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Paul Warren

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# Origins and development of New Zealand English

Paul Warren, *Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand*

## Abstract

This paper provides an overview of the chief characteristics of a relatively new variety of English, New Zealand English. After a brief historical sketch of the development of English in New Zealand, the paper highlights some of the grammatical patterns of the variety, before looking in more detail at the lexical features and characteristic pronunciations that make it a distinct variety. One of the significant influences on the development of New Zealand English has been contact with the Māori language and with Māori cultural traditions. This is reflected in the presence of a large number of Māori words in common use in New Zealand English, as well as in the development of Māori English as an ethnic variety in New Zealand. Finally, the paper considers other sources of variation within New Zealand English, including early signs of regional differentiation as well as age- and gender-linked variation that have emerged in the patterns of change in progress that typify this new variety.

**Keywords:** New Zealand English, Maori, Pakeha, pronunciation, vocabulary, varieties of English

## 1. Origins and history

### *1.1 Settlement of New Zealand and arrival of English*

New Zealand, a group of islands in the South Pacific, was first discovered by Polynesian explorers in the 10th century. These explorers lived for several centuries in relative isolation, and their language developed into Māori. The first Europeans to reach these islands were the Dutch, under Abel Tasman in 1642. The Dutch did not stay, though we owe the name New Zealand to their cartographers. The first contact with the English language came with Captain James Cook, who arrived in 1769 and claimed New Zealand for the British Crown. Initially, English was not the only European language spoken in New Zealand, with early settlers coming from many other countries. However, the bulk of the early settlers were English speakers. Many of them arrived in New Zealand via New South Wales in Australia, from where Britain's interests in New Zealand were managed until 1841. The Treaty of Waitangi, signed in 1840, established British colonial rule, and opened the way for more organised migration directly from Britain, which increased dramatically over subsequent years. In 1838, for instance, there were some 2,000 Europeans in New Zealand, but by 1842 there were 10,000, and by the middle of the 19th century there were more English speakers than Māori speakers in New Zealand.

In the period 1840-1860, settlers from south-east England moved to the New Zealand Company's settlements in Wellington and Nelson, others from Devon and Cornwall established the Plymouth Company's city of New Plymouth in Taranaki, the Scottish free church built settlements in the Otago region in the south of the South Island, Anglo-Catholics settled Canterbury, while further Scottish settlers, disgruntled with conditions in Nova Scotia in Canada, moved to Waipu in the north of the North Island.

A further wave of settlement accompanied a gold rush in Otago and the West Coast of the South Island in the 1860s, with the influx mainly from Australia. A third wave, of planned immigration, occurred from the 1870s onwards, mainly bringing further settlers from the south-west of England. From around the 1890s, population growth from New Zealand-born Europeans exceeded that from further immigration.

## ***1.2 Influence of Māori on English in New Zealand***

The main contact language for English in New Zealand is Māori. The language has a simpler phoneme inventory than English, with five vowels /i, ε, a, ɔ, u/, each of which can be short or long, ten consonants /p, t, k, m, n, ŋ, f, h, r, w/ and a (C)V(V) syllable structure. /f/ has variable realisation, depending on dialect, /t, n/ can be dental or alveolar, and /r/ is a voiced alveolar tap. The originally unaspirated voiceless stops have become increasingly aspirated under the influence of English. The rhythmic structure of Māori is mora-based. These phonological properties of the Māori language have had some influence on the shape of New Zealand English (NZE), especially on the ethnic variety known as Māori English (see section 6.1 below).

## ***1.3 Multicultural New Zealand***

New Zealand is a multicultural society. Over the past 40 years or so, New Zealand has looked less to its historical past in the United Kingdom (which has become increasingly Europe-centered), and more to its neighbours in south-east Asia and the Pacific. As well as immigration from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea and other Asian nations, there has been a dramatic increase in immigration from the Pacific islands, and recent studies have accordingly looked at the development of Pasifika English varieties in New Zealand (Bell & Gibson, 2008; Gibson & Bell, 2010; Starks & Reffell, 2006; Starks, Thompson, & Christie, 2008).

