

INTRODUCTION TO PART ONE:
RESEARCHING LANGUAGE USE AND LANGUAGE USERS

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New Zealand undoubtedly has the broadest and most vibrant sociolinguistics community in the Southern Hemisphere. The September 2004 New Zealand Language and Society Conference at Massey University covered the full range of the subject and, with its 50 papers (many more were turned away), in its scope and quality compared well with such Northern offerings as the Sociolinguistics Symposium. There was a strong regional focus, with local workplaces, immigrants' languages, Māori language development, and New Zealand English vowels getting due attention. A conference such as this runs the danger of excessive eclecticism, and if this is sometimes the case in the far North, it was not perceptible at Palmerston North. Through listening to the papers, and reading the articles presented in this ebook, I got a fantastic insight into New Zealand culture and society.

Part One of the book contains what many would call mainstream sociolinguistics, or better, sociology of language. The first two are linked thematically (Māori identity), but not in terms of their subject matter.

Su Olsson and Marianne Tremain's analysis of a speech by Joris de Bres likening the colonial impact on Māori culture to the Taliban destruction of Buddhist temples shows in a rather elegant way how the sermon-like rhetorical structure aiming at catharsis backfired in the context of inflamed ethnic sensitivities in New Zealand, outrage at the Taliban's action, and a

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desire for newsworthiness on the part of the press. Olsson and Tremaine use detailed textual analysis of content and rhetoric to achieve this.

Arapera Ngaha's article follows in a long tradition of investigating the strength of subjective links between a minority community language and an ethnic identity. What makes her study unusual is that she places *te reo* alongside a range of other cultural dimensions, all of which are overt indicators of Māori identity. It is fascinating to see that the *whakapapa* remains the strongest indicator for all age groups, while *te reo* dwindles among younger people from an already low base. This seems to contrast with Trudgill and Tzavaras's (1977) finding that young Arvanitika speakers in Greece considered language as a *stronger* signal of identity than did the older generation, leading to the conclusion that young Arvanites desired assimilation with mainstream Greece. Even if the prospects for *te reo* are not that optimistic, the same cannot be said for Māori identity.

Heather Kavan's study of glossolalia looks carefully at the linguistics and context of the phenomenon, rather than 'altered states' or specifically religious meanings. She has extensive recordings from acts of public worship. She has conducted ethnographic interviews with a large number of practitioners. It is apparent that glossolalia provides people with what they experience as profound, emotional or religious experiences. This study answers many questions outsiders have about talking in tongues. It is an insightful account from someone who is sympathetic to the practice, while maintaining a laudable academic detachment.

Reza Ghafar Samar's study of the phonological and morphological integration of the Arabic word *reja:l* into Persian is, in fact, an ingenious example of applied sociolinguistics - or even applied historical linguistics. Samar finds that this word, meaning 'men' in the original language, is indeed fully integrated and behaves just like a Persian word. He argues that the frequently-heard argument that women cannot take leading roles in Iranian society is false, because the Arabic male-only connotation is no

longer present - and this is confirmed by a number of university professors whom he asked. By writing this article, Samar has beaten the traditionalists at their own game.

Reference

Trudgill, P. and Tzavaras, G. 1977. Why Albanian-Greeks are not Albanians: language shift in Attica and Biotia. In Giles, H. 1977. *Language Ethnicity and Intergroup Relations*. London: Academic Press: 171-84

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