

The Changing Scope of Dialect Variation: A Transcontinental Perspective¹

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Where Angels Fear to Tread

I rarely introduce a paper with an apology, but this is a special case. Although I have been investigating language variation in the United States for over three decades, I spent less than three months observing the language situation in New Zealand. A wiser person would therefore have resisted the invitation to make observations on the sociolinguistic landscape of New Zealand after such a brief sociolinguistic encounter. For better or worse, however, one of my hallmarks has been the willingness to accept challenges when more cautious investigators might have patiently waited for a fuller complement of facts.

My rationale for accepting the challenge to offer a transcontinental perspective on language variation in the United States and New Zealand actually rests upon a deeper principle. I firmly believe that the most insightful perspective on behavior combines the vantage points of both outsiders and insiders. To strangers, the 'normal' everyday behavior becomes a noteworthy object, whereas it might have been taken for granted and overlooked by the insider. So there is an advantage to novelty. By the same token, the integrated members of a cultural group and long-term investigators are privy to the internal emic grids essential for interpreting the significance of various behaviors. So there is a decided advantage to culturally embedded experience and participant observation. My simple hope for this discussion is that my experience in a different sociolinguistic context might be combined productively with the novelty of a new

¹ Though my comments might not reflect it, I have profited greatly from many discussions with my generous hosts in New Zealand. Regular discussions with my hosts and friends at the University of Canterbury, Lyle Campbell, Elizabeth Gordon, Koenraad Kuiper, Gillian Lewis, and Margaret Maclagan, made me realize that profitable sociolinguistic discussion can, in fact, be pleasantly conducted over tea. Additional discussions with Janet Holmes, Laurie Bauer, and the students at Victoria University of Wellington, and Allan Bell, Donna Starks, and the faculty in linguistics and anthropology at Auckland University also stimulated my thinking about the topics discussed here. None of these, however, should be held responsible for my misunderstandings or uninformed opinions.

sociolinguistic adventure to provide a slightly different lens for viewing the sociolinguistic landscape—both in New Zealand and the United States.

Of Myths and Mythmaking

Most sociolinguists are only too aware of the popular myths associated with dialect differences (Bauer and Trudgill 1998). In fact, most of us spend a considerable amount of time and energy attempting to debunk widespread myths about language differences in various public venues. We never seem very far removed from discussions of myths associated with language variation – ranging from the casual conversation with a new acquaintance during a Saturday morning tramp to the fortuitous workday interruption by a news reporter curious about some peculiar fact of language usage.

In the United States, I have accumulated a list of widely circulated myths discussed with the media and general public. One of the most common notions is the belief that dialects in the United States are dying – due to the influence of the media, particularly television. Some dialectologists have countered this belief by noting that American dialects are actually becoming more divergent rather than convergent. The linguistic basis for this observation, as we shall see below, is the differential trajectories of vowel rotations in the so-called Northern Cities Vowel Shift and the Southern Vowel Shift, two subsystems of vowel rotation in American English that move vowels in quite different directions (Labov 1991). The observation that American dialects are actually becoming more rather than less divergent always makes a good media story, but I personally think that it may constitute a bit of reactionary mythmaking in its own right. As discussed in the next section, the sociolinguistic facts about this divergence are far from clear. My point, however, is to simply note that lay people are not the only ones who engage in mythmaking. As Cameron (1995) has demonstrated, it is healthy for our own doctrines about the state of language variation to be challenged in some of the ways that we have challenged others' beliefs.

In a spirit of healthy self-examination, admittedly tainted by my research experience with American dialects, I offer a couple of observations with respect to the state of New Zealand English dialects. First is the notion that, apart from the oft-cited exception of Southland (e.g. Bayard 1990, Bell and Holmes 1991, Gordon and Deverson 1998), there is virtually no regional variation in New Zealand English. Explanations for the relative absence of regional variation include the apparent colonial leveling of English in New Zealand, the so-called 'mixing bowl' hypothesis on the origin of New Zealand English, and the limited history of the English-speaking population in the country by comparison with other English-speaking areas.

A couple of cautions seem in order. First, there is some evidence to suggest that there may be more regional variation than is sometimes assumed. The regionally based variation may not be as transparent as that found in other, older English settlement areas with long-term regional

The Changing Scope of Dialectic Variation

traditions, but there it is certainly some indication of more widespread, albeit somewhat camouflaged regional variation. I find Gordon and Deverson's (1998) observations about Durkin's (1972) study of West Coast regional dialect items enlightening in this regard.