## ***1.4 Current historical position***

As the summary in 1.1 shows, early immigration to New Zealand was from a number of points of origin in the UK, and many settlers arrived via Australia. Despite this mix of sources, NZE has evolved as a highly homogeneous variety. It has been conjectured that NZE is currently at the differentiation stage of Schneider's (2003, 2007) dynamic model for the development of colonial varieties, with regional and/or social differences in the process of emerging (see for instance Bauer & Bauer, 2002; Bell & Gibson, 2008; Marsden, 2007, 2012).

## 2. Syntax and morphology

As with many language varieties, it is the differences in vocabulary (section 3) and pronunciation (section 4) that are first noticed as features of NZE, and so it is unsurprising that there has been relatively little research into aspects of its syntax and/or morphology. Indeed, most of that research has concentrated not on which features distinguish NZE from other English varieties, but on the incidence of non-standard grammatical features in NZE which are in most cases also found in other varieties. This section will report briefly on selected aspects of the use of verbs and pronouns, as well as on a few other notable features at the interface between grammar and the lexicon.

### 2.1 Verbs

In a corpus-based analysis, Hundt et al. (2004) report a lower level of regularisation of irregular past tense forms such as *dreamt* → *dreamed* or *spilt* → *spilled* in NZE and Australian English (AusE) than in American (AmE) and British (BrE) varieties. They describe this as an example of colonial lag affecting the Southern Hemisphere varieties only, and not AmE, which is more advanced in this measure than BrE. On the other hand, the use of *proved* instead of the irregular past participle *proven* was further advanced in NZE than in the AmE sample. They also observe that *gotten* as a past participle of *get* is a recent innovation primarily in spoken NZE and a likely result of AmE influence. There is thus considerable variation in whether more conservative or more innovative verb forms are used in NZE.

Another feature found in spoken NZE as well as in other varieties, and observed in particular in the casual speech of younger speakers, is the use of participle forms for simple past tense forms, such as *rung* for *rang*, *seen* for *saw*, *come* for *came* (Hay, Maclagan, & Gordon, 2008: 48-9; Quinn, 2000). Hay et al. suggest that such usages may be indicative of a change in progress.

Turning to modal verbs, it has been noted that NZE make less use of *shall* than other varieties, using *will* instead, apart from in a few fixed phrases (Hundt, et al., 2004; but see also Bauer, 2007). On the other hand, *will* to show future tense is dropping, replaced by *going to* and the spoken form *gonna*.

In her study of possessive *have* vs. *(have) got* in historical corpora, Quinn (2004) found that the use of *got* and *have got* has increased in NZE (just as it has in other varieties), at the expense of *have*. Female speakers seem to have led this change in NZE. In the most recent corpus data studied, socio-economic status was indicated by occupation, and Quinn found that while non-professionals used *got* and *have got* in all contexts, professionals were more likely to use these forms with inalienable possessions (*they've often got rattly doorhandles*) than with alienable ones (*we've got books*).

A feature that differs between varieties involves the details of number agreement between collective nouns in subject position and their verbs, as well as whether singular or plural pronouns are used to refer to such nouns. Hundt et al. (2004) report comparative data for representative NZ, British, Australian and US newspapers for five collective nouns (see also Hundt, 2009). Most varieties allow a mixed concord

system, with usages like *His family is coming for Christmas; they are arriving on Christmas Eve*. All four samples strongly prefer a singular verb with *government* and *committee* and a plural verb with *police*. The NZE, AusE and AmE samples show very high proportions of singulars with *team*, while the BrE sample has a less strong bias in the same direction. It has also been reported (Bauer, Bardsley, Holmes, & Warren, 2011: 221-4; Vantellini, 2003) that NZE and BrE differ in the use of singular vs. plural verbs not just with the word *team*, but with *team* names (e.g. *New Zealand is winning* vs. *BrE England are winning*). With *family*, Hundt et al.'s AmE sample shows a clear singular preference, which is less clear in AusE and BrE, and even less so in NZE. With regard to pronoun usage with collectives, the only statistically significant regional difference Hundt et al. found was for *team*, which was most likely to be used with a plural pronoun in BrE, but with a singular pronoun in the other varieties.

