanga, at kura too. The years of commitment you make as a parent, it's worth it when they can go all the way to do whatever they want, and the language is there alongside them.

What is the policy environment and support like for writing in te reo?

Graduate: When I first enrolled, filling in the forms and writing the initial proposal, I wanted to write in Māori, but it got to the point where it wasn't worth it because it was only going to be sent back to my supervisors to translate. I thought, what's the point? It's just creating extra work. I might as well write the initial proposal in English.

Dean 1: We appreciate the policy landscape in terms of TEC [the Tertiary Education Commission, www.tec.govt.nz] and the quadruple funding, but the counterargument is that it has no incentive for the student: it's all for the institution. The students are not receiving that completion funding up front, nor is it being used to support them. I've been trying to push our institutions as to how we think about taking some of that money and investing it up front so that they can see the value of the language. Research degree completion funding is drip fed over successive years [Tertiary Education Commission, 2014]. The institution is not really seeing it anyway, so it's hard to put it up front. From a language planning policy perspective, while it looks good on paper, it doesn't do anything for the language. The other layer is that those who are doing the PhD often want to be academics, so they want to publish, so that influences them to write in English.

Dean 2: It starts with the principle: what are we wanting to incentivise? Scholarship in our first language. I asked the committee, ought we not aspire to encourage scholarship in our first language? Yes, they said. Well, presumably we would have no objection to incentivising scholarship in our first language. No, they said, we'd have no objections to that. Would you therefore support me in recommending that we have a four-times weighting

for theses written in te reo Māori? They got the philosophical argument. This was about the nature of scholarship in New Zealand, but more importantly the nature of scholarship in our first language. And it got passed. Everybody relaxed when I said, well of course if a Pākehā wants to do their thesis in te reo, they would get the weighting as well.

Dean 3: There was an agreement that we wouldn't accept translated work, that anyone who wrote a PhD in te reo Māori had to defend it in te reo. There was this feeling that departments could get it translated if they wanted to get that completion funding. A department might decide they could make some money off a thesis if they got it translated into Māori. Hence the rule that if you write in te reo you defend in te reo, because then there's no question that the student did their own mahi.

Supervising a doctoral thesis written in te reo

Supervisor: There are still very few supervisors and examiners for reo Māori doctoral theses. For a PhD you've got to have someone who's already got a PhD to supervise so that restricts the number available, although it's expanding steadily. First I supervised one PhD student who did both an English and a Māori version, who was determined to do both. I reckon it took an extra year. I was able to use that one as an example to push the case to be able to do PhDs in Māori only. I said to the academic board, I know the international examiner is the problem, but why do we have to have an international examiner when we have all the experts on Māori language and on the topic here in New Zealand? Nobody is an expert in te reo me ōna tikanga over there; they're here. It went through without a hitch. I was expecting a battle, but the Deputy Vice

Chancellor was happy about it, so it all went through easily.

For a PhD your writing needs to be clear, but there's no reason why you can't use metaphor and so forth. There are some reo Māori doctoral theses where the authors have managed to pick the right word for what they're trying to say all the time. Ones like that make good models for people to look at. In the early stages the student has to work out how to cope with the conventions of a PhD, referencing, what to use for "contents", all that sort of thing. There are various models to follow now. The first ones paved the way, so now students doing PhDs can go to their theses as models and think, they did it this way, do I like that? If they like it, they take it on board. If they think there's a better way, they can modify it.

I've had two or three research students writing in Māori who have not been fluent enough, so you spend a lot of time trying to fathom what they're trying to say, to tidy up their language, and it makes it hard for the supervisor to be happy with the end product. Whereas when you've got someone who's very fluent and able to express themselves clearly in the language without too many grammar errors, it makes it a lot easier. Some of the ones I've supervised I would put up against any other doctorate I've supervised that's in English, that's possibly better than any of them.

People who don't feel they're fluent enough will go for English and sometimes there's one who you think could cope very well in te reo, but will write in English anyway. I guess they go along with this idea that if they write in Māori there's such a limited number of people that can read it, and we want to get it out to the world. My argument is, do it in the Māori language if you're up to it and then when you've finished, publish something in English. That to me is the way to go. Publish it in Māori and in English.

Some have written on a very Māori topic, while there are other theses written about, say, educational success: topics that are not so strongly tikanga focused. You've got to be mindful too, if they're doing a topic that's not Māori focused, it will be harder to find someone who can mark it. Probably what we'll see is people pushing the boundaries, writing on topics that are not directly related to Te Ao Māori. We'll probably get people pushing that boundary more and more if there are enough students coming through who are really fluent in the language. They're coming through slowly.