One of the difficulties Mary Durkin found when she carried out her investigation was that many born-and-bred West Coasters had never given much thought to such matters and were quite unaware that their vocabulary and usage differed in any way from that of other New Zealanders . . . The best source of information for this study came from the "outsiders", especially from primary schoolteachers, many of whom came from and had taught in other areas of the country (Gordon and Deverson 1998:130).

My brief observation of some of the established English-speaking settlements in New Zealand separated by topography, social grouping, and communication networks raises the possibility that there may be greater regional variation than has been ferreted out thus far. Some of the social and ecological conditions that exist in New Zealand seem to be precisely the kind of circumstances under which regional variation might be expected. Furthermore, there is reason to speculate that some incipient regional variation might now be developing in areas where it might not have existed as recently as several decades ago.² Certainly, the situation is ripe for the development of regional variety given the significance of the localized contact groups and the status of Auckland as a commercial and cultural centre. At the very least, I would claim that it is worth challenging the conventional observation that downplays regional variation in New Zealand with a detailed investigation of more subtle or incipient regionalism. In some cases, regional differences may have been obscured by a public and professional consciousness that is predisposed to dismiss its significance.

While it is important to point out that the relationship between social status distinctions and language variation in New Zealand is different from social class and language variation in countries such as England and the United States (e.g. Bayard 1987, 1990, 1991, 1995, Gordon and Deverson 1998), it is also important to identify empirically the precise constellation of sociological and sociopsychological factors that correlate with language variation. Bayard (1991:169) notes that the study of socioeconomic correlations 'stands in direct conflict with the cherished belief that New Zealand is a "classless" society', an observation that may have led to some reluctance in appealing to traditional socioeconomic indices in correlational

² In this respect, I am intrigued by Donna Starks' (personal communication) suggestion that Auckland may be developing a regional identity characterized by the production of a more phonetically fronted, dental production of /s/, due in part to the influence of language-contact groups in the region who have brought a fronted sibilant from their native language.

studies. In retrospect, this is probably a blessing in disguise. Although earlier sociolinguistic studies of language variation and social status in the United States (e.g. Labov 1966, Wolfram 1969) relied on demographically based socioeconomic indices, the search for authentic sociolinguistic description and explanation seems more reasonably rooted in ethnographic and sociopsychological explanation (e.g. LePage and Tabouret 1985). This, in turn, calls for more community-based studies in which the social dynamics of particular communities provide the framework for determining relevant social divisions and categories. Some social groups, such as the 'poker game network' in Ocracoke (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1995) can be identified only by following the community's lead with respect to the determination of relevant social groupings and attitudes about dialect differences. I suspect that community-based studies of various self-contained, small New Zealand communities would lead to a similar conclusion.³

With respect to language variation in New Zealand English, there seems to be some reluctance to abandon the tripartite distinction between cultivated, broad, and general pronunciation (Mitchell and Delbridge 1965) with reference to New Zealand English (Bayard 1991, Gordon and Deverson 1998; but see Holmes, Bell and Boyce 1991). Although there is now some description of the kinds of vowel productions that might correlate with these labels (Bayard 1991, Gordon and Deverson 1998), I must confess that I spent the better part of my time in New Zealand trying to figure out the sociolinguistic fit between the vowel productions associated with these labels without ever pinning it down in precise detail. I did, however, convince myself that the labels contributed mostly to sociolinguistic stereotyping. The term *cultivated* carries affective connotations that stretch the bounds of dispassionate sociolinguistic description, and, to be perfectly honest, I had trouble keeping straight the denotative difference between *general* and *broad*. But my concern goes deeper than mere nomenclature, in that the labels circumvent the kind of precision that we expect from sociolinguistic description in terms of the correlation of sociocultural and sociopsychological factors with language variation. Furthermore, the terms variation—the hallmark of sociolinguistic studies over the past several decades (Labov 1966, 1972). While I realize that these labels may not be any better or worse than the use of labels such as 'standard', 'RP', and 'vernacular', I would discourage the urge to salvage such labels, even with sociolinguistically appropriate qualification. They are just too prone to

³ We are aware that community-based collaboration raises deeper ideological and practical issues about the roles of sociolinguistic researchers in local communities. For a discussion of the kinds of issues raised in such collaborative partnerships, see Wolfram (1998).

popular stereotyping in terms of the linguistic subordination principle (Lippi-Green 1997) and too inexact and categorical in terms of empirical sociolinguistic behavior.

