# Some Grammatical Features of New Zealand English[1]

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## 1. Introduction

Both Hickey (2004) and Kortmann et al. (2004) provide summary lists of the kind of syntactic features which distinguish non-standard and regional varieties of English round the world from a neutral standard written international English (assuming that such a variety exists). The functions of such summaries are presumably that

1. they provide lists of places where there is known variation in English and where it may be worth examining any given variety of English for points of interest;
2. they provide sets of potential sources of variants which may be found in non-British varieties of English (what Lass (1987) calls extra-territorial Englishes); in particular Hickey (2004) provides excellent clues as to features which may have arisen from Irish English (as we would expect, given Hickey's interests);

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3. they provide a state-of-the-art commentary on what variants are found in which varieties of English, and thus a picture of how variable English is; they also provide the possibility of tracing changes from one variety to another.

The publication of such checklists gives us an opportunity to re-evaluate the grammar of New Zealand English, and to look for gaps in its description. Some of the points that will be discussed below are apparently unfamiliar to the writers of the summaries, and are not mentioned in recent discussions of New Zealand English grammar such as Hundt et al (2004). In some cases this may be because the relevant construction is rare in New Zealand English, in others it is no doubt due to the restrictions on space for papers such as Hundt et al (2004). If we look at these checklists through New Zealand eyes, one of the striking things is how few of the syntactically variable aspects of English are to be found in New Zealand. Such lists also raise the question of how complete the grammatical description of any but the standard varieties of the major national branches of English has been; such questions are much harder to answer. I shall first look at some of the features which do not arise in New Zealand, and then look at some of the features that do occur in New Zealand. I shall finish by considering the question of what constitutes 'standard' New Zealand English as far as grammar is concerned.

## 2. Things that are not found in New Zealand English

### 2.1 Aspect

Many varieties of English have a wider range of possible aspect-marking than standard English has. Some of these markers have their origins in Irish varieties of English, some have their origins in African-American Vernacular English. The general rule for these seems to be that they do not occur in New

Zealand. We cannot easily explain why some features that are found in other varieties of English do occur here while others do not. To a certain extent it is a matter of settlement patterns, to a certain extent it is a matter of distance from the norm of settlers. In general, we simply have to note that some patterns are found in New Zealand, while others are not. Some examples of those that are not are given in Table 1. The information provided here derives from Hickey (2004) and Kortmann et al (2004), and some of it can also be traced in Trudgill & Chambers (1991).

**Table 1:** Some varieties of aspect marking not found in New Zealand

| Category | Example | Standard equivalent | Probable origin |
|---|---|---|---|
| Habitual *be* | They (do) be working in the morning | They regularly work in the morning | Irish and AAVE |
| Perfect *be* | They are come already | They have come already | Old English |
| Perfect with *after* | They are after crashing the car | They have just crashed the car | Irish |
| Perfect with *done* | They done finished this | They have already finished this | AAVE |
| Durative with *a-* | They are a-singing | They are singing | British origins unclear, but found in Appalachian English |

### 2.2 Agreement

Although there is some equivocation with agreement where the verb *to be* is concerned (see below section 4.5), in general New Zealand English shows standard agreement patterns. Thus the patterns found in Table 2 do not arise in New Zealand, though they are widely found elsewhere (see Hickey 2004, Kortmann et al 2004)

**Table 2:** Non-standard agreement patterns not found in New Zealand

| Feature | Example | Standard equivalent |
|---|---|---|
| Invariant stem-form present tense | He see the car | He sees the car |
| Invariant *s*-form present tense | They sees the car | They see the car |
| Northern subject rule | I sing and dances | I sing and dance |
| Invariant auxiliary *don't* | He don't like me | He doesn't like me |
| Generalisation of *was* | I was there and so was they | I was there and so were they |
| Generalisation of *were* | I were there and so were they | I was there and so were they |

### 2.3 Some other patterns

New Zealanders do not introduce relative clauses with *as* or *at* (**the man as/at I saw*) nor with *what* (**the man what I saw*). They do not use double modals (**You shouldn't could do that*). They do not extend single object pronouns to subject function (**Us don't believe that*). They do not use *he* to refer to things (**He's a good shed*). They do not regularise the reflexive pronouns (**He did it hisself*). They do not use *for to* complements (**She went to Auckland for to see the museum*). All of these are features of some kinds of English round the world. Many other features listed by Hickey (2004) and Kortmann et al (2004) fit into the same category of syntactic constructions which are routinely found elsewhere, mostly in vernacular forms, but also in standard usage, but not in New Zealand.