Examining a doctoral thesis written in te reo

Examiner: As soon as I finished my PhD, due to the lack of Māori staff with the ability to supervise doctoral students, let alone who speak te reo Māori, I went straight into supervising and marking. There were only two of us at our university with the level of proficiency to supervise and mark doctoral theses written in te reo. Sometimes it meant we had to mark our own students, to fill the role of the internal examiner. It dawned on me then, how thin on the ground we are. There is such a small pool of people that can supervise or mark at that level of language proficiency.

It's not about marking language; it's the argument; the ability to delve into the text, beyond language, and to look at their argument in te reo. There's so few of us and we know each other so we're sending PhDs backwards and forwards because there's no one else to mark them. It'll probably be like that for at least another 10 years until we get a critical mass. From examining reo Māori doctoral theses one sees that some institutions are doing better than others. Some are displaying more understanding of what it takes to be a

successful PhD student; that it's more than just a process.

There's nothing worse than receiving a thesis to mark that hasn't even been proofread, which sometimes happens. I've failed some on that basis. With one thesis, the language was nonsensical, and I could not understand what the person was writing about. With others I am trying to find faults, and for me that's what it should be like. I read every thesis that comes to me—really pore over it, then I'll put it aside and do other work while I think about it, and then I'll come back to it and read it again, make notes and write up a report. I do that for every thesis I get. It is time-consuming but appropriate for the years of effort the writer has expended.

Defending a doctoral thesis written in te reo: The oral examination (viva)

Dean: We had set up a process for our doctoral candidates to have their oral examinations here in Māori Studies, not in the postgraduate office like everybody else. They have tikanga, so the normal karakia, mihimihi, and then the oral, and afterwards the staff would pōwhiri the candidate and whānau into the marae, and then we'd all go through and have a kai, and there was an opportunity for whaikōrero from the examiners, from the candidate themselves, and from the whānau and supervisors. The university agreed for us to do that.

The chair of the doctoral research committee at the time gave the head of Māori Studies great support. Later, we lost academics in the university who could chair oral examinations, because the convener had to be from another faculty, so we brought in external conveners who could convene in Māori. The changes were most visible in how the orals ran. At one stage we had [Name] who was the PVC [pro

vice-chancellor] Māori at [University] and would come in for the oral examination to sit alongside our Pākehā convener. Everything was in te reo. At times when the convener felt they needed to understand something then someone would translate, but it wouldn't get in the way or interrupt the flow of the exam. Another variation was to hold the oral offsite; with one kaumātua it was held at his home because he was elderly, so it was easier.

Locating the examiners was problematic: the rules stipulate an international examiner, a national examiner and an internal one from another school. We were able to shift the university from thinking that we always have to have someone international; it wasn't relevant for those writing in te reo. We had one person we could call on as the international, but then the university started seeing that it was always the same person. So, we put up a case to do away with the international, and to use Māori matatau experts instead: experts who had had nothing, of course, to do with the thesis. The university has been good at being flexible in finding ways to adapt the viva process to examine these theses and allow the candidates to defend them.

Graduate: The hours leading up to the oral, I'd never been so stressed in my life. Woke up that morning, stomach doing flips. I remember walking to the building with my supervisors and wanting to just turn around and run away. Walking there, sitting waiting to be summoned—that whole time I was in a bad state, full of nerves. That was all in my head. Physically I was there, I got into the room, sat down at the table, had karakia, and then during karakia—that's the beautiful thing about karakia, ka tau—after that there were no more cramps in my stomach. It was just, ask the question and I'll talk to it. It took about an hour and a half. I felt very comfortable. It was just a discussion. I loved it actually. For so long it had been a very solitary experience, just me

and my writing and no one else involved, so my oral examination gave me an opportunity to talk in depth about my subject. Almost a sense of confidence, and then finished, went to sit down for about half an hour, then they summoned me back in and said, OK excellent, a provisional pass if you do a, b, c, and I thought, oh, that's great. In the end it was a very positive experience.

Convener: These were the first doctoral oral examinations being conducted in te reo Māori at this university, and the protocol for conveners is that they need to come from a different faculty, but there were no experienced conveners who were te reo speakers outside Māori Studies. The postgraduate office approached me to act as convener for these examinations. Initially, I was cautious because of the importance, firstly, in terms of respect for the culture, and secondly, for the convener to understand what was going on, and I'm not a fluent speaker of te reo. I felt honoured to have been asked, but wanted clarification on how we might accomplish those two things. I did some homework and took some advice, and after that I agreed.