On the Principled Differentiation of Dialects

One of the most important observations to emerge over the last couple of decades of dialect study is the understanding that vowel systems are comprised not of independent, unrelated units of sound but of systems or subsystems that work together in rotational schemes and push-pull chain effects. Labov (1991, 1994) has reduced the rotational schemes to a limited set of vowel-shift principles which are summarized below:

Principle I

In chain shifts, tense nuclei rise along a peripheral track.

Principle II

In chain shifts, lax nuclei fall along a nonperipheral track.

Principle III

In chain shifts, back vowels move to the front.

Principle III

In chain shifts, tense vowels move to the front along peripheral paths, and lax vowels move to the back along nonperipheral paths.

In varieties of English found in the United States (and elsewhere in the English-speaking world), two major rotational schemes have been identified, the so-called Northern Cities Vowel Shift and the Southern Vowel Shift. These dialect patterns are differentiated by their involvement in the various rotational schema that move them in quite different directions, hence leading to the conclusion that Southern and Northern dialects in the United States are becoming more divergent over time. The vowel system of New Zealand English (Maclagan 1982, Bauer 1979, 1986, 1992, Labov 1994, Gordon and Deverson 1998) also participates in rotational schemes that can be captured to a large extent in Labov's principles of vowel shifting. In fact, some of these differential shifts capture major distinguishing traits of New Zealand English vis-à-vis other varieties of English (Gordon and Deverson 1998). Figures 1-3 display the rotational schemes of the Northern Cities Vowel Shift in the United States, the Southern Vowel Shift in the United States, and the New Zealand Vowel System. Key words are included for reference in the production of the vowels.

We see a number of similarities and differences in the application of the principles of vowel rotation across the different varieties in Figures 1-3. In combining Principle 1 and Principle 3, New Zealand English identifies with the Southern Vowel Shift of the United States, though the phonetic particulars are, of course, quite different. At the same time, however, an examination of the rotational schemes raises some questions about the principles themselves. The description of the vowel rotation schema is based

