

STOUT CENTRE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

For some time now we have felt the need of something more extensive than the Newsletters as a reflection of the Stout Centre's image of activities. During the academic year the Centre holds weekly seminars, most of which are eventually published somewhere, but are often not freely available to interested members. This issue is a start in the direction of a journal which will present shortened versions of papers given at seminars, interviews with researchers in residence, and accounts of conferences and other activities in the Centre. The name has thus been changed from Newsletter to the *Stout Centre Review*. The first two issues, October and December 1990 have been guest edited by John M. Thomson.

Jim Collinge
DIRECTOR

EDITORIAL

Since its foundation in 1984 the Stout Research Centre has steadily developed in a variety of directions. Its annual conferences have become an important feature of New Zealand cultural life. A less-known aspect of its activities has been the weekly seminars held in term time at which much original and provocative material has been presented.

We hope to enlarge this present modest publication by stages until it becomes a fully fledged journal in its own right. It supersedes the Newsletters 1-21, the last of which appeared in June 1990.

J.M. Thomson

Writing a grammar of Maori: some linguistic issues

WINIFRED BAUER
John David Stout Fellow for 1990

Writing a grammar of Maori appears to be a project that requires justification. In this paper, I endeavour to provide that. I take as my starting point some of the objections which have been voiced by members of the community.

There are many New Zealanders who believe that Maori does not have any grammar. For many such people, 'grammar' means lists of forms of nouns and verbs such as they had to learn for Latin at school. In that sense, it is true that Maori does not have much grammar. However, that is not the way in which linguists today use the term grammar. Today, the term grammar includes not only the study of such paradigms, but also the study of the rules which govern the order of words in sentences, and much else besides. In this sense, *all* languages have grammar: there is no language in which all orders of words are meaningful. Normally, the fewer the paradigms of the Latin type a language has, the greater the number of rules controlling word order. There is thus a great deal of Maori grammar to be studied.

Many people seem convinced that grammars are of no use. It is commonly argued that the best language learners are children acquiring their mother tongue naturally, and that they do not need grammar books. It is true that children learn best, but not true that they learn most efficiently. Pre-schoolers spend about 128,000 hours learning their mother tongue before the age of five. In contrast 5 years of French in a New Zealand school adds up to something like 1200 hours.

This argument proves nothing about the worth of grammar books. Adults can learn much more efficiently than children by using all the resources available to them, and a grammar is one resource which can increase learning efficiency for adults. If restoration of the Maori language is to be achieved, there will have to be much successful language learning by both Maori and non-Maori in this decade. A grammar is one aid to such success.

Beyond the New Zealand scene, a grammar of Maori can also make a contribution to our understanding of language change. The languages of Polynesia, being closely related and yet grammatically diverse, provide an excellent field for the study of language change, and descriptions of the current structure of any Polynesian language thus provide important data. Even more globally, the study of linguistic universals - of the properties shared by all human languages - can only proceed if careful descriptions are available of a very wide range of languages. No language can be deemed insignificant: it may be the only surviving language to exhibit a particular linguistic property. We cannot know this before the grammar of that language is fully described.

Others object that we already have a number of grammars of Maori. That statement needs modification. We already have a number of small grammars of Maori. There are many matters which they touch on only briefly, and others about which they say nothing. I do not wish to belittle their achievements, but there are many questions to which the learner cannot find answers. Most of these grammars have had the beginner in mind. There is a great need for a grammar which will support the learning efforts of those who wish to progress beyond the initial stages of the process of learning Maori. No grammar is ever complete, but the present grammar aims to be considerably more comprehensive than Maori grammars hitherto.

To many, it seems inappropriate that a non-Maori should attempt to write a grammar of Maori. However, I am not doing it alone. I have a native speaker of Maori as my consultant, Te Kareongawai Evans, of Te Aopouri. She provides much data; the rest comes from texts. My input is the analysis. This makes excellent linguistic sense for several reasons. Linguists themselves do not make good consultants - their judgements about sentences have been shown to differ considerably from those of lay people. A grammarian is trying to describe consciously what every native speaker knows unconsciously: namely the rules of the language in question. A non-native speaker who has tried to learn a language has already partially undertaken this process, and is therefore well-placed to write a grammar. (Most of the best grammars of English have been written by foreigners.) A grammar can be judged to be accurate if sentences constructed by following the rules of the grammar are accepted by native speakers of that language. Thus the native speaker is the source of the rules, and the judge of their accuracy. The linguist merely formulates the rules, or acts as an 'interpreter' interpreting from unconscious knowledge to conscious knowledge.