## 2.2 Pronouns

A number of non-standard pronominal uses are found in NZE, as in other varieties. For example, NZE frequently uses *they* as a generic singular third-person pronoun (*if anyone is late they should report to reception*). It has been remarked that this usage is particularly high in NZE (Hay, et al., 2008: 58f.; Holmes, 1998). New Zealand English also shares with other varieties a non-standard second-person plural pronoun: *yous* (or *youse*). This is probably of Irish or Scottish origin (Bauer, 2007: 5). An alternative form that is quite widespread is *you guys* (or *yous(e) guys*).

The case marking of personal pronouns in conjoined phrases is variable. For example, the use of *I* or *me* does not necessarily follow the grammatical rules for this pronoun (Bauer, 2007). So *me* can occur in subject position (*me and Jack will do it*), though this is less common than *I* in object position (*they're going to show you and I how to fix it*; and as a prepositional object: *he'll give it to you and I*), which is even quite likely in the speech of those who might be expected to be speakers of a more standard variety (e.g. politicians, educators, broadcasters).

Where other varieties may use *she* for machinery (cars, boats, planes), it has been noted that both NZE and AusE use this more widely with inanimate objects (Bauer, 2007:5 reports overhearing *she's a good crash-helmet*). *She* is also found in the phrase *she'll be right* (meaning *it will be all right*).

Relative pronoun usage is reported to not be markedly different from BrE or AmE usage (Sigley, 1997), though the use of *which* with people has been noted for NZE, especially with prepositions (*the friend which I was talking to ....*) and in other syntactically complex constructions.

## 2.3 The grammar-lexis nexus

There are a few cases of prepositional use with individual lexical items that are worth commenting on. NZE shows a preference for *in the weekend* rather than *at* or *on the weekend* (Bauer, 1989). The word *different* appears with a selection of pronouns, mainly with *from*, *to* and *than*. Bauer et al. (2011: 234-6) report a survey of web material which shows that NZE, AmE and BrE all use *different from* more than either *different to* or *different than*, but the second most frequent preposition with *different* is *than* in AmE but *to* in BrE and NZE (see also Hundt, et

al., 2004). In addition, a small handful of verbs are widely used in NZE without a preposition, where a preposition would be expected in other varieties and/or from more conservative speakers. So one can *protest an outcome* or *appeal a decision*.

*Farewell* is more widely used as a transitive verb in NZE and AusE than in other varieties, especially with the sense of putting on a function to mark someone's departure or retirement: *they farewelled the professor at a party in the staff club*.

The use with countable nouns of *less* (for *fewer*) and of *amount of* is widespread, as in the supermarket checkout specification of *ten items or less*. Bauer (2007) reports seeing an advertising billboard for a radio station that read *Less Commercials, More Music*, to which a graffiti artist added 'Fewer Grammar'.

### 3. Lexis

Most of the vocabulary found in NZE is also found in English around the world. There are however two areas of vocabulary that are more specific to NZE. By far the most obvious lexical marker of NZE as a distinct variety is the large number of Māori words used in everyday contexts. In addition, there are a number of English coinages and other New Zealandisms of various origins.

#### 3.1 Māori terms in NZE<sup>1</sup>

NZE contains a rich selection of Māori words related to significant Māori cultural traditions, many of which have become part of general New Zealand culture, as well as to the flora and fauna of New Zealand, particularly for species not found elsewhere, along with very many place names. Macalister (2007, 2008) comments on recent increases in the number of such words in common use in NZE, especially those relating to social culture. The greeting *kia ora* has long been familiar in New Zealand, including English-speaking contexts, as have the terms *haka* (the challenge famously used by the New Zealand rugby team before international fixtures), *whare* (house or meeting house), *marae* (the open area in front of a meeting house, used for ceremonial purposes), *whakapapa* (genealogy or ancestry), *whānau* (extended family), *hui* (meeting), *iwi* (tribe), *tangata whenua* (indigenous people), *hīkoi* (protest march, usually involving large distances over many days), *taonga* (treasure), and many others.