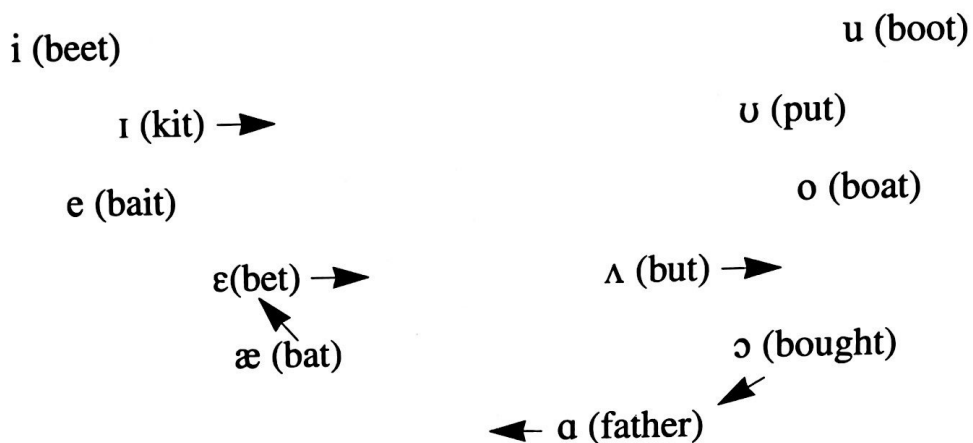


Figure 1. The Northern Cities Vowel Shift: USA

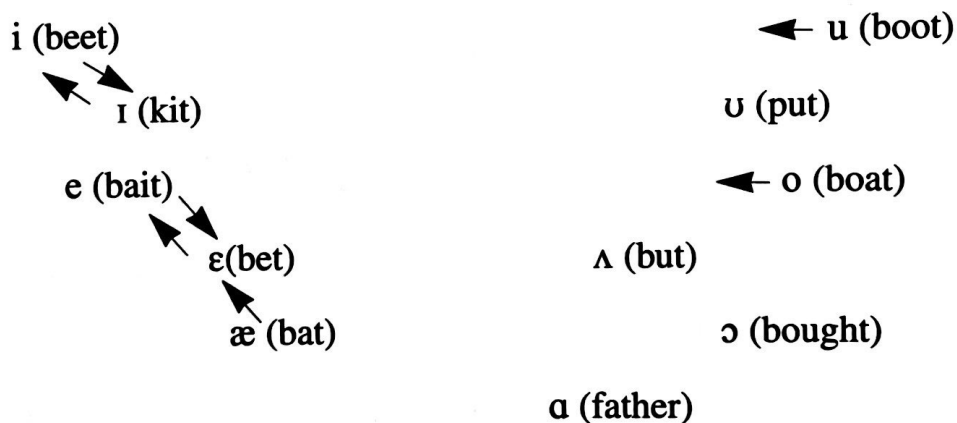


Figure 2. The Southern Vowel Shift: USA

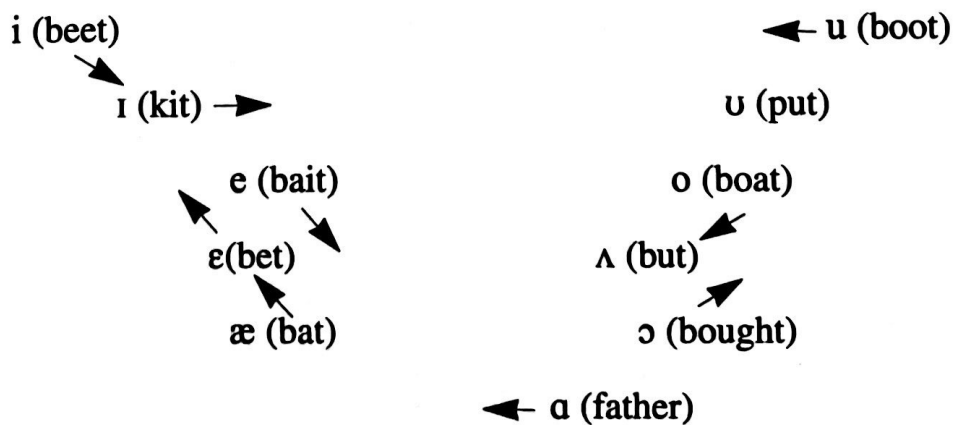


Figure 3. New Zealand Vowel Shift

on the distinction between peripheral and non-peripheral vowel productions, a critical yet empirically elusive dichotomy. In New Zealand English, for example, the rising front vowel nuclei of the short vowels would have to be peripheral to explain their upward movement, but the upward movement of /*ɛ*/ and /*æ*/ and backward movement of /*ɪ*/ seem contradictory to Labov's principles, by his own admission (Labov 1994:138). Maclagan's (1982) analysis of formant plots for New Zealand English vowels seem to support the peripheral placement of the short vowels in phonetic space, but the peripheral/non-peripheral dichotomy as the basis for differential rotation is not nearly as neat as is assumed under the principles. The independent acoustic measurement of rotating vowels in American English dialects by Erik Thomas (1997) in our lab at North Carolina State University shows that the differential distribution of vowels classified as peripheral and non-peripheral is not as discrete and binary as the vowel rotation principles would assume. More empirical phonetic evidence for the distinction seems warranted.

There are also issues about the co-occurrence relationships of different rotational patterns within an overall vowel system. For example, Schilling-Estes's (1997) exploratory examination of Smith Island in the Southeastern United States suggests that this dialect enclave combines some principles found in the Southern Shift with those described for the Northern Cities Vowel Shift in an apparent mixed, and somewhat anomalous alignment. The possible combinations and implicational arrays of the differing subset rotational schemes thus need to be specified in a more accountable and principled way.

Perhaps a more essential issue in terms of the principles of vowel rotation is their lack of explanatory value. Even if the descriptive principles could be revised to our satisfaction, we still have to address the question of why these particular shifts happen. What underlying principles of phonetics drive the changes to begin with? Are there articulatory or perceptual explanations (e.g. undershooting or overshooting phonetic targets) and, if so, how do they lead to the initiation of a change? The 'actuation' problem in terms of language change (Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog 1968) remains one of the most elusive and least addressed issues in language change, whether it involves the configuration of the New Zealand or the Southern United States version of the Southern Vowel Shift.

