

Media

Push to get te reo right on TV

by Anika Forsman

Kaore taku reo Maori i te tino pai – loosely translated means “my Maori is not too flash”.

Many non-Maori journalists are struggling to get their te reo right in an industry demanding perfection.

Correct pronunciation of te reo has become a requirement for television news presenters, yet some Maori feel like reaching for their remotes when words are pronounced incorrectly.

AUT University public affairs manager Renata Blair says there have been improvements in Maori pronunciation by mainstream presenters.

“There has been a real push to get it right,” he says. “Presenters like John Campbell, Neil Waka and Mike McRoberts are faces of the nation so need to have a firm grasp of te reo.”

Blair says it is extremely important for broadcasters to get pronunciation of Maori right. A common error made by news readers is getting names wrong. For Maori, names have whakapapa and mana so it is important to say them correctly, he says.

Wena Harawira, a current affairs presenter for Maori Television, is more critical of the mainstream media.

“TVNZ has had 35 years to get te reo right and they still haven’t. TV3 has shown the most noticeable change but both channels are still making too many mistakes.

“It is certainly better than



GETTING IT RIGHT?: TV3 presenters Hilary Barry and Mike McRoberts

what it was 10 years ago,” she says. “But at the same time there are huge gaps in understanding and professionalism,” she says.

Harawira says the new generation of journalists coming through tend to have a greater knowledge of Maori than their older counterparts.

She adds that those who have

five to 10 years experience are letting themselves down professionally by not learning to say things properly.

Harawira also emphasises the importance of correct pronunciation of names.

The Foveaux Straight tragedy saw both television channels mispronounce the family members’ name Topi and the boat

Kotuku they were lost on. It was not until reading the newspaper she realised they were Maori.

“There is mana in a name,” she says.

“The Topi family are descendents of a chief and very proud people; it is a matter of respect to say their names right.”

TV3 spokesman John Beaumont says ensuring appropriate te reo Maori is used is something taken seriously by the channel.

“There’s no strict, formal policy in place, but there are certain members of the team that act as a mentor to everyone and monitor key areas of Maori pronunciation,” he says.

Tini Molyneux, a Maori correspondent for TVNZ, says there is a stronger emphasis on using correct te reo and most presenters make an effort to use it as best they can.

“Looking back there is a lot more awareness now for Maori language, there are still the odd words that people will get tongue-tied on – but generally they’re pretty good,” Molyneux says.

However, to ensure a higher standard of te reo is achieved in the future, a benchmark for journalists to learn te reo needs to be established, says Harawira.

“Learning te reo should become a matter of professional standard,” she says.

“It’s no good telling a story but getting it wrong because you don’t have an understanding of what you’re saying.”

Pronouncing te reo

Vowel sounds

- a = “ar” in far.
- e = “ea” in leather
- i = “e” in “me”
- o = “awe”
- u = “oo” in moon
- au = “oh”

Place names

- Manukau: Mar-noo-koh
- Manurewa: Mar-noo-rea-war
- Kohimarama: Kaw-hee-mar-rar-mar
- Remuera: Rea-moo-ea-rar
- Waiheke: Why-heck-ea
- Mangere: Mar-nge-rea
- Onehunga: Awe-knee-hoong-ar
- Waikowhai: Why-kor-fie
- Takapuna: Tucker-poo-nar
- Orewa: Awe-ree-war
- Waitakere: Why-tar-kea-rea
- Karangahape Rd: Car-rar-ngar-har-pea
- Whangaparaoa: far-ngar-par-rar-awe-ar

Poor portrayal of Pacific women

by Ali Bell

Women are poorly represented in Pacific media, often being shown as stereotypes or depicted in a negative way, says a former *New Zealand Herald* journalist.

Julie Middleton, who now works for the Pacific women’s bureau of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) in New Caledonia, spoke to *Te Waha Nui* recently on a trip to Auckland.

There are few women in top newsroom jobs, although they comprise about half the region’s journalists, she says.

The portrayal of Pacific women in the media as newsmakers and subjects is the focus of an action plan symposium taking place in Fiji this month.

Middleton is co-organiser of the symposium as part of SPC, along with UNESCO and the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association.

The draft action plan is about extending coverage of the Pacific Islands and extending leadership and decision-making positions to women.

Media is targeted frequently because of the power it wields.

“We want to get into the media’s collective heads so they understand,” says Middleton.

“The symposium is about getting people out of the newsroom and sitting down to think about

how they portray women and how they could do better.”

She says the problem with newsrooms is people are working on instinct and making hurried decisions, so they fall back on stereotypes.

A recent study done by Informing Citizens and findings of The Global Media Monitoring Project show Pacific women are not reflected fairly in the Pacific media.

Women are commonly portrayed as victims, says Middleton.

“The man is asked his opinion of the event and the woman is photographed in a flood of tears. Women are often not asked their opinions.

“Culture often works against women as decision-makers. But you can’t leave half the population out of decision-making.”

One aim of the action plan is for media to get more women employed in newsrooms.

Another aim is to get more women employed in newsrooms, employ more women from different ethnic groups and ages, to identify their ambitions and give them the necessary training to get them into leadership positions.

Radio is the most popular source for news in the Pacific, says Middleton, although she adds that newspaper readership is increasing. The internet is also



Julie Middleton

becoming more popular, despite the expense and limited access, she adds.

These are developing nations, she says, but the SPC “is about developing people” so they can be self-sustaining.

New Zealand seems to be holding its own in terms of Pacific reporting.

In the Global Media Monitoring Project, New Zealand stands out in terms of women’s representation in political news. On the study’s “scrutiny day” in 2000, women accounted for 40 per cent of politicians and government spokespeople in the news – higher than any other country.

TVNZ communications adviser Robin Field says the network as a whole has a close to equal gender split.

Of the news readers, 56 per cent are female and 44 per cent are male.

The same applies in leadership and decision-making, he says.

“From the top it’s a 50/50 split. We’ve many women in senior management positions, in strategic and operational positions.”

The heads of sales, programming, human resources and public affairs are all women.

Presenters of the *Tagata Pasifika* programme are equally represented by men and women. The senior director and producer are both male.

Angela Gregory, Pacific issues reporter on the *New Zealand Herald*, says she is very conscious of achieving an equal gender mix in her stories.

“It’s fair to say that a lot of the spokespeople are men in New Zealand. But I go to women for quotes.

“If anything I go more the other way and I’m guilty of talking to more women than men, and I have to find the men.

“I’m aware of women’s rights issues in the Pacific. But I probably report on Pacific issues completely differently to the way Pacific people do.

“When I go to the countries, I talk to the people in the street and villages.

“I talk to the people who don’t normally have a voice.”

Action Plan Symposium

The plan will be based on the Beijing Platform for Action, which calls for:

- Decision-making and leadership by women in the media
- Partnerships to overcome gender-based stereotyping
- Change to the continuing use of negative and degrading images of women
- Balance in coverage of women’s diverse lives and contributions to society
- Empowerment of women with skills, knowledge and IT access.