Many of the Māori terms for flora and fauna relate to the natural wildlife of New Zealand and in particular to endemic species for which the early settlers would not have had a name. A large number are the only or at least the most commonly used names for these species, such as the tree-names *kōwhai*, *pōhutukawa* (aka New Zealand Christmas tree, as its bright red flowers appear at around Christmas time), and *ngaio*; the bird-names *kiwi*,<sup>2</sup> *tūi*, *kākā*, *kea*, *kererū*; as well as the reptile name *tuatara* and the insect *wētā*, and many others. Some of these words of Māori origin have existed alongside European terms that were coined largely on the basis of the appearance of the referent. In many such cases the Māori word has in recent years largely replaced the English term (so *parson bird* - the bird in question has a white tuft at the throat similar to a priest's collar - existed alongside *tūi*, but

nowadays only the latter is widespread). In other cases, the English term remains better known amongst English speakers, e.g. *fantail* for the bird *pīwakawaka*. In this specific case a contributing factor is that there is a wide range of dialectal Māori names for this bird, and so *fantail* has nationwide acceptance.

Place names of Māori origin include the Māori name for New Zealand, *Aotearoa*, the names of regions such as *Taranaki*, *Wairarapa*, *Waikato* and *Horowhenua*, towns (and lakes) such as *Taupō*, *Rotorua* and *Whakatāne*. Recent changes in the labelling of settlements and in particular of geographical features has seen the (re-)introduction of Māori names to replace English names (so *Mount Taranaki* was known as *Mount Egmont*, then was double-labelled *Egmont/Taranaki*, and now is most usually *Taranaki*). Some place names have been involved in a certain amount of controversy. So in recent years the town of Wanganui, on the Whanganui river, has been re-labelled *Whanganui*, to better reflect local Māori tradition and possibly local Māori pronunciation (the Taranaki Māori pronunciation of <wh> is [ʔw], but English speakers do not hear the glottal and so think it is [w]).

The pronunciation in English-language contexts for many words of Māori origin is highly variable, and many NZE speakers have heavily anglicised pronunciations (so *kōwhai* might be pronounced [kəʊwaɪ] rather than [kɔːmɛɪ]).

### 3.2 NZE vocabulary

A number of NZE terms have their origin in Australia. *Coo-ee* was originally an aboriginal term meaning ‘to come’ and which has been used as an all-purpose call to summon someone in for their lunch etc. It exists in NZE in the phrase *within coo-ee* meaning ‘near’. Other Australian terms common in NZE include *muster* (to round up sheep), *station* (for a large farm), *maimai* (a duckshooter’s hide; originally a makeshift shelter, from aboriginal *mia-mia*). *Tall poppy* originated in Australia as a negatively loaded reference to someone who stood out from the crowd (e.g. by being particularly bright or successful). It has been adopted and adapted in New Zealand, giving *tall poppyitis*, *tall poppy pruning*, etc., as well as homegrown equivalents like *tall ponga* (the *ponga* is a native tree fern).

Historically, NZE has had stronger connections with BrE than with AmE, and so much of the vocabulary of NZE is British based. However, there are some terms that the variety has taken from AmE. For example, where BrE speakers talk of the *silencer* on a car, AmE and NZE speakers use *muffler*, where BrE has *lorry*, NZE and AmE use *truck*, for BrE *estate car*, NZE has the AmE *station wagon*. This pattern is not limited to the automotive industry: NZE prefers AmE *stove* to BrE *cooker*, AmE *hardware store* to BrE *ironmonger*, and so on. It should be noted that these Americanisms are the exception rather than the rule - there is a fear in some quarters that there is an ongoing Americanisation of NZE, but this fear is largely unfounded.