Many people ask whether it is adequate to use just one informant. Ideally, one would not, but there are also practical considerations to take into account, and the use of a single consultant is not as damaging as might at first be thought. If people in a speech community understand one another, they must share to a very large extent the same knowledge about their language - they must largely use the same rules. So it is not totally unreasonable to take one speaker as typical of a speech community. The question also arises as to whether, with one consultant, the description is valid for only one dialect. The answer is yes, but Maori dialects do not differ dramatically in their grammar. The chief differences are in pronunciation and vocabulary. The bias towards one dialect is also partially counteracted by the fact that I have had past consultants from other dialects, and textual material also from a variety of dialects. Thus the grammar will take account of the major grammatical differences between dialects.

One of the criticisms frequently proffered is that an Indo-European-trained linguist will impose inappropriate categories on the languages they describe. Linguistics earlier this century went to great lengths to avoid this. One of the results of this work was that it became clear that in *most* languages, it is appropriate to speak in terms of categories like noun, verb, subject, etc., although these categories must be defined from within each language by criteria appropriate to that language. One of the great revelations of the linguistic study of languages this century has

been the discovery of very great similarities between apparently diverse languages. No language has rules of the kind: 'Make a question by reversing the word of the statement'. All languages have rules which have to be formulated in terms of word classes and grammatical categories. There are plainly considerable constraints on the sorts of rules which human languages have. But until we have grammars of more of them, we will not know the range of possibilities.

From a Stout Centre seminar on 18 July 1990.

Musical images : A New Zealand historical journey 1840-1990

CHRISTOPHER BLAKE

On 14 September 1990 Christopher Blake, manager-designate of The Concert Programme of Radio New Zealand, composer and General Manager of the Auckland Philharmonia opened the exhibition 'Musical Images : A New Zealand historical journey 1840-1990', in the National Library Gallery in Wellington. In printing his speech for that occasion we also mark the 75th birthday of Douglas Lilburn, who has been a generous friend to the Stout Research Centre since its inception in 1983, with many important donations to the library.

In early January 1989 I was standing on the end of a jetty in a secluded bay in the Marlborough Sounds, a place where I have spent much time over the years. It was early evening. Perfectly calm. The sea water was a rich, velvety emerald and murmuring gently. The air was filled with the sounds of birds calling and singing in a chorus of rich and vibrant profusion. For a sudden and brief instant - perhaps five or ten seconds at most I heard an almost exact replication of the bird song I had recreated in a piece of music about this special place written several years earlier. The effect on me was literally hair-raising! Nowhere else in the world could these sounds be heard. Nowhere else in the world could these sounds evoke the sensations that I experienced. Musically unsophisticated though this anecdote may be, perhaps this was my first understanding of the words 'New Zealand' as a composer and a musician. Perhaps the first time I had a real understanding of their implications and possibilities.

This exhibition is subtitled 'a New Zealand historical journey'. My experiences in the Marlborough Sounds were part of the personal journeys we are all obliged to make. But this is recent history. Consider a part of this journey which took place forty years ago:

'On the way up here in the night train we stopped at National Park, and in the moonlight I could see an uncanny picture of Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu. I was so excited by this that I hung out of the door of the carriage as we came from National Park down to Raurimu at the foot of the Spiral. There was something very strange about that experience of speeding through the night with the vivid night smell of the bush country all around me.

At that moment the world that Mozart lived in seemed about as remote as the moon, and in no way related to my experience. What my feelings were I don't really know until some one can make them articulate in painting or poetry or in music'.

Many of you will recognise these words. They were spoken by Douglas Lilburn in 1946 at the first Cambridge Summer School of Music - itself a seminal undertaking in the development of New Zealand music initiated by the journeys of another intrepid musical traveller - Owen Jensen.

The gentle irony of these words is that at the time they were spoken Douglas Lilburn had in fact already made them articulate in music - an inexplicable distillation of 'New Zealandness' which in the ultimate, means something more to us than others can truly understand.