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## REVIEW

Hay, Jennifer, Margaret MacLagan And Elizabeth Gordon. 2008.  
*New Zealand English*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

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*New Zealand English* by Hay, MacLagan and Gordon is a recent addition to the Edinburgh University Press *Dialects of English* series. The series adopts a largely formulaic structure in which individual chapters cover the background, phonetics and phonology, morphosyntax, lexis and history of a given variety. The books aim to be “the most obvious starting point for both academic and interested non-academic readers” (series homepage), and to this end Hay et al. provide an energetic overview of the dialect that will a) interest and enlighten, but not confuse nor alienate its general readership, b) serve as a useful reference guide and c) stimulate future research on the variety. One strikingly positive feature of the book, common to others in the series, is that sound files accessed online provide an opportunity to hear native speakers of the dialect. Readers therefore get a ‘feel’ for a dialect they may have never previously encountered and the dialect description is significantly enhanced. The book also includes a bibliography of works on the variety which, together with its compact size, suggests its potential use as a handy student resource. Here I discuss individual chapters with a view to highlighting those characteristics of the book that serve the three functions (a, b and c) identified above.

Aiming to engage “high school and undergraduate students [and] anyone interested in New Zealand English” (vii), the authors make it clear at the outset that theoretical debates are not addressed. The book remains simply descriptive throughout. Readers can expect to apply some basic knowledge

of descriptive linguistics and the authors suggest “any introductory phonetics textbook” (18) for their treatment of NZE phonetics and phonology, where phonetic symbols and references to voice, place and manner of articulation occur. However, a brief discussion of terminology in chapter 2 clarifies the basic distinction between phonetics and phonology, the established use of Wells’ (1982) *keywords* and the notion of *standard language* and throughout the book, features of New Zealand English are introduced in a manner that familiarises readers with the linguistic description of dialects more generally.

For those unacquainted with New Zealand, the opening chapter provides an overview of its geography, demographics, circumstances of settlement, evolving race relations and some of the more prominent events in its social history. This socio-historical background brings the relevance of region to the foreground. It introduces readers to a modern-day New Zealand where “In parts of Christchurch, a visitor would see strong similarities to places in England. In some suburbs of Auckland the same visitor might think he or she was visiting a town on a Pacific Island” (12). This attention to the significance of cultural context is maintained throughout the subsequent dialect description. In relation to phonetics and phonology, readers are reminded of the geographical origins of settlers and informed that “modern NZE reflects this” (14). In relation to vocabulary, the affects of changes in the social and political climate on the indigenous population illuminate the ebb and flow of Maori lexical influence. Connections between the language and culture of this and any other region are thus usefully emphasised.

The cultural history of chapter 1 and the bibliography and transcription texts in chapters 7 and 8 respectively, frame five core linguistic chapters which describe the dialect’s phonetics and phonology (chapter 2), morphosyntax (chapter 3), vocabulary and discourse (chapter 4), origins and development (chapter 5) and internal variation (chapter 6). In each of these, Hay et al. focus on a sample of better-documented and/or more distinctive features and illustrate these with examples drawn extensively (though not exclusively) from ONZE project archive data. Examples can often be sampled auditorily via the aforementioned sound files allowing readers to gain familiarity with the features described.

Chapter 2 for example, briefly outlines the overall similarity between the consonant phonemes of NZE and those of other English varieties while the phonemes /r/, /l/, and /t/ “deserve special comment” (18). Individual sub-sections describe variability in each of these features, such as linking and intrusive /r/, /t/ flapping and /l/ vocalisation. Readers can compare the general

positions of NZE vowels with positions for the same vowels according to acoustic measurements of word list pronunciations on the accompanying audio files. Misunderstandings between speakers of NZE and other English varieties are illuminated with discussion of some distinctive NZE vowel pronunciations. Suprasegmental features are also addressed, with description of HRTs, patterns of stress-timing and the observation that “the Maori language ... may well be influencing the rhythm of NZE” (31). In addition, by briefly demonstrating some of “the ways in which NZE pronunciation has changed over the last 100 years” (32) (e.g. the NEAR-SQUARE merger), and by highlighting contrasting changes between distinct English dialects (e.g. British English labiodental /r/), this first linguistic chapter acquaints readers with dialect description that gives equal consideration to similarity and difference between NZE and other English dialects, and to variability between speakers of the same dialect.

This emphasis on variation and change usefully sheds light on potential areas for future research on what is specific to the dialect. In relation to morphosyntax, the authors note the “relatively few syntactic features that are wholly unique to New Zealand” (47) but emphasise the potential for such features to contribute to its distinctiveness. Thus, a low frequency of use of *shall* relative to other modals is a similarity with Scottish English, Australian English and American English, while the reanalysis of *should have*, *would have*, etc. as *should of* and *would of* (resulting in forms such as *should of not*), is a recently noted feature which “may become more representative of NZE in the future” (55). Negative concord (e.g. *they don't do nothing*, 55) may be ethnically distributed and the second person plural pronoun ‘yous’ may represent an age-graded feature. Surprisingly, although “‘real’ as an adjective modifier” (63) is included in this chapter, there is no mention of the ‘adjective + *as*’ construction (e.g. *sweet as*). This may be a New Zealand-specific syntactic construction (Petrucchi and Head 2006), though research is needed to clarify its regional distribution across varieties of English. But it seems that the use of *as* as an adjective booster in NZE has rapidly expanded to include a wide range of adjectives (e.g. *easy as*, *cool as*, *dumb as*, cf. Bauer and Bauer 2002a: 248). This chapter raises intriguing questions in terms of the “particular combination and frequencies” (63) of NZE morphosyntactic features in comparison with other English dialects.