There was enormous respect shown for walking in the two worlds—the Māori world and the world of the university. We tried to ensure, firstly, that the process was respectful of tikanga Māori, and allowing those protocols to be included. Secondly, that with sensitivity, we ensured the approved process and standards expected for the doctoral degree were applied appropriately and diligently. There was discussion and negotiation in advance about how things would be done; what was and wasn't appropriate, whether whānau could attend, whether we would have a full pōwhiri or a mihi whakatau. This involved discussions with the supervisors and then liaison in writing and by telephone with the examiners themselves, who were significant rangatira in the Māori world and the academic

world. When the examiners arrived for the oral examination, I met with them and worked through how they wanted things to be handled. We also involved a translator, which was something else we discussed in advance. How would we use the translator so that it wasn't a distraction and didn't interrupt the process? We chose for the translator to sit beside me and quietly let me know when there were things related to process, or things they felt that I should understand or know about. I was very grateful the translator was involved and thought they did an excellent job.

One examination was held in the university marae, which as a Māori space added a strong sense of grounding in tikanga Māori. I thought carefully about the question of whether appropriate rigour and due process was applied in these examinations. My answer is yes, absolutely. I'm very confident that irrespective of my ability to understand all that went on or not, in terms of the expectations and implementation of the approved process for the examination of doctoral exams, that standard was reached. But what made it special was the opportunity to include not just the language, but also the broader tikanga Māori protocols that became an inherent part of the examination process. Of all of the things I've done in my 25-year academic career, I consider these oral examinations to be some of the greatest privileges I've had. I felt proud that this university had embarked on this journey and become a national leader in this area. It would benefit the whole university community to share in and learn from this process, and become proud of what our university has achieved.

This uplifting narrative counters the dominant detrimental stories told by research about Māori university education. The next section returns to more familiar genres, drawing on the interview data to support a wider discussion of reo Māori doctoral theses.

The significance of doctoral theses written in te reo Māori

The question of the significance of reo Māori doctoral studies can be considered in two senses. At the time of writing, 20 doctoral degrees have been written and defended in te reo Māori at five of the eight universities in Aotearoa New Zealand over the past 18 years, on topics in Māori history, culture, identity or education. Such a small set of doctoral degrees is numerically insignificant, in relation to the size of the university sector and the national aspiration to grow Māori postgraduate education. Conversely, the achievement of these first 20 reo Māori doctoral theses is greatly meaningful for those individuals involved, and significant for their universities, communities and the nation as a whole. Hence, the choice of title phrase "he iti, he pounamu" from the whakataukī "Ahakoa he iti, he pounamu", which means "Although small, it is very valuable."

The loneliness and stress entailed in completing a doctoral qualification are amplified for a Māori candidate (McKinley, Grant, Middleton, Irwin, & Williams, 2011), even more so when writing in Māori. Besides the student, demands on supervisors, examiners and others involved in a reo Māori doctoral thesis are also greater than for an English-language equivalent. The doctoral oral examination takes on added importance in the reo Māori pathway, because of its kanohi ki te kanohi nature and the consequent need for tikanga, and because it attests that the thesis is the candidate's own work, not a translation.

Some interviewees described efforts to achieve a national conversation and consensus on "what a policy framework would look like for te reo Māori theses and how we could embed that into our practice" (Dean), but over the years, these efforts had dissipated under the changes and pressures of academic life. Despite the will expressed by interviewees to share and collaborate, around the country the universities are at different stages in relation to Māori

scholarship in general, and reo Māori doctoral studies in particular. Several interviewees mentioned the need for *all* members of Te Kāhui Amokura to be successful senior academics, which has not been the case in the past. A critical mass of expertise to enable a steady annual stream of te reo Māori doctoral graduands has not yet been achieved. At each university, the first te reo Māori doctoral completion is a breakthrough that challenges the system at every step, from enrolment to examination. This need to “break through” heightens the barrier faced by each university, before it can be added to the list of te reo Māori doctoral completions.

The combined testimony presented above is a counter-narrative to dominant ideas about te reo Māori as a language of the university. Besides Eurocentric ideas about things Māori in general, two specific ideologies concerning te reo Māori as an academic language retain purchase: one questioning the adequacy of the philosophical content and linguistic resources of te reo Māori; the other disputing the adequacy of literature resources for academic study in te reo Māori. Both these notions were raised in multiple interviews. One dean reflected on Māori as an academic language:

Before I began teaching students writing in te reo Māori, I hadn't considered that there might be such a thing as academic Māori. If we look at the components of what constitutes beauty and elegance and scholarship in te reo, what would that be? The kinds of metaphor we draw on, those kinds of mechanisms that make our language stand out, and how the phrasing enhances its beauty. [My student's] thesis was cited as outstanding for the quality of the reo. The student purposefully worked on that by getting people who were matatau ki te kōrero, matatau ki te pānui. Get alongside them and get them to read the work; read what they write and use those as the exemplars. What does good academic writing look like in te reo Māori? Well, I think you'll know it when you see it.