There are also questions about dialect innovation and diffusion that merit examination with reference to the various vowel rotations. For example, in the United States, there is evidence that the Northern Cities Vowel Shift is a current, progressive change that is proceeding in a cascading fashion—from larger metropolitan areas to moderately sized cities to smaller cities (Labov 1991, 1994). By the same token, the Southern Vowel Shift in the United States appears to be a more rural pattern which is in the process of receding, particularly in some of the large cultural centres of the South (Bailey, Wikle, Tillery and Sand 1993). Thus, the pattern of apparent divergence in terms of Southern and Northern dialect regions in the

United States due to the direction of vowel shifts may actually be somewhat of an illusion created by the failure to take into account the relative stages of progression and regression in Southern and the Northern vowel shifts in the United States.

In a similar fashion, questions of innovation and conservation have been raised with respect to New Zealand English vowels. Bauer (1979, 1992) has maintained that New Zealand English vowel shift represented in Figure 3 is innovative but Trudgill, Gordon, and Lewis (1998:49) argue that the realizations of short front vowels were present in New Zealand English from its inception with the direction of movement since that time taking New Zealand English and British English in different directions. Thus, Trudgill et al. (1998) argue that contemporary New Zealand English combines conservative and innovative tendencies. Similarly, it has sometimes been assumed that high rising terminal intonation contour in New Zealand English spread from Australian English, but Holmes (1992:217) questions this conclusion and suggests that the more likely diffusion was from New Zealand to Australia. Questions of historical origin, innovation, and diffusion are not merely matters of national pride and cultural identity; they relate to more fundamental issues of sociolinguistic dynamics and principles of language change and accommodation.

One of the enviable resources in the study of New Zealand English is the availability of recordings with speakers who represent the complete history of the English language in New Zealand in apparent time. Thus, the Project on the Origins of New Zealand English (Trudgill et al. 1998) holds the potential to arrive at answers to questions of conservatism and innovation based on spoken language data. Older English-speaking countries such as the United States and England obviously must resort to written language records with all their limitations for the examination of phonetic production. The recordings of speakers in New Zealand born between 1850 and 1890 is a dialect lodestone for examining the development of colonial and post-colonial English varieties.

The Changing Sociolinguistic Landscape

Sociocultural situations, like language, may vary greatly over time and space. In the United States, important demographic and sociocultural changes have taken place since the first widescale dialect surveys were conducted in the U.S. over a half-century ago, thus reconfiguring the American dialect landscape as we enter into the next millenium (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1998:113). The primary types of change with the most bearing on the landscape include: (1) changing relations among cultural contact groups, (2) shifting patterns of migration, (3) the redefinition of cultural centres, and (4) shifting communication networks.

During the course of the twentieth century, immigrants have continued to pour into the United States, but the types of groups have shifted since earlier dialect surveys of American English. Some ethnic groups are now arriving in significant numbers for the first time and other immigrant

groups have stopped arriving. The languages brought by these new immigrant groups should affect American English, as did the languages of previous waves of immigrants. The languages brought by these groups may also serve as substrates for the creation of new ethnic and regional varieties of English. For example, Hispanic English is now so widespread in such states as Florida, Texas, and New Mexico, as well as a number of major cities throughout the country, that it has earned a place on the American English dialect map, and Vietnamese English, with roots in the extensive migration of Vietnamese into the U.S. following the fall of Saigon in the mid-1970s, may become a recognized variety.

In a similar vein, we might expect more recent patterns of immigration in New Zealand, such as the influx of immigrants from the South Pacific since the 1950s (Bell and Holmes 1991), to be reflected in differential patterns of language shift and maintenance (Hulsen 1998, Roberts 1997, 1998). In some regions with significant populations of immigrants, we may also expect emerging ethnic and/or regional varieties of English—influenced by the substrate effects of the native languages of these newer immigrant populations.

In addition to the changing patterns of cultural contact which result from new patterns of immigration, we also find changing cultural relations among members of longstanding ethnic groups. For example, the desegregation of ethnic communities in the United States is an on-going process in American society which continually brings speakers of different ethnicities into closer contact with one another. The expected result of this inter-ethnic contact is the erosion of ethnic dialect boundaries; however, research indicates that ethnolinguistic boundaries can be remarkably persistent, even in face of sustained daily inter-ethnic contact, most likely because ethnic dialects are an important component of cultural and individual identity. This certainly seems to be the case for African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in the United States (Wolfram, Thomas, and Green forthcoming).

