



Andreea Calude

Senior lecturer in linguistics at the University of Waikato

Seals would leap from rocks and Ari would point and I would look but miss seeing then. Pretend I had. And when you looked out as far as you could, you believed in taniwha and that it might be true your tīpuna followed stars to find their way here.

This week, following on from last week, we continue discussing Māori English. Perhaps the most salient feature of Māori English is the prevalent use of words of Māori origin, words like *taniwha* and *tīpuna* in the excerpt above.

As I wrote in an earlier January post, many speakers of New Zealand English (NZE), including Pākehā English(es), also use such words. So how do we identify Māori English?

This question speaks to a general point about Māori English. The features of this growing variety (and researchers think it is the fastest-growing English variety spoken in New Zealand!) are not generally unique to Māori English, but they are relatively more frequently encountered in it, compared to other English varieties.



I'm talking to youse

Language Matters

So while many in Aotearoa NZ might use words borrowed from Māori (did you notice my own use of borrowings?), speakers of Māori English use comparatively many more such words.

Bro, you probably lost your job. You been in bed two days.

Māori English exhibits a higher use of kinship terms and more explicit ways of directly including the person who is being addressed: words like *bro*, *koro*, *girl*, *you*, *youse* or *youse two* and *(you) fellas*.

Some interpret the forms *youse two/you*s which refer to plural versions of *you* – a distinction which English once had

but subsequently lost – as mirroring the Māori language pronouns *korua* and *koutou*, respectively.

The sentence *You been in bed two days* instantiates another feature: the loss of the auxiliary *have* in past perfect forms (as well as the preposition *for* in this case). Whereas standard English would have: *you have been in bed*, Māori English omits the verb *have*.

Other differences include a comparatively higher use of double negatives (*I don't know nothing about that*), and the increase of “-s” forms in present tense verbs (*We goes down the river most weekends*). There is also the higher use of the marker *eh* and its Māori near-synonym, *nē*.

*“She was singing in te reo Māori eh?”
“Āe, my moko.”*

And there are several general discourse features which are associated with Māori English, such as minimal feedback, differences in narrative style and humour, and differences in how speakers provide direct speech and quotatives (*And he was like ...*).

The features identified suggest that Māori English distinguishes itself from other NZE varieties in being more informal (adopting several non-standard features) and more solidarity-driven (the addressee is overtly referenced and particles like *eh* and *nē* are used to include the listener and check their engagement).

Personally, as a non-native speaker of English, beginning my own journey into the study of Māori English has led me to two unexpected realisations.

First, the very study of something we call Māori English shows us that there is no such thing as a “neutral” English. There are Pākehā Englishes and there is something we think of as standard New Zealand English, and there is Māori English. Every one of these Englishes has a colouring of sorts (white is also a colour!)

Second, you don't have to be bilingual to carve out a different linguistic identity. One single language can bend and twist to allow a different self to emerge; imagine what life might look like if we opened our minds to new varieties of our own language!

(Excerpts from Becky Manawatu's 2019 novel Auē, Mākarō Press, pages 23-24, 103 & 13 respectively.)

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Bolsonaro's murderous folly

Views from around the world. These opinions are not necessarily shared by Stuff newspapers.

To describe the Brazilian senate's 1180-page report on Jair Bolsonaro's handling of the Covid pandemic as damning would be inadequate. It chronicles not just bad leadership but wilful, lethal acts of folly, carried out by a Donald Trump mini-me who sacrificed lives on the altar of his own unfounded presumptions.

It finds he deliberately sent his citizens over the top without defences in the battle against Covid. Other countries scrambled to buy up vaccines when they became available; Mr Bolsonaro delayed for half a year while ruthlessly pursuing a herd immunity strategy. He himself claims not to have yet been vaccinated. When Brazilians

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suffered a record rise in deaths during a 24-hour period last March, their president told them to “stop whining”.

The report's allegation of crimes against humanity would need to be pursued by the international criminal court. The court of public opinion is another matter. The lasting impact of this devastating indictment may be to shred Mr Bolsonaro's credibility, lose him the next election and leave him vulnerable to future prosecution.

That is an outcome devoutly to be wished for. It might also be of some consolation to those millions of grieving relatives, whose bereavement was treated with a cavalier disregard by this unworthy leader of a great nation.