### 2.4 Why are these lacks important?

The fact that these features are not part of the English spoken in New Zealand shows that English is not just one large undifferentiated mass: there are different varieties of English which use different constructions. Thus it makes sense to talk of a New Zealand variety of English (or possibly, of several New Zealand varieties) which can be differentiated from other varieties by features such as those mentioned above. New Zealand varieties can, of course, also be

differentiated from other varieties in terms of their vocabulary and sound systems, but those features of New Zealand English are not the focus of this paper.

In the main part of this paper, we will go on to look at some of the constructions which are found in New Zealand. None of these is unique to New Zealand, and many of them have their roots in pre-settlement British usage. It is the particular mixture of features which occur in New Zealand that identifies New Zealand English.

## 3. Nouns and Noun Phrases

### 3.1 Second person plural pronouns

Like many other varieties, New Zealand has a non-standard second-person plural form *youse* (alternatively spelled <yous>). There are alternative forms, *youse guys* and *you guys*. It seems likely that the form *youse* is Irish in origin, although it is also found in parts of Scotland and the north of England. *You guys* is almost certainly American in origin (Hickey 2004: 601).

### 3.2 *She* with inanimate reference

*She'll be right* is easily recognised as a central part of New Zealand philosophy, but who is *she*? The answer, of course, is that *she* can refer to things which are not animate. This is standard in many forms of English if the inanimate object is a ship, car or other piece of much-loved machinery, but *She's a good crash-helmet* (overheard in conversation) is not standard international English. This is also a feature of Australian English, with the difference that some varieties of Australian English also allow *he* with a similar usage (Pawley 2004).

### 3.3 *Us* for *me*

Use of singular *us* is very widespread in colloquial forms of English, often in fairly well established expressions like *Give us a go, Give us a chance* where we often find an assimilated form which might be represented as <gissa>. While this is not as pervasive in New Zealand as in some other varieties, it is found occasionally in vernacular speech, as illustrated in (1) from the Wellington Spoken Corpus.

(1) okay then yeah give us a call later on (Wellington Spoken Corpus dpf005 66)

### 3.4 Subject and object pronoun forms

The conservative standard norm is for the series of pronouns including *I, he, she, we, they* to be used in positions where a nominative case is expected, and the series including *me, him, her, us, them* to be used in other positions. This means that we would expect to find in conservative standard varieties, sentences like those in (2).

(2) (a) I saw him.

(b) The one we need is she.

(c) Kim and I went to the cinema. (cf. I went to the cinema)

(d) They talked to Kim and me. (cf. They talked to me)

(e) She saw Kim and me at the cinema. (cf. She saw me at the cinema)

Where (2a) is concerned, there is no variation in New Zealand English, and we can ignore that instance. Where (2b) is concerned there has been variation in English for over 400 years and for most speakers in most parts of the world *her* would be more natural than *she*, although we occasionally find *she* (or the equivalent for other pronouns) in fairly formal or literary written texts. *She* (or

equivalent) may be slightly less likely in New Zealand writing than in American writing, although we would need a proper study to be sure of this, but the general picture here is not very different for British, American and New Zealand varieties.