Our research on inter-ethnic dialect contact has shown that even when speakers do cross ethnic dialect lines by adopting features from other ethnic groups, they may subtly alter the adopted features in order to convert them into markers of their own ethnolinguistic identity. For example, the Lumbee Native Americans who reside in a tri-ethnic community in southeastern North Carolina appear to be adopting some features of AAVE as they come into increasing contact with neighboring speakers of AAVE. However, they do not necessarily use the adopted features at the same rate or in the same way as AAVE speakers (Dannenberg and Wolfram 1998). Thus, although both Lumbee Native Americans and African Americans may now use constructions involving finite *be* such as *Sometimes my ears be itchin'* to indicate a habitual action or an on-going state, only Lumbee speakers can use *be* in other types of constructions, as in *Those girls in the picture be(s) my sister*. The Lumbee may appear to be conforming to neighboring African Americans through their use of *be*, but close

examination of the patterning of this form in each ethnic community indicates that simple accommodation is not the whole answer.

Notwithstanding the obvious influence of Maori on the lexical items of New Zealand English and some possible substrate phonological and grammatical influences on its development, the notion of 'Maori English' as a distinctive ethnic variety remains a debatable issue (Holmes and Bell 1988, Benton 1991, Holmes 1997, Bell forthcoming). Conclusions about the ethnolinguistic status of Maori English vary, based on the selection of speakers, ethnic status of interviewers, speech styles of the interview, the community setting of the investigation, and the definition of 'distinctive' (Bell forthcoming). At the same time, carefully detailed empirical evidence in controlled comparative studies such as Holmes (1997) and Bell (forthcoming) suggests that a constellation of quantitative differences in the use of shared structures may result in an ethnolinguistically identifiable variety.

With the decline of native speakers of Maori, the possibility of language transfer as the basis for distinctiveness among Maori speakers is correspondingly diminished, but this does not rule out a type of 'reversion strategy' in which ethnically marked linguistic features, once the product of language transfer are seized upon to mark ethnolinguistic identity. Dubois and Horvath's (1998, forthcoming) study of Cajun English in Louisiana shows a 'V-shaped' model of generational change that supports this kind of reversion. The oldest speakers in their sample, native speakers of Cajun French, reveal high rates of transfer features (e.g. interdental stopping in *this* and *think*) while middle-aged speakers who speak English as a native language show low rates of these variants. However, younger speakers who strongly identify with Cajun culture show higher levels of the non-standard variants more like the older speakers even though the source of these variants can no longer be attributed to language transfer per se. A similar kind of reversion strategy certainly might help explain some of the patterns found in the English of some Maori speakers who identify strongly with Maori culture but no longer speak Maori as a first language (Holmes 1997, Bell forthcoming).

Not only are speakers coming into contact with different cultural and linguistic groups through immigration and integration, but we also find that cross-cultural and cross-dialectal mixing results when populations of speakers migrate from one region of the country to another. Historically, the significant migrations of English-speaking people in the U.S. have run along east-west lines. However, in the twentieth century several large migrations along north-south lines have taken place as well. In recent decades, the American South has witnessed a large influx of speakers from Midland and Northern dialect areas, who are settling in the area in increasing numbers due to such factors as economic opportunity and desirable climate. It is unclear at this point exactly how great an impact the speech of these non-Southerners has had or will have on the traditional Southern dialect. At first glance, the effect seems enormous indeed, especially in areas such as

Miami, Florida; Houston, Texas; and the Research Triangle Park area of North Carolina, where Southerners are overwhelmed by non-Southerners to such a degree that it is becoming increasingly rare in these areas to locate young people with genuine 'Southern accents'. However, there are factors which work to counter the dialect inundation that may result from such linguistic swamping. For example, Southerners have long viewed their dialect as a strong marker of regional identity and often even as a source of cultural pride, and such feelings about a speech variety may certainly help preserve it, even in the face of massive linguistic pressure from outside groups. Thus, for example, Guy Bailey and his colleagues (Bailey, Wikle, Tillery, and Sand 1993) have found that some Southern dialect features in Oklahoma, including the use of *fixin' to* (as in *She's fixin' to go the races*, have persisted and even spread in the face of increasing settlement within the state by non-Southerners. Bailey et al (1993) also noticed that heavy use of the *fixin' to* form correlates with regional pride, as measured in people's responses to the survey question, 'Is Oklahoma a good place to live?' Thus, it seems that *fixin' to* carries strong symbolic meaning as a marker of regional identity; this symbolic meaning may play a key role its ability to stay afloat in the face of linguistic swamping.

