

## E) “A” or “O”

Tirohia –

1. The son of Hata - Te tama <u>a</u> Hata The axe of Hata - Te toki <u>a</u> Hata The dog of Hata - Te kurī <u>a</u> Hata	2. The father of Hata - Te pāpā <u>o</u> Hata The house of Hata - Te whare <u>o</u> Hata The land of Hata - Te whenua <u>o</u> Hata
3. my son - tāku tama my axe - tāku toki my dog - tāku kurī	4. my father - tōku pāpā my house - tōku whare my land - tōku whenua

In examples 1 & 3:  
**a** = of and **tāku** = my

In examples 2 & 4:  
**o** = of and **tōku** = my

Why the difference? With all words denoting possession, like ‘of’ and ‘my’ and ‘your’ and ‘their’ and all the rest, Maori conveys a wealth of meaning as to the nature of the possession by simply using vowel ‘a’ or vowel ‘o’.

As a general rule –

The use of ‘a’ indicates active possession, that the possessor possesses a person or thing etc. through his own actions, operates a thing personally, has complete rights over something, and so on, ie. is dominant, superior. The use of ‘o’ indicates the opposite.

Some examples to clarify –

So - te tama a Hata - Hata begat his son (the son had no part in it).  
te toki a Hata - Hata uses the axe, has total control as he likes.  
te kurī a Hata - Hata is absolute master of the dog.

But - te pāpā o Hata - Hata had no say in who his father is.  
te whare o Hata - Traditional usage – no Maori of old owned a house for himself outright – he shared it and it sheltered him.  
te whenua o Hata - Likewise, no Maori of old had individual rights to land, neither did a tribe own land in the Pakeha sense of own – it was a gift of nature.

And so remember ‘tāku tama’ and ‘tōku pāpā’, for the reasons given above, and so on eg. my slave - tāku taurekareka, while my master – tōku māhita.

Pronunciation of ‘a’ and ‘o’ when used as separate words.

More often than not the vowel sound of both is the short sound. But when the first syllable of the following word has a long vowel, or more than one vowel, then ‘a’ and ‘o’ should be given the long sound. This is simply because doing so makes the speaking flow harmoniously and sound better to the sensitive Maori ear.

Hei taurira:

te wahine a Hata	te pāpā o te tamaiti	ngā mahi a Rewi	Ko Tamahae te hoa o Rewi.
te wahine ā Raukawa	te pāpā ō ngā tamariki	ngā mahi ā Paurini	Ko Mere te hoa ō Mārama.