

## School Research Activities in New Zealand English: Years 12 and 13

The research activities described here are intended for you to identify distinctive words and usages from New Zealand English and to find out how widely they are known and identified as New Zealandisms. As background, you should read the article on the **New Zealand Dictionary Centre website** entitled **New Zealand English in the Twenty-first Century**.

Other useful sources include:

- \*Bell, Allan & Koenraad Kuiper (2000) *New Zealand English*. Wellington: VUP
- \*Deveson, Tony & Graeme Kennedy (eds) (2004) *The New Zealand Oxford Dictionary*. Melbourne: OUP
- \*Gordon, E & Deveson, T (1989) *Finding a New Zealand Voice: Attitudes Towards English in New Zealand*. Auckland: New House
- \* Gordon, E & Deveson, T (1998) *New Zealand English and English in New Zealand*. Auckland: New House
- \*Macalister, John 2005 *A Dictionary of Maori Words in New Zealand English* Melbourne: OUP (this text has a particularly useful introduction to the history of te reo Maori in New Zealand English)

*New Zealand English Journal* published by the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies, Victoria University and available on the School's website

*NZWords*, Numbers 1- 10, on the **New Zealand Dictionary Centre** website.

\*Orsman, H O *Dictionary of New Zealand English* Melbourne: OUP (this dictionary is of particular use when you are compiling a list of terms for your survey.)

\*If these are not available in your school, they can be interloaned. In addition to the New Zealand dictionaries, you will also find useful resource material, including New Zealand English terms, in the New Zealand section in the school or local library.

Once you have selected a topic, possibly from those listed below, compile a list of words/items that are relevant to your topic.

Write a hypothesis. e.g. 'People over 50/under the age of 50/urban dwellers /rural dwellers will not know these Kiwi-isms or these new terms.' 'New Zealand English is not

just a use of slang terms'. [You will need to check with your teacher that this will be a useful approach.]

Once you have a list of words that are used in a new sense or are purely NZ words, you could construct a questionnaire of approx 10-15 items (no more) and administer it to different age groups, genders, sports/non-sports teams, school staff etc. Read the notes at the end of this list about the construction of questionnaire surveys and to ensure that your questionnaire will be reliable and valid and will be acceptable to the school and wider population.

Compile and maintain a research log and include it with your report.

### NZ English research topics:

**1 NZ acronyms.** An acronym is a word that is made up of initials, e.g. DoC, representing Department of Conservation or MOTAT, for Museum of Transport and Technology. Collect 10-15 acronyms and write a questionnaire to assess the extent to which they are known/used in various age groups. You could select a wide range of acronyms or select single-domain terms, e.g. government agencies such as WINZ, DoC, MAF etc; health-related terms like WOOPS, CHE etc; educational terms like AUT, ERO, HoD, TAMU, NEGS etc; informal terms like Jafa and RONZ, or rural terms such as MIRINZ, CAPRONZ, and DINZ.

**2 Initialisms and abbreviations.** Compile a list of initialisms, such as BYL, (broken yellow line) CRI, DIY, FOB, and NZQA, and compile a questionnaire to assess their usage, as described for 1 above.

**3 NZ eponyms – Eponyms are terms that are named after people.** e.g. Carlyon (pony) Hamilton (jetboat), Hilgendorf (wheat), Hunter (fence) Mother Cameron's Weed (evening primrose), or Perendale (sheep). Compile a list of these and then write a questionnaire as for 1.

**4** Money is an interesting topic for research, particularly the local words for cash (ding, jink, pinger, shingle etc), and for money associated with ‘hole in the wall machines’. New Zealand notes are often known as Rutherford (\$100), Shepherd’s Pie (\$10), tomato (\$100), and lettuce (\$20). Grass money and wool money were used in rural New Zealand. Ask respondents to explain the origins of these terms and others you have collected.

**5** Plants have distinctive New Zealand names. Most of these have names from te reo Maori. How well are these known? Terms like Mount Egmont buttercup, lancewood, ti (cabbage tree) etc could be included on your list. You could consider including exotic plants, particularly those with several synonyms, such as antirrhinums, also known as snapdragons and rabbits/ bunny’s ears.

**6** NZ place names and toponyms. Toponyms include terms that are either named after a place or an event, or from a place of origin. e.g. Avondale spider, Corriedale (sheep), Hokonui (sheep) Kaimanawa (horse), Mangere sub (clover), and Onehunga weed. Compile a list of these, along with a questionnaire to assess their usage.

**7** Sport is a topic with many terms that have originated in New Zealand, examples being blackwater rafting, cave tubing, coconut tackle, dam-dropping, dibbly-dobblers, zorb, zorbing, and munchie hole. You might like to select a specific sport such as canoeing or tramping, and find New Zealand words associated with the sport for your questionnaire survey. A list of names for national sports teams could be another topic of study.

