



Te Reo
the Journal of the Linguistic
Society of New Zealand

Volume 61

Issue 2 (*Special Issue*)

Linguistics in New Zealand: Personal Histories.

Contribution Type: Essay

2018

Pages 1-2

November 2018

Introduction

Laurie Bauer

Victoria University of Wellington

This paper is a peer-reviewed contribution from <https://www.nzlingsoc.org/journal>

©*Te Reo* – *The Journal of the Linguistic Society of New Zealand*

Editor: Laurie Bauer

Introduction

Laurie Bauer

A few years ago, I put a proposal to the editor of *Te Reo* that it might be worthwhile putting together a selection of linguistic autobiographies from New Zealand linguists, painting a picture of the development of Linguistics as an academic subject in New Zealand, but also, incidentally, illustrating the various paths that practitioners have taken into Linguistics. At the time it was considered that such a project would be more suited to some anniversary year for the Linguistic Society, and now, in the 60th anniversary year of the Linguistic Society of New Zealand, it is seeing the light of day.

My original idea was for a series of autobiographical essays to match the British series published as Brown & Law (2002), whose title I have plagiarised. I found their volume enlightening for its illustration of the way in which Linguistics developed in Britain. Keith Brown once remarked to me that the British volume had been as notable for what was not said as for what was said. I suspect that something of the same is true for the papers collected here, but I quite literally do not know, although some of the authors have said there were some things they did not feel they could write about (not necessarily just because of laws of libel!). Nevertheless, I feel that the current collection has been successful in charting much of the development of the subject in New Zealand, and in showing the academic whakapapa of the individuals involved.

Unfortunately, some points of view could not be represented. A number of linguists in New Zealand are unfortunately no longer with us, although their influence is often still felt, and is still represented in these pages. Among those who can no longer be invited are the people from an earlier generation who first got linguistics started in New Zealand: Bruce Biggs, Frank Brosnahan, Ian Gordon, Jim Hollyman, Forrest Scott; their influence is felt in the reports assembled here. Less expected is the number of untimely deaths among our colleagues, people who contributed greatly to the academic and social life of linguistics in this country: Scott Allan, Donn Bayard, Colin Bowley, Chris Corne, Terry Crowley, Graeme Kennedy, Frank Lichtenberk and Jae Sun. Some of the people who might have been invited proved impossible to track down; some did not respond to the invitation. I trust that those who have responded, nearly always with enthusiasm, give a good representation of linguists and linguistics in New Zealand.

My selection criteria were originally based on finding people whose memory was likely to go back furthest into the development of linguistics in the main centres in New Zealand. It has long been my contention that if all of the linguists in New Zealand had been in a single department, rather than spread across so many universities, it would have been one of the best departments of linguistics in the world. I hoped to capture some of what led to this flourishing of linguistics in New Zealand. Although we have many important – and impressive – younger scholars in New Zealand as well, I feel that they will have an opportunity to contribute to a similar project at a later date should they wish to. The number of people represented here is already quite extensive.

I hope that readers find these autobiographical essays as interesting as I have. Not only do they show the multiple ways in which people get into linguistics (something that may be of comfort to more recent students who have not yet found their way), they illustrate the flow of linguistic ideas across the globe, the contributions that individuals have made to that, and something of the way that the culture of New Zealand has helped to contribute to the development of the subject.

Reference

Brown, Keith & Law, Vivien (2002). *Linguistics in Britain: Personal histories*. Oxford: Blackwell (for the Philological Society).