It is with (2c-e) that there are real problems of description. There are two things going on here, only one of which is strictly grammatical. For most language users it is natural to put themselves first and others in second place; many of us were trained from an early age that, to be polite, we should put others first and ourselves in second place. Thus for most speakers, *They talked to me and Kim* would be more normal than (2d), and similar changes would be made to the other examples. In principle, though, this would not change the form of the pronoun used in these sentences, and so is not relevant for the grammar. For speakers of this variety (and there are still some of us around), the use of *I* for *me* or vice versa is simply wrong, just as using *me* for *I* or *he* for *him* in (2a) would be wrong for all New Zealand speakers.

For less conservative users, though (and this does not necessarily just mean young people, I know retired people who do this), there is a different set of rules. For such speakers *I* and *me* are both permitted in any of (2c-e), and the difference is that *I* (or of course the other equivalent pronouns, though *I* is the most commonly affected) is more formal or posher than *me*. Note also that where (2e) can have *I* instead of *me*, the *I* is never found before the proper noun (or other noun phrase): that is, **He saw I and Kim* is impossible. At this point, the difference between *I* and *me* (or the other equivalent pairs) is no longer a matter of nominative case versus some other case, it is an entirely different kind of distinction. (For further discussion see Parker et al 1988.)

The interesting theoretical question here is whether sentences like those in (3) are part of standard New Zealand English – albeit a modern standard – or not.

(3) (a) Me and Kim went to the cinema.

(b) They talked to Kim and I.

(c) She saw Kim and I at the cinema.

(3a) is probably not part of the standard, but is certainly common in everyday speech in New Zealand, and even gets into press reports (see e.g. *Me and my partner were married last week*, *Dominion Post* 29/1/2007, p. A5). (3b-c), on the other hand may well be part of the standard: they are heard from lawyers, politicians, broadcasters and teachers, they are met in print, and speakers who use the corresponding forms in (2) may be thought to be speaking incorrectly. Note that this is an unusual set of circumstances. Normally it is the old-fashioned form which is assumed to be 'right' and the new form which is assumed to be 'wrong'. This change seems to have gone so far that those values have been switched for a large number of speakers. It is not clear to me how general this state of affairs is. For full discussion of this topic, see Quinn (2005).

### 3.5 Extended use of *-self* forms

Perhaps as a direct result of insecurity in the use of *I* and *me* (and parallel pairs), some people cut the Gordian knot by using *myself* (or equivalent self forms) instead. Thus we get examples like (4) (attested in speech)

(4) The proposer and seconder of the first motion was myself and Miss C–.

However, the *-self* forms in New Zealand English do not, as they can in Irish English, occur in subject position, as in (5).

(5) Himself is gone to Dublin (Hickey 2004: 601).

Again, this usage seems to be part of standard New Zealand usage, and again New Zealand usage is not noticeably different from British usage in this regard (see e.g. Miller 2004: 60 on Scottish English).

### 3.6 Unmarked plurals

Hickey discusses the use of unmarked plural nouns following a numeral, as in *It weighs five pound*, but New Zealand English has created some other classes of unmarked plural. The first of these is the noun *woman*, whose plural is, for many New Zealanders, homophonous with its singular (to the extent that newspapers make orthographic errors, writing *woman* for the plural). This is generally assumed to be a phonological change in origin, with no contrast between /ə/ and /ɪ/ in unstressed syllables, and stressed, centralised /ɪ/ becoming rounded in the presence of the /w/, but whatever its origins, it has a clear morphological outcome. The second type of unmarked plural in New Zealand English arises from the use of Maori words in English. In the Maori language, only a handful of nouns are marked for plurality, plurality being marked on determiners rather than on nouns in the default cases. This has led to the feeling that a form such as *pipis* is 'wrong' because it uses English morphology on a Maori word. Accordingly, a strong prescriptive tradition of deploring the marking of Maori nouns in the plural has arisen. While this prescriptive force is ignored by many, of both Maori and non-Maori ethnicity, it means that Maori nouns are frequently heard with zero plurals in the public domain. With the word *Maori*, used to denote a person, this has led to a frequent compromise solution of saying *Maori people* rather than either *Maori* or *Maoris*, but all three choices can be heard. It is not clear what the long-term effect of this movement might be. The result, where the prescriptivism is heeded, is often an NP with no number marked, e,g. *the pipi*, something which is unusual both in Maori and in English. This might suggest that it is unlikely to persist. However, the Maori language is fighting for