NZE has also developed some expressions of its own. Hay et al. (2008: 77) point out that there are many compounds that have evolved specifically in NZE. One is *aerial topdressing*, a practice invented in New Zealand but known as *crop dusting* elsewhere. Another is *sausage sizzle*, when sausages are barbecued (e.g. in the school yard) and sold to raise money for charity.

Then there are words in NZE which might not be found elsewhere or if they are then with different usage, such as *chooks* for *chickens*, *jandals* for *flip-flops* (*thongs*

in AusE), *bottlestore* for *off-licence*, *football* for *rugby* (and *soccer* for *football*), *township* for *village*, *jug* for *kettle*, *chippies* for *potato crisps*, *section* for where you build your house, etc. A small industry has developed around the naming of national sports teams – the *All Blacks*, the national rugby team, is perhaps the best known, but by extension New Zealand also has the *Tall Blacks* (the national basketball team), the *Black Caps* (the cricket team), the *Black Sticks* (hockey) and even the *Tool Blacks* (a team of trade trainees that represented the country at a WorldSkills tournament).

## 4. Segmental phonology

This section presents a summary of the more significant aspects of the segmental phonology of NZE. For more details, the reader is referred to Bauer and Warren (2004).

### 4.1 Consonants

The consonant system of NZE is unremarkable for a variety of English. There is regionally variable rhoticity (see section 6.2), and pockets of *wh-* pronounced as [ʍ]. The incidence of glottal stops is increasing, mainly as a variant of /t/, but also as reinforcement of /p, t, k, tʃ/. Tapped realisation of both /t/ and /d/ is widespread, as is /l/ vocalisation in coda position. So-called /s/-retraction is frequently heard, in particular in /stj/ and /str/ clusters, so that /s/ is more ʃ/-like. Words like *student* are often heard with [ʃtʃ].

### 4.2 Vowels

While the vowel system of NZE is fairly standard for a largely non-rhotic variety, the realisations of the vowel phonemes provide most of the characteristic features of the pronunciation of this variety, including the main features that distinguish it from its closest neighbour Australian English (AusE). Table 1 gives the stressed vowel system based on Bauer and Warren (2004). This uses Wells’ lexical set labels (Wells, 1982) and gives the main realisations of each vowel, with the most usual one listed first.

Table 1. NZE stressed vowel system

Short Vowels		Long Vowels		Diphthongs	
KIT	ə, ɐ, ɜ̣, ɪ	FLEECE	i:, ɪi	FACE	æe, ɐe, ɛi
DRESS	e, ɛ, ɛ̣	BATH, START, PALM	ɐ:	PRICE	æe, ɐe, ɑi
TRAP	ɛ	NURSE	ɐ:, ɛ:, ʊ:	CHOICE	oe, oi
STRUT	ɐ, ɜ̣	THOUGHT, NORTH, FORCE	o:, ɔə, ɔ·ɐ	GOAT	ɐʌ, ɛi
LOT	ɒ, ɔ	GOOSE	ʌ:, ʔ:, ɪʌ, ɐʌ	MOUTH	æʌ, ɛʌ
FOOT	ʊ, ɪ̣			NEAR	iə, i:·ɐ, e·ɐ, eə
				SQUARE	eə, i:·ɐ, e·ɐ, iə
				CURE	ʌə, ʌ·ɐ



Four key features of this system will be outlined here: the NZ short front vowel shift, the tendency towards quantitative rather than qualitative distinctions for some vowel contrasts, a set of neutralisations in /l/ contexts, and the merger of NEAR and SQUARE.

As can be seen from the transcription values for KIT, DRESS and TRAP in Table 1, the short front vowels in NZE show a clockwise shift, so that the TRAP vowel is close to the DRESS vowel of varieties such as Southern British English (SBE), the DRESS vowel has a value similar to that of SBE KIT, and KIT is centralised. This shift can lead to confusion for non-NZE speakers, who might hear NZE *sacks* as *sex*, or *sex* as *six*. The centralisation of KIT distinguishes NZE from AusE, where KIT is fronted and raised, more like NZE FLEECE. Indeed, a phrase commonly cited for differentiating the two varieties is *fish and chips*, parodied as *feesh and cheeps* for AusE and as *fush and chups* for NZE, by speakers of the other variety. FOOT also has an innovative central unrounded variant, as found for instance in *good* – this is reflected in the informal written form of the greeting *good day* as *giddyay*. There is therefore some overlap of FOOT with KIT.

