

What is the Southland accent?

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Abstract: Southland English is often said to be the only regional accent in New Zealand. And yet we know almost nothing about this variety or its development.

In the first part of this talk, I will present work which originally began as a dialectology study – a simple attempt to better understand the full trajectory of the history of rhoticity in Southland English. However, in our (failed) attempts to get statistical models to converge, we uncovered something far more interesting and were forced to engage with the realisation that men and women from this community appeared to have very different phonological constraints operating on rhoticity; or very different community ‘grammars’. I will suggest that these results may be a product of a particular set of socio-historical facts and that they raise interesting implications for the demarcation of speech communities more generally.

It would be highly unusual for a regional variety that is salient to linguists and non-linguists alike to be distinguished by just one phonological variable; but again, surprisingly little is known about other ways in which Southland English might differ from General New Zealand English.

In the second part of this talk, I will examine the trajectory of change in the vowels of the NZ English short front vowel shift, trap, dress and kit, comparing apparent time variation in Southland English with well-attested changes in General New Zealand English. The emergent picture will indicate that Southland was either considerably ahead of General New Zealand English in early parts of the vowel shift, or contained raised trap and dress vowels from its very inception. In either case, these patterns complicate the existing idea that the short front vowel shift is a pan-New Zealand process by highlighting regional variation in its development.

Bio: Lynn Clark is Senior Lecturer in Linguistics and Head of Department at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. She gained her PhD from Edinburgh University in 2009 and went on to complete two Post-doctoral Fellowships (at Edinburgh University and Lancaster University) before joining the Linguistics Department at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand in 2012. Her research interests are in sociolinguistics (with a strong focus on sociophonetics) and usage-based Linguistics, often on the relationship between these two areas of research. She has held 3 major externally-funded research grants (Marsden Fund) since joining UC, and has published work in venues such as *Language Variation and Change*, *English Language & Linguistics*, *Journal of Phonetics* and *Laboratory Phonology*.