**8** Politics and government departments. Politics is a domain that has developed new words, or new usages for existing words, e.g. Corngate, flip-flop, Orewa speech, musterer. A useful, readable and amusing resource for you is *Political Animals* by Jane Clifton (Auckland. Penguin: 2005)

**9** Language in the kindergarten, kohanga reo, play centre or junior primary school. Compile a list of terms that are used here – e.g. ‘little play’ in the junior primary school, ‘mat time’ in pre-school centres. Explain their origins, or ask questionnaire subjects to explain them.

**10** Language in the office/bank. Compile a list of terms used in these domains. Find out which are NZisms, and how well they are known outside these domains.

**11** Language in real estate. Compile a list of terms used in this domain, some of which will be NZisms. e.g. ‘doer-upper’ has first recorded use in NZ. Explain their origin and see how well they are known. What does this tell us?

**12** Compile a list of New Zealand English compounds, some of which are hyphenated, e.g. ‘one-roader’; others of which will be closed (a single word) e.g. ‘huntaway’, and others are open, such as ‘hot water cupboard’. Find out which terms have global English alternatives or equivalents, and identify and list these.

**13** Compoundings and blendings of Maori and English. Compile a list of these, such as cyber-hui, kaumatua flat, kaupapa ward, and kokiri centre. Compile a questionnaire to see how much they are used or understood.

**14** Hypocorisms and diminutives. These are shortened terms or pet names, some of which are used more than once in NZ English, e.g. blockie (block shepherd and lifestyle block owner), pressie (Presidents grade rugby player, as well as the globally-used pressie for presents and Presbyterians), subbie (sub-contractor and suburban train) and tinny, (aluminium boat and cannabis in tinfoil). Many of our placenames are known by hypocoristic pet names. e.g. Gissy, Palmy and Kune. Compile a list of these and find out to what extent they are used or understood. See pages 368-369 of the *Dictionary of New Zealand English* (1997) for a list of diminutives.

**15** Make a list of words from te reo Maori that have recently been incorporated into New Zealand English, words for recent events, or concepts, or which are being used in a new way. You might consult your teacher of te reo, or a recent dictionary of Maori terms, or contact the **Maori Language Commission**. Examples of recent specific usages are nohoanga (a temporary campsite) and mataitai (an exclusive fishing zone). Find out how many of these are known, and by whom.

**16** Influence of the Maori Television channel. You could administer a comparative study of viewers and non-viewers to see which words are used routinely by each group. e.g. What word do you use when you apologise? What word do you use for ‘tired?’.

**17** A cloze test is an effective way to test an individual's appreciation of New Zealand words in context. Administer this cloze test (from text set in the 1930s depression times) to a survey group of mixed ages, to see how often New Zealand words and usages are used to fill the gaps:

*He was the third ..... she had been out with that week. Like the others, he was on .... That meant she had to spend the ..... she had saved, for getting into the ..... at the Regent. He went to her ..... place for a .....first. 'Thanks for the .....Mrs Fowler,' he said to her mother. 'It was real .....' He certainly ate as if he*

*..... Her Mum and Dad were riveted with his ..... manners. After dinner, he pulled out a tin and offered around some ..... Mum coughed. Dad asked him how he could afford to smoke. '....., man', he answered, 'a ..... 's gotta have something to ease the pain. No jobs. No likelihood of jobs. Nothing worthwhile to do. And those ..... in Parliament are doin' nothing about it. I made these ..... this morning. Gave me something to do. Can't afford tailor-mades.' He seemed real ....., but he soon calmed down. He was an odd sort of ..... But she thought he was .....all the same. Although sometimes she did wish that he'd ....., and really look for a job.*

**18** Change of form. Compile a list of nouns that are used in verb form or vice versa, e.g. to eyeball, to whitepage, to hikoi. In rural New Zealand English, nouns are commonly used as verbs, e.g. to belly, to bobby, to bulldog, to ergotise, to deerfence, to hobnail, to kai, to kea, to lawyer, to leg, to paddock, to scab, to Sheeplan, to shelterbelt, to sodium, to sparrowhawk, to super, to trough, to tutu.

**19** The transport sector. You might consider a historical study of New Zealand English words from this sector. Interesting examples from usage in the rail domain include bird cages, coffee pots, grass grubs, subbies and tin hares. Compile a historical list of the names of NZ ships, and discuss their origins. New Zealand airlines have an interesting history of names, (including acronyms), icons and names of airplanes. What do they tell us?

**20** New Zealand Placenames. See activities elsewhere on this website to assist you to compile a questionnaire about New Zealand placenames and their origins. You could also compile a questionnaire asking subjects where these terms are most likely to be used in New Zealand: crib, naati (often ngati), kiekie, pakahi, and tomo.