As various researchers have pointed out (Bayard 1995, Gordon and Deverson 1998) there has been an increasing awareness of New Zealand English that has accompanied the heightened sense of nationhood. But what is the role of different dialect features in projecting Kiwi English, given the expanding inventory of lexical and phonological features that are associated with Kiwi English? Are there any that are the focused, symbolic indicators in a way comparable to the way *fixin' to* functions in some parts of the Southern United States? What role do particular vowel productions such as backed /I/ and suprasegmentals such as high rising terminal contour play? What is the role of lexical items in the projection of Kiwi English?

At the same time, there have also been apparent changes in the status of competing external models of English, such as the relative status of American English and RP (Bayard 1995). The apparent increase in the selection of American lexical alternatives over British ones, and the spread of American pronunciations of items such as *schedule*, *lieutenant*, and *clerk* support this trend (Gordon and Deverson 1998), but the possible sociolinguistic explanations are even more intriguing. Bayard (1995) has suggested that such changes derive from a strong media-based influence from the United States. Most American sociolinguists reject any significant role for the media in explaining dialect change in the United States (Wolfram, Adger, and Christian 1998), but the situation may be different in terms of New Zealand given its relative isolation, its satellite status in terms of the global economy and politics, and its historical sensitivity to external models of English. The accommodation of American English may also attest to the ever-widening network of transportation and intercommunication with respect to world Englishes, since even the most remote areas now seem to have access to a variety of Englishes. Air travel has removed a number of

once-formidable geographic barriers, and formerly isolated regions have become havens for tourists and other outside visitors. Furthermore, telephones, television, and internet communications are bringing English speakers around the world into closer communicative proximity than ever before. The effects of this globalization may help explain the expanded influence of varieties such as American English, but it may ironically also be one of the reasons for the increasing consciousness of Kiwi English as well, as New Zealanders seek to establish their identity in the marketplace of world Englishes, while also being affected by them.

Given their different histories, social and ethnic divisions, social relationships, and psychosociological identities in terms of the English language, the changing dialect landscape of the United States and New Zealand may seem quite different. Such differences offer the kind of proving grounds essential for testing underlying principles and explanations involved in accounting for language variation in different contexts. We might also find that some of the apparent differences are indeed superficial and reflective of an underlying, unified set of sociolinguistic principles.

Going Public with Sociolinguistic Diversity

Most sociolinguists are committed to the principle that knowledge obtained from their research studies can and should be used to address social and educational problems. As Cameron, Fraser, Harvey, Rampton, and Richardson (1992:24) observe, 'If knowledge is worth having, it is worth sharing.' In the United States, the social involvement of researchers has been canonized in Labov's (1982) *principle of error correction* and *principle of debt incurred*, in which sociolinguists become involved in social and educational issues when there are errors in public understanding about language that can be addressed on the basis of their data. Our own perspective (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1995, 1997) favors a more proactive approach in which we actively seek ways in which we can return favors to the communities that have fueled our research studies, the so-called *principle of linguistic gratuity* (Wolfram 1993).

Almost from the outset of our sociolinguistic research on isolated dialect communities in North Carolina in 1992, we have been actively engaged in community-based *dialect awareness programs*. The goal of such programs is to inform members of host communities and the general public about the dialect heritage of the community and matters of dialect diversity in general. We view our relationship to the community as 'advocacy research' in terms of Cameron et al.'s (1992) tripartite distinction (ethics, advocacy, and empowerment) of researcher-researched relationships.

Our programs involve an extensive set of formal and informal educational activities, and engage different types of community institutions and agencies. Activities, programs, and presentations include the following (adapted from Wolfram 1998):

- The development of a week-long, dialect awareness curriculum on

The Changing Scope of Dialectic Variation

community dialects (e.g. Wolfram, Schilling-Estes and Hazen 1995; Wolfram Dannenberg, Anderson and Messner 1997) which is now taught yearly on the 8th grade level (age 13-14) at schools in communities where we conduct research.