There are insights into the cross-linguistic influences that contribute to the dialect. Chapter 4 describes a base of standard English vocabulary, adapted for the New Zealand context, influenced by Australian and American

English, and distinctively flavoured with Maori lexical items. Given that NZE speakers may choose Maori over English where synonyms do exist and that this may represent “ongoing nativization” (Macalister 2007: 504), the role of Maori vocabulary in the future divergence of NZE is significant. Hay et al. illustrate the creative effects of bilingualism and biculturalism with the merging of languages in collocations such “hui-hoppers” (72). Readers are introduced to strategies such as compounding, affixation and semantic change which contribute to a rapidly evolving vocabulary with many locally-specific characteristics. NZE discourse features are also addressed, with discussion of *eh* and *like*, and acknowledgment of the extensive work of Janet Holmes and others in this area. The distribution of discourse features across English dialects is identified as a topic that is also in need of further investigation. For example, “the falling intonation pattern typically associated with the NZE ‘eh’ distinguishes it from the similar particle which is found in some other English dialects” (81).

Given its introductory nature, issues are necessarily simplified. The overview of the origins and development of the dialect (chapter 5) adopts an overall acceptance of Trudgill’s (2004) linguistic determinism tempered with: “even if social factors did not influence the final outcome of the development of NZE as Trudgill’s theory of determinism hypothesises, social factors were certainly important over the course of its development” (93). Though readers are not alerted to the ongoing debate regarding the relative role of social factors (e.g. Coupland 2008; Holmes and Kerswill 2008; Schneider 2008; Trudgill 2008), the significance of patterns of settlement and the role of children in dialect formation are made clear. Most importantly, the evolution of NZE over time is clearly and effectively demonstrated, with reference to features used by four speakers in the ONZE data born in 1851, 1866, 1877 and 1886 respectively (with extracts on the audio files). Readers are also directed to the comprehensive treatments of this topic in Trudgill (2004) and MacLagan et al. (2004).

With variation having thus far provided the key theme of the book, chapter 6 broadens the view of the *types* of variation furnishing the variety. The language use of horse-racing commentators which is local to New Zealand and Australia illustrates differences in register for the same speaker. Although complex issues regarding regional, ethnic and social variation in New Zealand English are beyond the scope of this introductory text, readers are alerted to a multitude of factors in the mix. Examples of well-known regional lexical items (e.g. *bach* versus *crib*) are provided, non-linguists’ perceptions of

regional differences are considered and this insubstantial evidence of regional dialects is contrasted with established features of the *Southland Dialect*. Readers are informed that rhotic pronunciations of the NURSE vowel have been found (Kennedy 2006) to “extend into parts of Otago as well as Southland” (99), while Kennedy’s findings regarding this feature in the far north of the North Island are treated separately in the context of ‘Maori English’ (note that Kennedy (2006: 32) suggests that rhotic NURSE in the North Island is not purely ethnicity-related, since use of this feature was low at other North Island schools with similarly high percentages of Maori students). Bauer and Bauer’s (2002b) regionally distributed ‘playground vocabulary’ demonstrates regional variation additional to Southland. Readers may also have been interested to learn that these “regionalised names ... have existed for at least the last sixty years, and largely in the same regions we find today” (Bauer and Bauer 2002b: 181).

Problems of social class categorisation are highlighted in the context of the levelling of differences between general NZE and the more “cultivated” and “broad” ends of the continuum. Diagrams illustrate broad versus cultivated pronunciations of MOUTH, PRICE, FACE and GOAT. Final /k/ (e.g. in *something*, *anything*) is an example of a vernacular feature included in the audio files and the authors describe stereotypical attitudes towards a female broad NZE speaker, despite an apparent lessening of ‘cultural cringe’ towards general NZE. The difficulties regarding ‘Maori English’ are also made clear. Such features are “spoken more in the North Island than in the South Island ... more in informal situations than informal ones, more by speakers from lower social classes and more by men than by women” (105). Connections are emphasised between levels of Maori language fluency and the appropriation of a variety of features as a means of “establishing who they are” (107), and language transfer is elucidated in relation to linking and intrusive /r/ and a lessening of stress-timing differences between Maori and NZE. It is also noted here that the use of Pasifika vocabulary within the variety is becoming “commonly heard, especially in Auckland” (109). This final linguistic chapter thus draws together the extensive range of factors made relevant throughout the book and provides a snapshot of the rich source of variability within the dialect.

The *selected bibliography of works on New Zealand English* is presented in chapter 7, where readers are also alerted to Deverson and Macalister’s (2006) comprehensive bibliography. Anyone wishing to explore features or issues introduced in this book will not be short of published sources. Organised in topic-specific sections, the bibliography combines with the

question marks over particular issues throughout the book to form valuable background for student projects on for example, particular features of the dialect, or comparison of features across varieties.

Transcripts of the associated sound files are provided in chapter 8. It is unfortunate that at the time of writing these audio files are not yet available. As I have tried to stress throughout this review, these add significant value to the book. They could also be put to a variety of educational uses, as a practical tool for students to hone their phonetic skills for example.

Overall, this simply-presented but lively book covers huge ground. Despite its neutral theoretical orientation, it nevertheless introduces some basic principles of sociolinguistics (e.g. the role of women in language change) alongside its coverage of an extensive range of the factors and features that make up the dialect. Most importantly, the book demonstrates the variation and change inherent in any dialect at a given point in time.

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