revitalisation and for recognition in New Zealand society, and this is one small matter about which some people clearly feel extremely strongly. The vocal support for this movement from such people might keep it alive. One likely result if the trend continues is the use of zero plurals on a wide range of borrowed nouns, not just those from Maori. Although it seems unlikely that even such an expansion would be sufficient to overcome the established grammatical patterns of English, it might well have an influence in some areas.

### 3.7 Plurals with voiced fricatives

The plural forms of *roof* and *wharf* in New Zealand are typically *rooves* and *wharves*, in contrast to the standard forms in England. The origins of these forms are not clear, given that there is historical variation in both words, and at least *rooves* is widespread in non-standard English varieties (see e.g. the comment in Burchfield 1996 sv *roof*).

### 3.8 Double comparison

Double comparatives like *more easier* have a long history in English. In Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* we hear of *the most unkindest cut of all*. It seems likely that double comparatives in many vernacular varieties of English are remnants from the time when they were part of standard usage. As Hundt et al (2004: 586-7) note, double comparison is also found in vernacular New Zealand English, and can be extremely common with some adjectives in some social groups.

### 3.9 Demonstrative *them*

*Them* as a demonstrative (e.g. *them people, them things*) is widely heard in the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia in colloquial varieties. It is a hard variable to observe, and evidence of its use in New Zealand English is

hard to obtain. Nevertheless, it is heard in New Zealand, though probably not as commonly as elsewhere, and it may be more colloquial in New Zealand than elsewhere.

### 3.10 Uncountable constructions with countables

There are two relevant constructions here. The first is the gradual erosion of *fewer* in favour of *less*. The advertising billboard for a local FM radio station that said *Less Commercials, More Music* (and to which an inspired graffiti artist had added 'Fewer Grammar') makes this point neatly. The second construction is the use of the quantifier *amount of* with countable nouns. The following example is American rather than from New Zealand, but indicates that this trend is not limited to New Zealand.

(5) There would be just the right amount of people on the street. (Eric Van Lustbader, *French Kiss*. London: Grafton, 1989: 111).

Both of these constructions are now common enough in New Zealand English (and indeed in other varieties) to have to be considered as being standard, though they may still attract normative criticism.

### 3.11 Relative pronouns

Relative pronoun choice in New Zealand English is considered in depth by Sigley (1997). It is concluded not to be vastly different from relative pronoun use in British and US varieties of English, except that the prohibition against *which* in restrictive clauses (most familiar to most others from suggestions for modifications in Microsoft Word) – and the consequent higher usage of *that* in such environments – is more strongly adhered to in American English than in other varieties. On the other hand, the use of *that* with human nouns tends to be dispreferred, so that its use in contexts such as *The man that I saw* is less common in formal contexts than in informal ones.

# 4. Verbs and Verb Phrases

## 4.1 Variability in verb forms

There is a great deal of variability in verb forms in English, and it is sometimes difficult to determine what is standard in a given area and what is not. Variability between *proved* and *proven* as the past participle of *prove* in New Zealand has been widely discussed in the literature (e.g. Bauer 1987b, Hundt et al 2004), as has the use of *gotten* as a past participle in New Zealand. The interesting thing about *gotten* is that it is not always appropriate as the past participle of *get*. Trudgill & Hannah (1994: 58) point out that *gotten* cannot be used in United States English in the sense of 'have', and that Americans say *I've got the idea now* not **I've gotten the idea now*. They also imply that the use of *gotten* rather than *got* has been increasing in the United States. Similar restrictions appear to apply to the use of *gotten* in New Zealand, judging from my students' reactions, but no study of the uses of the form has been undertaken. Hickey (2004) mentions the use of *bet* as the past tense of *beat*, a usage that is wide-spread in New Zealand. In informal surveys my students have found *bet* to be more common than *beat* as the past tense of the verb among people of their own age. While Hickey sees this form as being Irish in origin, it is also found in Scotland, and the immediate source of the New Zealand usage is not clear.

