

Dani Schreier from the University of Zurich, Switzerland: Semester 2 2018

Where have you come from and what do you teach?

I am based at the University of Zurich, Switzerland, where I teach courses on synchronic English linguistics. My area of specialisation is language variation and change, the diffusion of English varieties around the world and the sociolinguistics of English as a world language.



Dani in his office at UC

What interested you in the Erskine Programme/Why did you want to come to UC?

The New Zealand Institute for Language Brain & Behavior (NZILBB) is a globally renowned research institution. What interests me most here is the unparalleled database on New Zealand English, containing the speech of hundreds of New Zealanders born between the late 1850s (literally off the boat) and the early 21st century. This gives linguists a fantastic opportunity to analyse new dialect formation and ongoing language change over a period of more than 150 years and has been instrumental in modelling complex contact-based change mechanisms. There is also a personal dimension: I spent my post-doc here, working on the Origins of New Zealand English project, so have been in contact

with my colleagues here, particularly Prof. Jen Hay, for more than 15 years. I have always wanted to come back and experience first-hand how the project has developed.

What have you been doing at UC?

I completed two major editorial projects: the Cambridge Handbook of World Englishes and a volume on contact patterns involving English and Spanish, two of the major world languages (also with Cambridge University Press). Moreover, I finalized a journal article, which is published next year, and finished draft versions of two more.

Together with my colleague, Dr. Lynn Clark, I taught a course on the history of the English language, which was quite challenging as we decided to teach it backwards, starting in 2030. I also gave a few guest lectures and held a publishing workshop for the benefit of PhD and post-doctoral students, sharing my insights as editor of the journal English World-Wide (Amsterdam: Benjamins).

What have you most enjoyed about your time here at UC/Christchurch?

I really enjoyed the amiable and friendly atmosphere at the Department, which has shown me clearly that first-class research and a spirit of collegiality go hand in hand. I have learnt a lot in terms of corpus compilation and handling and benefited from discussions with my colleagues and also my teaching experiences here. Plus: I had almost forgotten what a stunningly beautiful country New Zealand is - I will keep fond memories of my trips to the West Coast, Kaikoura and the Mount Cook National Park!