In the long vowel set, FLEECE and GOOSE can be diphthongized, with a short relatively open first element. A more exaggerated diphthongal GOOSE is sometimes heard in the phrase *Thank you*. GOOSE itself is very front, except when it precedes a vocalised /l/, as in *school*, when it becomes back. THOUGHT is also often diphthongized, with a marked off-glide, particularly in open syllables, as in *more*, *saw*, etc., which are sometimes even bisyllabic.

Contrasts between STRUT and START, and to some extent also DRESS and FLEECE and FOOT and THOUGHT are becoming dependent on a vowel length distinction, as their qualities increasingly overlap.

Before /l/ there is widespread neutralisation of DRESS and TRAP towards an intermediate and slightly backed vowel, so that word pairs like *Allan* and *Ellen*, *salary* and *celery* can be homophonic. Before coda /l/ there is frequent neutralisation of FOOT with KIT and/or GOOSE, so that *pull*, *pill* and *pool* can form homophonous pairs or even a triplet. Likewise for some speakers LOT, GOAT, THOUGHT and FOOT can be neutralised before coda /l/, resulting in homophony involving *poll*, *pole*, *Paul* and *pull*.

Next to the short front vowel shift, the most discussed vowel feature of NZE is the merger of NEAR and SQUARE. This is a relatively recent change, and is more noticeable amongst younger speakers, many of whom not only make no difference in their own productions, but are also unable to hear the difference in the speech of others (Hay, Warren, & Drager, 2006; Warren, Hay, & Thomas, 2007). Different directions of the merger have been suggested, which is perhaps symptomatic of the instability of a change in progress, but the consensus seems to be that the vowels are approximating on a close variant [iə].

## 5. Prosody and discourse

### 5.1 Rhythm

It has long been observed that the NZE of many speakers has a rhythm that is less “stress-timed” than other varieties, and further along a continuum of rhythmic types towards a “syllable-timed” variety. One study (Ainsworth, 1993) compared the full-vowel realisations of unstressed vowels as a rhythmic property of newsreader speech and found evidence of more syllable-based timing in NZE than in BrE (see also 6.1 below).

### 5.2 Intonation

The main intonational feature commented on for NZE is the high rising terminal (HRT). This final rise to an extreme high point in the speaker’s pitch range is not exclusive to NZE (being found in Australia, USA, UK, Canada, Falkland Islands, etc.), but it is certainly widespread in this variety. The HRT is realised on statements rather than questions (which arguably have a phonetically distinct rise – see Warren, 2005), and to speakers of other varieties it often comes across as indicating uncertainty. For HRT users, however, it indicates that they seek common ground and mutual participation in the discourse. Accordingly, it is found more in narrative structures than in descriptions or in opinion texts (Warren & Britain, 2000).

The HRT was first discussed for New Zealand in the English spoken by Māori children in the 1960s (Benton, 1966), but has since been observed in recordings made by Radio New Zealand in the 1940s (Hay, et al., 2008: 28). Nevertheless, this form of intonation appears to have spread relatively recently, particularly among younger speakers, Māori and women (Warren & Britain, 2000).

### 5.3 Discourse features

The HRT is a clear discourse feature of NZE, particularly among younger speakers. So too is the use of the tag *eh*. This is an invariant tag, having the same form regardless of the verb it follows, unlike the standard tags in English that change their form as in *they are leaving now, aren’t they* or *he is funny, isn’t he*. It is more like the *innit* form found increasingly in Britain. Like the HRT, *eh* is used more widely by Māori (Meyerhoff, 1994). Its uptake by Māori may have been influenced by the similar *nē* particle in the Māori language (Bell, 2000; see also Stubbe & Holmes, 1999). Starks et al. (2008) report an investigation of *eh* in the English of the Niuean community.