Bauer (1987b) also commented on the New Zealand preference for irregular past-tense and past-participle forms of *burn, learn, smell, spell, spill, spoil*, something which reflects British but not American usage. These findings were not entirely confirmed by a corpus study (Bauer 1993; Hundt 1998), though the general trend seems right. It is an area in which change is probably continuing, with the regularly-spelt (or spelled) past tense and past participle forms becoming more frequent. I do not know of any study of the

pronunciation of these forms, but am aware than many New Zealanders say *earned* as /ɜːnt/, which may indicate that spelling and pronunciation do not go entirely hand-in-hand in this area.

There is an apparently recent but pervasive confusion of *bought* and *brought* in speech, which can often be heard in the broadcast media. I have not yet noticed this in print. A full study would be required to determine whether the confusion goes in both directions, or whether the confusion arises only or most frequently in one direction.

Hickey (2004) comments on the *dive/dove* pattern, where a previously weak verb is becoming strong. Surprisingly, this is also found among younger speakers in New Zealand — surprisingly, because North American grammatical features are not the norm in New Zealand (although note comments on *gotten* above).

My students report that among people of their generation almost any of the verbs which in standard English takes the *swim/swam/swum* ablaut pattern can be heard with the *string/strung/strung* ablaut pattern. Thus *I swum three lengths this morning* is an increasingly common pattern. This is clearly not standard in New Zealand, and does not appear in newspapers, for example. The strength of such patterns is commented on from a theoretical perspective in Bybee & Moder (1983).

This may be part of a more general move to reduce verbs with three different forms to just two different forms. *Seen, done* and *come* are regularly reported as past tense forms, not only in New Zealand (Hundt et al 2004) but also in Britain (see e.g. the comment in Brook 1965: 106-7). These cannot be historic presents, because other common verbs like *go, say* do not show parallel structures. The fact that these particular forms receive so much comment suggests that the pattern is not a particularly general one. These forms are not standard, either.

### 4.2 Use of modals

Like Irish, Scottish and American varieties, New Zealand English is said to have no clear distinction between *shall* and *will* (Trudgill & Hannah 1994), although a distinction is drawn in legal language, where *shall* retains the meaning 'must' (see Burchfield 1996 sv *shall*). However, the spoken part of the New Zealand ICE corpus illustrates *shall* being used predominantly according to prescriptive norms, that is mainly in questions with first person subjects, and the question form *will I* being rare. On the other hand both *I will* and *I shall* are common. The example in (7) may indicate the lack of clear distinction between *shall* and *will*, but it is not typical in this regard.

(7) though the next few weekends shall be quite interesting<ICE-NZ:S1A-039#209:1:T>

*Shall* is said to be particularly unlikely to occur in Southland English (Hundt et al 2004).

Hickey (2004) does not comment on the use of *may* rather than standard English English *might* in counterfactual sentences like *The accident may have been prevented if traffic lights had been installed*. This is not peculiar to New Zealand being found at least in Scottish English (McClure 1994: 71). It appears to be a standard form in New Zealand.

Hickey (2004) comments on the Australian (as well as Irish and Scottish) use of *She mustn't be Scottish* rather *than She can't be Scottish*, which he terms epistemic *must* in the negative. This is also found in New Zealand English, as illustrated below.

(8) she mustn't be a good teacher <ICE-NZ:S1A-071#209:1:D>

cos there mustn't be so many people there anymore anyway <ICE-NZ:S1A-094#178:1:A>

Kortmann & Szmreczanyi (2004) do not appear to be aware of the Antipodean use of this construction.

