

Ka hoki mai a Korero Mai?

Five of the eight television screens concentrate on Mei Taare and Pou Temara. Mei looks straight out of one and nervously curls the ends of her dark hair.

Up in control suite nine producer Brian McDonald says: "Mei's looking fairly good. Perhaps we could move her up a little bit on camera one."

In the studio, floor manager Steve Gray hears the instructions on his earphones and passes them on.

A woman in the control suite turns to another and says: "Pou's half the man he used to be. He's lost two stone since we started."

Filming for the show, *Korero Mai*, started in October last year, and five 15 minute programmes were finished by November. Now a sixth is needed and that is why Taita College Maori teacher Pou Temara is back in the studio.

He and Mei arrived at Avalon at 8am to be made up. Now at 1.10pm the final on-camera rehearsal is about to start.

The original music by Sydney Melbourne is played and Mei nervously claps time. She looks at one of the cameras and says: "Don't tell me two shot is on that ..." She glances round. "Oh no, it's on there."

Brian says: "Ask Pou to look on camera one."

The message is relayed and he does pulling a face. Then the floorman's voice is heard in the control suite: "Can we please start rehearsal or we'll be here all day."

Brian says: "This is a rehearsal with inserts."

The inserts have been filmed and will be cued in as Mei and Pou run through their script.

Mei Taare



Pou Temara

One of the production team begins counting: "Eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one."

Korero Mai comes up on the screen and the theme music starts but then Brian stops things. Apparently there is a question about one of the inserts. Pou says he can't see the monitor and Mei wants to know how long they have for filming.

The floorman says: "OK, we'll start from shot one then we'll go to shot 10 and take it from shot 10."

Mei yawns and Brian says: "On five, coming up on two."

Korero Mai comes on screen, the theme music then Pou speaks into camera two: "E nga iwi tena koutou. Hello and welcome to *Korero Mai*. Throughout the series we've stressed the importance of vowel sounds, but this also applies to consonants, and we'll be looking at those a little later."

It goes right and they move to shot 10.

The series aims to give a grounding in Maori. Brian McDonald says *Korero Mai* is the first language teaching pro-

gramme for television made in New Zealand, in Maori or English. He could not find any other programme to model it on, though he looked at French and German language films. "We felt that their styles didn't apply."

Brian is pleased with *Korero Mai*, but only when he considers that the programme was a first and there was a limited budget. He is pinning his hopes on a second series with increased funds.

"For the programme to have any real value it has to be an ongoing thing."

With more money the quality of the inserts could have been improved, and the links with the studio presentation could have been better.

McDonald said he and others had been pushing for a programme like *Korero Mai* for years. TVNZ did not favour the idea because it felt such a programme would have limited appeal. Now, he says, the TV bosses were responding to pressure from the community. So while the programme is an educational tool, he hopes it will also be a lever to convince the TV administrators that there is a demand for a Maori language programme.

He says people have to realise that Maoris are not solely responsible for keeping the language alive.

"I think it's past the time when Maori people can think about doing it off their own bat. The media has a responsibility."

The programme aims to teach basic language and show examples of how it is used. It is aimed at the person with little or no knowledge of Maori. As well, some Maori etiquette is explained.

"We've tried to explain the ceremonial stages that people go through and the reasons why certain things happen. We hope the viewer will be able to use the basic Maori they have learned from the programme on the marae."

The skit 'James of Aotearoa' is used throughout the programme. Temara plays James, an English speaking person in Maori speaking Aotearoa. The idea of the skits is to have simple phrases repeated over and over without boring the viewer.

Because the main aim of the programme is to educate not simply entertain, McDonald believes there should be a follow-up to it within the community. He has worked with the Education Department so a cassette of the series can be made available to schools. He also hopes the Maori Affairs Department will have Maori language courses planned to cater for the interest the series creates.