**21** Mining. Make a historical study of mining terms that are specific to New Zealand. Find some names of old mines in your area, some of which will possibly have intriguing names. Trace the origins of these names.

**22** Rural NZ English. There are several aspects of usage in the rural sector that have had a significant influence on NZ English. Sheep husbandry is an appropriate topic – not only because there are numerous NZ generated words to do with sheep, but we have a large number of sheep breeds as well. Questionnaire subjects might be aware of Corriedale and

**Word skill and research activities**

**New Zealand Dictionary Centre**  
<http://www.vuw.ac.nz/lals/research/nzdc>

Coopworth as NZisms, but they may not know Tukidale or Highlander, Polydale or Coopdale, Growbulk or Carpetmaster. Contact the New Zealand Dictionary Centre for suggested sources.

**23** Names of cafés, restaurants, hairdressers, and products with a particular New Zealand application or origin. Refer to *NZWords* 8 for names of New Zealand cafés and restaurants. Explain the origin and distinctiveness of these names. Compile a questionnaire to find out how popular these names are to people of different age groups.

**24** Collect and compile a list of proprietary names for products in common use in New Zealand, such as calfetaria, hydraladder, perino, Swannndri, Vivid, woolover, Zip, etc. Compile a questionnaire survey of their usage. To present your list in a novel way, look at the poem **Datsun Stanza** on the website: [www.funnypoets.com/poems/datsunstanza.html](http://www.funnypoets.com/poems/datsunstanza.html). This poem could be replicated using New Zealand proprietary names or names of New Zealand music groups.

**25** New Zealand mall language and group or gang language. Record terms that are overheard in meeting places such as malls. Research terms such as 'nana'd' to see how widely they are known.

**26** Words that relate to specific periods of NZ history. These are collocated with terms such as colonial and Dominion: colonial ale, colonial brew, colonial tongue, colonial blankets, colonial menu, colonial stove etc etc. Use Orsman's *Dictionary of New Zealand English* for a list of these and survey people to find out what terms such as Dominion sausage and Dominion pudding mean. Explain what a knowledge/lack of knowledge of these terms tells us about words in time contexts and the extent to which words represent history.

**27** Borrowing from Maori and changing or debasement. Look at the use in New Zealand English of hikoi, pakihi, taipo, taonga and utu, along with others that have several new meanings. Compile a questionnaire to assess their use and understanding.

**28** Collect the *Sunday-Star Times* for 4 weeks. Collect terms used in sport, crime, politics, and fashion. Compare these with international senses, meanings or contexts, by using a world wide web search engine.

**29** Meaning change and New Zealand homonyms. Find words that are given a new meaning in New Zealand. Honey-pot is a term, for example, that has a specific New Zealand meaning, as well as its original uses and its use in computer security. There are two entries for double-happy in Orsman's *Dictionary of New Zealand English*: a Chinese cracker and a nuclear explosion. Recently a double-happy has become an object or event that satisfies, e.g. 'The Duke judges the meal a double-happy.' Bungy has several meanings. List all the meanings for each word, and compile a questionnaire to see how many of these meanings are known.

**30** Compile a list of NZ infotechnology terms. Survey classes at different levels in the school to assess understanding of the terms. Use the same questionnaire survey for a group of older people.

**31** NZ Music – Collect a NZ music magazine such as *NZMusician* for a specific month of one year within the 1990s and for the same month a decade later. Research the new words that have come into the domain and which ones are NZisms. Explain trends that have developed over the decade. (*NZMusician* has been published for at least 15 years, and music names such as *Proud Scum*, *Spelling Mistakes*, *Dum Dum Boys*, *Reverend Fluid*, and *Headshrinkers* are included.) Use the *Ha Ha Ha* music website, or others that can be found on the Te Puna Web Directory. Compare the names of music groups and compile a questionnaire to find out what the names suggest.

**32** Read the Listener *Life in NZ* column for 4 – 6 weeks and study and comment on the types of mistakes/ambiguity people make/use. What do the results tell us about the way we use language in New Zealand? Ask your teacher for a copy of the Philip Larkin poem ‘This Be the Verse’ and modify it, rewriting it with the errors you have recorded, using ‘muck’ in place of the vulgarity, and substituting ‘Mum and Dad’ with ‘Enzed words’.

**33** Collect and compare NZ terms with Australian ones, such as berm/nature strip, canary/bluey, celly/mobe (or moby), warrant of fitness/Roadworthy. Interloan Australian and New Zealand Dictionaries of Slang to help you. Compile a questionnaire to find out how well Aussie English is known in your region.

**34** Whaddarya? Compare/contrast terms used in *Foreskin’s Lament* with terms used in *Wednesday to Come* or even *Pygmalion*. Or take 4-6 issues of *Country-wide* and compare/contrast terms used with *Metro* or a similar city periodical. Explain carefully what your results and conclusions are.