The use of *wouldn't of* and *shouldn't of* is a non-standard feature of New Zealand English (and many other kinds of English) which draws frequent criticism. This construction goes back over two centuries already (Tietken-Boon van Ostade 2006: 258 reports on this usage from Sheridan), and in origin it is simply a respelling of *wouldn't 've* and *shouldn't 've*, but now the /əv/ is frequently pronounced as though it were a strong form, *of*. Grammatically speaking, this is a very odd construction, one which it is difficult to parse. We must almost assume that *wouldn't-of* and *shouldn't-of* are being interpreted as new modal verbs, each with its own meaning.

The use of *would have* or *had have* in past counterfactuals (e.g. *I wish you wouldn't/hadn't have told me that* [attested]) is another feature that is found elsewhere in the world. It is sometimes hidden by the pronunciation of the *have* being reduced (or replaced by *of*, as above) or by the *would/had* being reduced to *'d*. This feature is widespread in speech in New Zealand, and passes unremarked, though it tends not to occur in writing. It is accordingly less non-standard than it is in the US or in Britain. In the *OED*, for instance, this is discussed in §26 of the entry for *have* simply as 'redundant' *have*, and is considered old or dialectal, though Burchfield (1996 sv *had*) suggests it is making a comeback in Britain.

It is striking in New Zealand English that *ought* is very rare in the negative. The opposite of *The government ought to act* is probably *The government shouldn't act*. Hundt (1998) says that just 5% of the uses of *ought* in journalistic writing in New Zealand are negative, approximately half the level of negative *ought* in equivalent British English. In the spoken part of the New Zealand ICE corpus, the percentage is even lower than that.

Hickey (2004: 605) refers to constructions such as *The car needs washed* which is regularly found in Scotland, sometimes with the verb *wants* rather than *needs*. The same construction is found in the midland region in the USA. *The car needs washing* is a standard English form, not special to Tyneside and Belfast as Hickey appears to believe. Both constructions are found in New Zealand, but *The car needs washed* is restricted to the Southland area where there is a strong Scottish influence (Bartlett 1992). It is not clear to me whether *The car needs washed* is, as Hickey asserts, an abbreviated form of *The car needs to be washed*, or whether it is an alternative construction to *The car needs washing*. As my Scottish friends have pointed out to me, *I want this homework finished* makes better sense than *I want this homework finishing*.

### 4.3 Negation

The knotty puzzle of how to negate *have, used to, need* and *dare* has been widely discussed in the literature (Bauer 1989a, b; Hundt 1998; Hundt et al 2004). There is variation in this in New Zealand, as there is in British and American varieties of English. *He hasn't a clue, He hasn't got a clue* and *He doesn't have a clue* are all possible patterns.

More generally, alongside the standard English English pattern of reduction of *not* to *n't*, there is a Scottish and Northern English pattern where *not* is kept in the full form and, where possible, the auxiliary is reduced. So alongside English *Didn't you find her?* and *She isn't coming today* we find Scottish *Did you not find her?* and *She's not coming today*. Although the Scottish pattern is not as common as the English one in New Zealand, we do find both, as illustrated in (9).

(9) did you not know about that (Wellington Spoken Corpus dpf027 61)

but he's not commenting on his chances of getting the job <ICE-NZ:S2B-012#34:1:L>

why are they not there in history of new zealand <ICE-NZ:S2A-023#64:1:C>

Hickey (2004) discusses this under the title of 'future negation', with reference to structures such *as She'll not go home* as opposed to the more standard form, *She won't go home*. However, as is apparent, the phenomenon is wider than Hickey implies here.

Hundt et al (2004) give examples of *ain't* in New Zealand usage, commenting that it is not a standard form. It seems to me that this usage is often intended humorously in New Zealand English, but it is difficult to be sure of this.

Kortmann & Szmreczanyi (2004) comment on the widespread use of *never* as a simple negator (i.e. corresponding to standard *not* rather than to *not ever*) in varieties of English round the world. This is also common in New Zealand, a nice example being provided in (10). What is not clear is how standard this feature is in New Zealand. It passes unremarked in speech, but is rarely found in print.