Another dean disputed the notion that te reo Māori lacks a written literature—a notion that has been used against te reo Māori in the university for over a century (Walker, 1999):

The archives are full of so much language, but people don't access it. The niupepa, the manuscripts, the publications. People don't use it, they don't read it even if it's online. You can tell because people are not referring to it and they're not writing more. We allow it to be locked up because the libraries make it accessible for us, but we're not engaging with it.

The phrase “success as Māori” has become widespread in tertiary Māori education policy and in related sectors such as schooling, yet there remains limited understanding of its meaning, in particular, what it means for universities. In my view, the phrase “as Māori” refers to the rights of Māori people to identify as Māori without accepting the ideological baggage that goes along with general ideas about things Māori. To succeed as Māori is to assert the right to one's own subjectivity, the right simply to “be Māori”—a philosophical right to a Māori-centric worldview or paradigm, one's personal philosophical framework of reality as a Māori person. Te reo Māori is central to Māori identity, so the practice of writing a doctoral thesis in te reo makes a strong assertion of the right to identify as Māori. From this point of view, each completion of a doctoral thesis written in te reo Māori is highly significant and a taonga.

All the doctoral theses written in te reo to date have been embedded in Māori culture, history, identity or education. A doctoral thesis is a theoretical treatment of a topic related to the real world, so for any reo Māori doctoral thesis, we could expect to find an equivalent Māori-medium field of practice. This rule also guides thinking about the likely appearance of reo Māori doctoral theses in other fields in which a Māori practice has been initiated, including architecture, the arts, environmental science,

health sciences, literature, media studies and psychology. The human and social sciences are the disciplines in which to anticipate the development of Māori-medium scholarship, not chemistry or physics-based disciplines.

Although not the main focus of this article, this research generates useful advice for universities:

Universities cannot control future decisions to be made by students about writing doctoral theses in te reo, but can and should be proactive in developing policies and processes to support future initiatives in this area. The most important steps a university can take are ensuring they have doctoral systems in place that can be flexible, while upholding academic standards, and are underpinned by a welcoming attitude towards Māori language and culture. (Stewart, 2018a, para. 10)

Conclusion

The widespread but covert influence of Eurocentrism in the academy means individuals from disciplinary backgrounds outside Māori studies, including senior Māori academic leaders, let alone non-Māori university leaders, seldom hear these Eurocentric ideas challenged with evidence-based argument, so may never have the opportunity to realise their erroneous nature. The subtle nature of such racist ideas allows them to go unremarked and thereby to maintain their insidious influence throughout the university sector. The growth of reo Māori doctoral studies as a practice, supported by theorisation in research, is the best answer to those outdated ideas. This article contributes to that theorisation and therefore to challenging that racist academic residue.

As noted above, the emergence of reo Māori doctoral theses is one small part of the larger history of te reo in the university, and further research is needed into Māori-medium university practice, as well as more detailed analysis of

the contents of the existing reo Māori doctoral theses. These ideas highlight the fruitfulness of a focus on doctoral theses written in Māori. He iti, he pounamu: it is small, but valuable.

Glossary

Aotearoa	New Zealand
e te kaipānui, nau mai, haere mai ki tēnei ao	welcome, reader, to this world
iti	small
kanohi ki te kanohi	face to face
ka tau	I settled down
kaumātua	male elder
Kaupapa Māori	Māori-based topic/event/enterprise run by Māori for Māori
kōhanga	Māori-language pre-school
Hainamana	Chinese
kai	shared food
karakia	prayers
kaupapa	topic, basis; guiding principles
kete mātauranga i roto i te reo	repository of knowledge in te reo Māori
kōrero	speak, talk, discuss; discussion
kura	Māori-language school
mahi	work
mana	authority
marae	Māori space, tribal meeting grounds, village common
matatau	fluent
matatau ki te kōrero	fluent speakers
matatau ki te pānui	fluent readers
mihimihi	speeches of greeting
mihi whakatau	welcome protocol, less formal than pōwhiri
niupepa	newspapers

Pākehā	a person of predominantly European descent
pounamu	greenstone
pōwhiri	formal welcome ceremony
pūrākau	myth, ancient legend, story
rangatira	leaders
reo	language
taonga	valuable
Te Ao Māori	Māori worldview
te reo Māori	the Māori language
te reo me ōna tikanga	Māori language and grammar
tikanga	customs and practices
waiata	sing, song, chant
whaikōrero	speeches
whakataukī	proverb
whānau	family, nuclear/extended family

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