**35** Use of the definite article. We use the Basin, the Bay, the Beehive, the Brook, the Cake Tin, the Cally, the Coast, the Mount, the Shore, the Sounds etc. to represent placenames and locations. Compile a list of such terms, explain their origin where necessary, and survey subjects from several age groups to see how well they are known.

**36** Using Orsman’s *Dictionary of New Zealand English*, select and compile a list of collocations for bush (bush nightie etc) and for Maori (Maori holly) etc. Select some words that have examples or citations from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and some from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Survey different age groups to see how well they are known or used. You might consider using a mix of terms with neutral or positive connotations and those with negative connotations.

**37** Peer group usages: conduct a questionnaire at Years 8, 10, and 13 on usage of terms such as:

- what do you call a person who reads a lot and plays no sport
- what do you call a person who plays a lot of sport
- what do you call a person who wears trendy clothes
- what do you call a person who is very goodlooking
- what do you call a person who deals in drugs
- what do you call a person who takes drugs
- what do you call a person with a poor attendance record (is a regular absentee)
- what do you call a person who belongs to no group at school or is usually alone
- what do you call a person who usually looks scruffy
- what do you call a person who works very hard and is successful at school work

Analyse the results. Do they match your hypothesis?

**38** Figurative New Zealand English. Compile a list of New Zealand similes and metaphors, such as 'a fair suck of the kumara', 'a kumara short of a hangi', 'as black as the inside of a cow', and 'as cunning as a Maori dog'. Compile a questionnaire to survey several age groups, to demonstrate understanding and origin of these.

**39** Collect word columns from Frank Haden or another word columnist for 4-6 weeks and make observations about our language use that most concern readers. Are concerns principally to do with NZ words and usages or usage from global English? Are they issues of pronunciation or inappropriate vocabulary? Using these, compile a questionnaire to seek the opinions of people from different age groups. What is your conclusion?

**40** The naming of New Zealand. New Zealand has been known by a surprising number of terms. In *\*NZWords 4* (2000), Tony Deveson traced the numerous terms, both historical and current, that have been used to name our country. Make a list of these and compile a questionnaire to see how well respondents know these terms and their origins. Include a final question: Should New Zealand be renamed **Aotearoa**?

*\*NZWords 4* (2000) is available online on the NZ Dictionary Centre website, under the page *Newsletters*.

#### ENDNOTES:



## Student Questionnaires on NZ English Words and Usages.

1. New protocols relating to privacy, the use of employment time, parental permission and, often, Board of Trustee permission mean that you have to work through a formalised procedure, even for a relatively short, informal questionnaire or interview schedule. Street interviews in particular need to be carried out with care. Respondents should always be asked if they would like a report on the questionnaire/interview findings.
2. You need only 10-15 items or terms for which to seek responses. It is better to have a greater number of respondents to a short questionnaire than a smaller number of respondents for several items. It is best for data analysis if items are very carefully edited, to prevent ambiguity and irrelevance and to guarantee reliability and validity. A pilot survey within a class will help here. In your report, you should be able to describe your sampling strategy e.g. a simple random sample, a stratified random sample (e.g. only males) or a systematic random sample (e.g. every 20<sup>th</sup> person).
3. Think carefully and consult your teacher when you form a hypothesis, and when you relate results and conclusions to it. If a hypothesis is not supported, it is not a problem – something has still been learned and that kind of result points to further research being indicated, which is often a better result than a very conclusive one! You also need to take care with faulty reasoning – e.g. ‘These results showed all 30 respondents in the age group 14-17 indicate that they use ‘random’ for ‘stranger’, therefore New Zealand teenagers don’t use the term stranger. They use random.’
4. Approach the Newspapers in Education section of newspapers in your area or a student newspaper such as *Tearaway* or *Taiohi* to see if they can assist in publishing a questionnaire or a report of it. There are major problems with identity and authenticity when e-mail or internet is used for questionnaires, for results are limited to a sample of those with access to e-mail or the internet or to those who are willing to respond.
5. Internet websites only tell us where words are used, but not where they were first used, or anything about their origin. What is not there may still exist. And what is there is possibly not well-edited and may not be authoritative. If you use the the world-wide-web, add this observation to your report, to show that you understand that there are indeed shortcomings to web-information.
6. The NZ Dictionary Centre staff will respond to your e-mail requests.
7. Lexicographers at the NZ Dictionary Centre are interested to hear the results of your research projects, which can be published in *NZ Words*. Each year, Oxford University Press offers an award for the best Year 13 research project in New Zealand English. Closing date is December 1 each year; Send by e-mail attachment to [dianne.bardsley@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:dianne.bardsley@vuw.ac.nz) or by snail-mail to Dr Dianne Bardsley, New Zealand Dictionary Centre, Victoria University, PO Box 600 Wellington.