(10) I've never seen a meeting of this size in Taneatua for some time (National Radio, Morning Report, July 2003)

Double negatives are found in New Zealand, as they are in most non-standard varieties of English. They are also non-standard in New Zealand, following the prescriptive norm. They are probably less common in New Zealand than in some other varieties.

### 4.4 Use of the perfect

There is an unexpected use of the perfect alongside definite time adverbials which appears to be largely restricted to the broadcast media. Bauer (1989a) gives examples such as that in (11). There is no sign that there is any development in this situation, although some people apparently feel that the

use of the perfect in such places is simply more formal and weighty, which explains this usage in police reports (Cox 2005).

(11) Sanctions have been imposed by the UN thirteen years ago (Radio New Zealand news, Dec 1979)

Such usage is apparently also found in Britain (Hundt et al 2004).

Change in the opposite direction appears to be occurring gradually with some adverbs such as *just* and *yet*. We have the possibility of *I just did* alongside the expected British standard *I just have*, or *Did you do it yet?* alongside the expected British form *Have you done it yet?* Hundt et al (2004) find little evidence of these constructions in New Zealand English or anywhere else, but they are heard from young speakers, and do not appear to be considered non-standard.

### 4.5 Agreement

There are two places where there is variable agreement in New Zealand English, and both of these reflect variation found elsewhere in the world. The first is with collective nouns, the second in with the dummy subject *there*.

Collective nouns are nouns like *committee, team, government, army, family* which are grammatically singular but which refer to aggregations of people. In principle these allow the use of singular agreement when the group is viewed as a unit and plural agreement when it is viewed as a number of individuals, so that *The family was huge* is not the same as *The family were huge*. However, there are, or have been, such clear differences between the amount of singular and the amount of plural marking in different varieties that it is clear that this is not solely a matter of perception, but also a matter of grammar. The major New Zealand newspapers tend to prefer singular agreement on the news pages (see (12)), but in speech plural agreement is often found.

(12) the sevens team **has** been a major talking point (*The Dominion Post Sevens Programme*, 2 Feb 2007, p. 11)

Stuart said the team **was** looking at the match as a chance to "right a wrong" (*The Dominion Post Sport*, 2 Feb 2007, p. 15)

i think if the new zealand team **are** going to put any pressure on this australian side they really have to force the pace of the game<ICE-NZ:S2A-013#89:1:K>

This phenomenon has been often discussed in the last few years without any great consensus appearing. We can say that there is variation, and that this variation is not restricted to New Zealand. Although singular concord is probably viewed as more formal, plural concord cannot be said to be non-standard. For further discussion of the New Zealand situation, see Bauer (1988).

The other construction where agreement is variable is also one where the same pattern is repeated in many varieties of English. Although conservative, formal usage would have *there is* before a singular noun phrase and *there are* before a plural noun phrase, there is a also a widespread usage of invariable *there's* before singular or plural, as in (13)

(13) senior sergeant brian goodwin says there's several reasons why they're worried about him <ICE-NZ:S2B-008#60:2:V>

A full vowel version of this, *there is*, is also heard in the broadcast media, possibly as a more formal representation of this rather informal construction.

# 5. Miscellaneous points

## 5.1 Unmarked adverbs

As in many other varieties of English, there are adverbs without the *-ly* which would be necessary in standard English English, particularly in non-standard forms of New Zealand English: *It was real funny*. The number of adverbs with which this is found is strictly limited. Hickey gives the example of *awful* (*He's awful busy these days*), which is not part of New Zealand English.

## 5.2 Sentence-final emphasis

The use of sentence-final *but* as an emphasiser is found in New Zealand.

## 5.3 Sentence-final tags

The use of *eh* (/eˆ/) as a tag is common in New Zealand, and is often said to derive from the use of Maori *ne*, despite the tag of similar form (but different intonation) in Scottish English and Canadian English. This form is discussed by Meyerhoff (1994).