## 6. Variation in NZE

### 6.1 Māori vs Pākehā English

It has long been recognised that people of Māori origin have a number of distinct characteristics in their English. Some of these may have originated as part of the contact situation between Māori and Pākehā (European New Zealanders), but they are now found in the English of non-Māori speaking individuals and of others

who identify with Māori, indicating that these language forms are now part of such speakers' cultural identity rather than a direct result of cross-linguistic influence. Many of these characteristics are also found in Pasifika English (Gibson, 2005), i.e. the English of communities that have their origin in the islands of the South Pacific (mainly Samoa, Cook Islands, Tonga and Niue).

One unsurprising way in which Māori English differs from Pākehā English is the higher incidence of words of Māori origin. One study showed four times as many such words in Māori English (Kennedy, 2001). In addition, Bell (2000: 227) gives a summary list of thirteen features which he suggests distinguish Māori and Pākehā English. These include the discourse markers mentioned above - the HRT and the *eh* tag - as well as *y'know*, and the relatively low incidence of standard tag questions. Māori English speakers are also more likely to delete *have*, as in *you got no right being in here* (see also Jacob, 1991), and to use *there's* with a plural complement (*there's people at work who can help me*). Jacob also noted a higher use of double negatives (*he's not never going to do it*) in Māori English (Jacob, 1991).

The remaining seven of Bell's features all concern segmental pronunciation: ING reduction ([n] for /ŋ/), non-aspiration of initial /t/, devoicing of final /z/, affrication or stopping of /θ/ and of /ð/, decentralization of KIT, and fronting of GOOSE. Some of these are likely to be due to transfer from the Māori language (see also Maclagan, King, & Gillon, 2008). In addition, many further pronunciation features are likely to indicate Māori ethnicity. However, and as pointed out by Warren and Bauer (2004), these are features that are found more generally in NZE, but are more consistently or more strongly present in Māori English. These include prosodic aspects of pronunciation as well as segmental. For example, the more syllable-based rhythm is a key marker of Māori English (Holmes & Ainsworth, 1996; Szakay, 2006, 2008). In an acoustic analysis of timing intervals in news broadcasts, Warren (1999) found that New Zealand samples showed more evidence of syllable-based timing than the BBC (i.e. BrE) sample, and that among the NZE samples, those from Māori newsreaders (announcing in English) exhibited the highest level of syllable-based rhythm. See also Stubbe and Holmes (1999) for further discussion of discourse features in Māori English.

## 6.2 Regional variation

As indicated in section 1, it is held that NZE has reached a stage in its development where greater differentiation within the variety should start to emerge. According to folk-linguistic studies (Gordon, 1997; Nielsen & Hay, 2005), many New Zealanders are confident that there are regional differences, although they struggle to reliably identify what they are.

An obvious place to look for regional differentiation is in pronunciation. There is, however, still remarkably little robust regional marking of NZE. One exception to this is the "Southland burr", the semi-rhotic pronunciations of post-vocalic /r/ in the south of the South Island. This regional trait - usually associated with the high proportion of Scots settling there - has been acknowledged for many years. Closer study has shown that it is particularly prevalent in the context of the NURSE vowel (so in words like *word*, *bird*, *nurse*, etc.). Current research suggests that postvocalic /r/ is not restricted to Southland, but is found also in the central North

Island (Marsden, 2012), where there may be a Pasifika influence, but also a possible influence from modern New Zealand hip-hop music, which has been shown to have high levels of non-prevocalic /r/ after the NURSE vowel (Gibson, 2005).

Other Southland features that have been identified and which may also relate to early Scottish settlement are the use of the TRAP vowel in a set of BATH words (*dance, castle*), which is also found in AusE, and in the maintenance of the /ɹ/ ~ /w/ distinction (so *which* and *witch* are not homophonous for such speakers) (Bartlett, 1992).