- The publication of a book on Outer Banks speech written for general audiences (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1997); the book is available in tourist sites and in popular bookstores and museums around the state. Royalties from the book are shared with the local preservation society.
- The production of video documentaries on community dialects (Blanton and Waters 1995; Creech and Creech 1996). The documentaries are shown in informal and formal educational venues.
- The development of an archival tape collection of selected excerpts from interviews conducted as a part of our research project.
- The establishment of a permanent exhibit on the Outer Banks speech for the local historical preservation museum. Funds for its establishment were obtained through a special grant written by our research staff on behalf of the preservation society.
- The design and distribution of a souvenir T-shirt with the slogan 'Save the Brogue' printed on the front of the shirt and a set of unique dialect terms printed on the back. The shirt is distributed at the museum operated by the preservation society, with all revenues from its sale donated to the society.
- The presentation of a series of lectures and workshops on dialect variation and Outer Banks speech for community groups (e.g. preservation society meetings) and for Outer Banks visitors (e.g. visiting groups of students, civic groups, and teachers).
- Cooperation with a variety of media specialists producing feature stories on the historical roots and the current, moribund state of community dialects. Articles have appeared in newspapers ranging from *The London Times* to the local school newspapers; TV and radio coverage has ranged from BBC-produced features aired on the international level to local and state-based TV and radio spots.

Our attempts to return linguistic favors to the community represent one of the most extensive examples of how sociolinguistic researchers might work productively with a community on language issues, and have involved social, educational, and economical alliances. Public information about language and language diversity tends to be (mis)guided by a strong set of language myths and an underlying ideology of language subordination that require our most concentrated educational effort on informal and formal levels.

I have been greatly impressed in New Zealand with some of the dissemination of sociolinguistic information and the practical application of such information in various venues—from publicly distributed university guidelines on sexist language to programs and popular articles about understanding language use in the workplace (e.g. Holmes 1998a, 1998b). I

have also been impressed with the effort to reach broad-based audiences with information about New Zealand English (e.g. Gordon and Deverson 1998) and the active support for the revitalization of the Maori language by New Zealand sociolinguists. In many respects, New Zealand sociolinguists have provided a model for the application of linguistic knowledge in education, the workplace, and public life. But there are also other venues that might be considered. For example, during a recent visit to the Maori culture and history section in Te Papa, the new national Museum of New Zealand in Wellington, I was impressed with the Museum's commitment to a bilingual presentation. But I was also frustrated by the fact that there was no specific information or particular exhibit dedicated to the history and current status of the Maori language in New Zealand. The national Museum seems an ideal venue for educating the public about issues of language and culture, and particularly about language endangerment. Our construction of museum exhibits on language variation (Wolfram, Schilling-Estes, Gruendler and Holton 1997) has shown that they can provide a most effective informal educational venue.

We have also found that creatively produced, entertaining television and video documentaries provide one of the most effective public means of addressing issues of sociolinguistic diversity. One award-winning television documentary on language attitudes and dialect diversity, *American Tongues* (Alvarez and Kolker 1987), aired for three years on the Discovery Channel in the United States, and is still routinely shown in introductory courses in linguistics, sociolinguistics, anthropology, and sociology throughout the United States. A television documentary dedicated to language diversity in New Zealand in general and Kiwi English in particular could do a great deal to advance the public understanding of language diversity and language attitudes in New Zealand.

There are also practical educational and workplace issues that need to be addressed. For example, the equitable assessment of the language development of Maori speakers requires speech and language development tests that are appropriate for native speakers of Maori and bilingual speakers. Research on the role of language in workplace communication, as investigated in the Victoria University Language in the Workplace Project, should provide important information on how language functions to impede and enhance social relations and workplace productivity. At the same time, it is important to disseminate such information in places where those affected by these issues can use the information—in the workplace through workshops, seminars, and business magazines (e.g. Holmes 1998a, 1998b). The distribution of guidelines on sexist language that I received in my orientation packet at the University of Canterbury bearing the imprint of sociolinguistic consultation was an impressive indication of how sociolinguists can make a difference.

There is ample opportunity to disseminate knowledge about language diversity for broad-based public audiences in confronting the legacy of dialect stereotyping and discrimination that seem to be shared

transcontinentally. As Lippi-Green notes (1997:73), accent discrimination remains 'so commonly accepted, so widely perceived as appropriate, that it must be seen as the last back door to discrimination.' Some progress has certainly been made, but there are still many challenges in the struggle to change popular misconceptions about language diversity. The ideology of language subordination runs deep, cutting across continents and language situations, and its confrontation requires our most creative, enterprising effort if we are to make a difference in how language differences are viewed in society. When all is said and done, it would be nice to say that sociolinguists not only provided insight into the role of language in society, but also contributed to making society a more equitable and inclusive place for its speakers of diverse varieties.

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The Changing Scope of Dialectic Variation

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