## 5.4 Prepositional usage

Hickey (2004) discusses what he calls 'phrasal verbs'. However, he refers not to phrasal verbs such as *put up, put up with*, etc., but to what he calls 'Prepositional adverbs without verbs', although most of the examples he cites have the verb *to be*. Alongside *I'm off to town*, which Hickey uses as an illustration, New Zealanders frequently use *He's down the pub*, and Scots use *He's out the door*, and standard varieties have *She's out to lunch*, and *I'm down to my last shilling*.

In other prepositional usage, Hickey (2004) refers solely to the omission of prepositions with some temporal expressions, as in *We're going there Tuesday*, something which is only marginally found in New Zealand English.

However, there is a great deal of variation in prepositional usage, although whether this is best analysed as variation at the level of the preposition or variation in the complement structures of the different heads is an open question. Examples include *to study Ø/on a subject; to deal to/with a problem; in/on/at/during the weekend; to appeal Ø/against the verdict; to protest Ø/against a decision; to meet Ø/with a person*; *bored of/with something*; and so on.

## 6. Standard

At various points in this presentation, I have commented in a more or less impressionistic way, on whether, or to what extent, a particular grammatical phenomenon might be considered to be standard within New Zealand. There are no definite guidelines as to when something is or is not standard, so that it is difficult to say a great deal on the subject without laying oneself open to criticism. One of the interesting questions is whether there is a standard spoken language whose standards are different from those of the standard written language (Bex & Watts 1999: 113). My own feeling is that this is a useful distinction to make, and that many of the features that have been discussed here, such as the use of apparently subject pronouns after *and*, the use of *never* as a simple negator, the use of counterfactual *would have* / *had have*, and possibly some of the prepositional usages are standard in the spoken language but not in the written language. Although corpus studies can be used to tell us what kind of texts these uses occur in, we really need some kind of attitudinal study to give us a better impression of the way in which speakers react to these usages (if at all – some of them are never consciously noticed, such as *deal to a problem*).

## 7. Conclusion

This paper started with the publication of two lists, and has ended with yet another list, all of them non-exhaustive. To a very large extent, it seems to me, we are at a taxonomic stage in the discussion of the grammar of varieties of English: we can state whether particular phenomena are attested in some variety, but we cannot explain why in any particularly satisfying way, nor can we explain what the implications of that observation might be. For example, it seems from what has been said here that New Zealand English has borrowed from northern British varieties a usage of the full *not* as opposed to reduced *n't* in sentences like those in (9). At the same time, although *This shirt needs washed* may be found in Southland, it has not spread elsewhere in New Zealand. And Scottish (and Tyneside) double modals such as *I might could do it* have not been observed in native New Zealand speech at all. All of these come from similar sources, but have made differing impacts on the new colonial variety of English. It may be that the use of full *not* seems less 'foreign' to the run of English users than double modals do, and that the acceptance of one but not the other in the new environment is simply a matter of degrees of strangeness. However, if that is the case, we need to ask why some features should seem more foreign than others, and what might make a feature more easily absorbed. Is there some grammatical-typological point here (e.g. all languages with a particular grammatical structure tend to use a particular order of words) or is it simply a matter of the frequency with which the structure is likely to arise in everyday speech? Similarly, even given that the standard is not well defined, is there some underlying logic to why some of these features have become more standard than others?

This paper can be seen as an updated version of Bauer (1987a) and Quinn (2000). It is a summary of some of the main facts that we know about New Zealand English grammar, with an implicit pointer towards the limited

extent of our knowledge. There is clearly much work to be done on the grammar of New Zealand English before we can start answering the difficult questions. This paper points out where some of the gaps are, but also, by talking about what we do know, should challenge researchers to look for other things – things we know nothing about. The lists in Hickey (2004) and Kortmann et al (2004) provide a good starting point for examining the grammar of a variety such as New Zealand English, but as long as we only look there, we will never find what makes New Zealand English truly different. We also need to recognise the lack of exhaustiveness of those lists; they can provide pointers, but cannot tell us everything about how a variety like New Zealand English fits in to the wider range of world Englishes.

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