Two further studies have looked at rather different aspects of regional variation in NZE. Ainsworth (2004) studied intonation patterns in the *Taranaki* region in the west of the North Island. She considered farming communities and urban communities, and found that while speakers from the urban areas had a rather flat intonation pattern similar to that found further south in Wellington, the dairy farming community were more likely to produce a “sing-song” accent that had previously been noted anecdotally in the region.

Bauer and Bauer (2000, 2002) ran a survey across the whole of New Zealand of the vocabulary used by children in the school playground. On the basis of the distribution of some key words (such as *tiggy, tag* or *tig* for the chasing game), they were able to divide the country into three regions (north, central and south). Interestingly these regions seem not to be geographically bound, since the central region includes both the lower part of the North Island and the northern part of the South Island, two areas divided by the Cook Strait. Historically, however, travel between the islands by steamer was easier than travel across each island, until main railway lines and roads were built.

### 6.3 Social variation

Although many New Zealanders like to think themselves as belonging to a classless society, and although early settlement patterns and conditions broke down many of the social barriers that might have existed in the United Kingdom, there is some social stratification in New Zealand. Language studies employing socioeconomic indices have noted for instance that patterns of change can be socially conditioned in New Zealand as much as in other countries. Gordon and MacLagan (2004) provide a description that distinguishes between Cultivated, General & Broad NZE accents, and find that the distinctions are marked most clearly by vowel pronunciations, particularly of the closing diphthongs (FACE, PRICE, GOAT, MOUTH) and the short front vowels (TRAP, DRESS, KIT). As with the comparison of Māori English and Pākehā English, the differences are primarily in the degree to which the typical NZE accent is expressed, with the broader accents showing more extreme and more consistent implementation of the sound patterns that distinguish NZE from BrE. For more detail on social variation in NZE, see the results of the Porirua social dialect survey (Holmes, 1997; Holmes, Bell, & Boyce, 1991).

### 6.4 Age and sex differences

Because NZE has recently undergone quite rapid change as the variety establishes itself as a marker of cultural and national identity, there is a considerable amount of age stratification. Older speakers tend to be more conservative, closer to BrE

(especially Received Pronunciation), while younger speakers are more innovative. Repeatedly, sociolinguistic studies have shown that young women tend to take the lead in initiating and carrying through change in NZE. As an illustration, in a long term study of the NZE NEAR and SQUARE vowels, Gordon and MacLagan (2001) have shown an increase in the merger on NEAR both over time and – in an apparent time study – across generations (MacLagan & Gordon, 1996). The research shows that young women merge the vowels more than young men, as well as non-professionals merging more than professionals.

## 7. Summary

This brief overview of NZE has necessarily been somewhat superficial, and readers are directed to the references below as well as to the GRINZE (Group Research In New Zealand English) website (<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/research/grinze/>) for more detailed information on the issues covered. What is clear is that NZE is a new variety, recently establishing itself as distinct from its ancestors and its neighbours, while historically it owes much to southern British English and to its nearest neighbour AusE. NZE has been influenced, in terms both of its lexicon and its pronunciation, by contact with Māori and with the Pacific. Although remarkably homogeneous, NZE has some well-established ethnic (Māori English) and, to a lesser extent, regional (Southland) differentiation. NZE is beginning to show signs of increasing internal diversification on regional and socio-ethnic bases and is accordingly the focus of much attention, both from writers of letters to newspaper editors complaining about changing standards and from the experts who recognise the fascinating stage in its development that NZE has reached.

## Notes

1. Māori long vowels are marked by a macron over the vowel letter. This is not uniformly included as part of the orthography of loan-words into NZE, which also features double letters (e.g. *Maaori*) or no marking of length (*Maori*).
2. Also used of course as a descriptor for New Zealand entities and products, including *kiwi* fruit. Note that New Zealanders tend not to talk of the fruit simply as *kiwi*, unlike speakers of other English varieties. Eating a *kiwi* is accordingly not acceptable in New Zealand.

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