

Possessive *have* and (*have*) *got* in New Zealand English

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0 Introduction

This paper looks at the occurrence of possessive *have* and (*have*) *got* (1) in the speech of New Zealanders born between 1857 and 1976.¹

- (1) a. I have uh . two sisters and two brothers (cc96-3a, male, older, professional)
 b. I've got another brother third brother (cc98-14b, male, older, non-professional)
 c. I got three brothers (cc94-12a, female, younger, non-professional)

The analysis presented here grew out of a project Jen Hay and I carried out with an undergraduate sociolinguistics class in 2003, and it forms part of the larger Origins of New Zealand English (ONZE) project at the University of Canterbury.

Paper outline:

- 1 Existing research into possessive *have* and (*have*) *got*
- 2 The ONZE corpus study
 - 2.1 The sample
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 - 2.3 Results

1 Existing research into possessive *have* and (*have*) *got*

Noble (1985) studied the use of *have* and (*have*) *got* in British English (and also AmE) between 1750 and 1935. She found an overall **increase of (*have*) *got* use over time**, but also noted that at all stages, the (*have*) *got* rate is influenced by the nature of the possession relation and thing possessed:

- (*have*) *got* is more popular with '**temporally bounded**' possessions (e.g. *I've got a new job*) than with 'permanent' possessions (e.g. *I have brown eyes*) – the examples provided in Kroch (1989) suggest that the temporal-permanent distinction drawn by Noble may correspond to the alienable-inalienable distinction that has been noted to influence the form of possessives in other languages
- (*have*) *got* is more common with **concrete** (e.g. *She's got a car*) than with abstract possessions (e.g. *She has a careful approach*) (cf. Jespersen's (1932: 47) suggestion that the use of *have got* as a possessive 'probably began with objects denoting things')

¹ I have found no evidence in the recordings that *have*-drop (1c) is syntactic rather than phonological for the speakers I analysed (*has* is never dropped, and even the dropped *have* reappears in negation and questions). I have therefore treated possessive *have got* (1b) and *got* (1c) as one syntactic variant in the analysis.

Tagliamonte (2003) studied the use of *have* and *(have) got* in three varieties of British English (Buckie (Scotland); Wheatley Hill (County Durham, NE England); York). She found a clear age difference in all varieties, with **(have) got** most strongly favoured by **speakers under 35**. The Buckie data also revealed a significant gender difference, with *(have) got* more common in the speech of **males** than females. As in Noble's study, *(have) got* use was influenced by the nature of the thing possessed, in that speakers were more likely to use *(have) got* with **concrete** than with abstract possessions. However, this trend turned out to be significant only in the variety with the highest overall *(have) got* rate (Wheatley Hill).²

So far there has been no detailed study of positive possessive *have* and *(have) got* in New Zealand English (NZE). Bauer (1989) focuses mainly on the alternation between *have*, *have got* and DO + *have* in negatives and questions. He presents results from a small corpus study of written and spoken NZE, which suggest that simple *have* is favoured in positive declarative sentences, but he does not mention exactly which types of *have*-constructions he included in his dataset.

As Trudgill et al. (2002) point out, it is important to exclude any dynamic uses of *have* (2) from an analysis of variation between *have* and *(have) got*, because only stative *have* alternates with *have got*.

- (2) a. I always have coffee with breakfast.
b. She has a shower in the morning.

2 The ONZE corpus study

In this paper, I present findings from a corpus study which focused on the following types of stative 'possessive' *have*:

- (a) **alienable possession / 'ownership'** (cf. Tobin 1993: 307 – *I have a house*)
I have included **illnesses/diseases** here, but we should maybe treat these as a separate category (cf. Tobin 1993: 307 who treats examples like *John has a cold* as 'property assignments'; see also Biber et al. 1999: 429)
- (b) **'whole-part relationship' / inalienable possessions / physical characteristics & character traits** (cf. Tobin 1993: 307 – *The house has a roof*)
- (c) **kinship relationship** (cf. Tobin (1993: 307), Biber et al. (1999: 429) - *John has a brother*)

2.1 The sample

I examined the use of possessive *have* and *(have) got* in recordings from the following corpora, which are held by the Origins of New Zealand English project (ONZE) at the University of Canterbury.

² Tagliamonte (2003) also found that the following linguistic factors had a significant effect on *(have) got*: subject type (pronoun vs. full NP), type of reference (generic vs. non-generic), and polarity.

The Mobile Unit recordings (MU)

Interviews conducted by the New Zealand Broadcasting Service in the 1940s, with speakers born in New Zealand between 1857 and 1904.

The Intermediate Archive (IA)

A collection of interviews with speakers born between 1891 and 1936, who were recorded in the early 1990s. Many of the recordings come from an oral history project conducted by Rosemary Goodyear. Others are interviews with descendants of the Mobile Unit speakers, which were carried out by researchers in the Linguistics Department at the University of Canterbury.

The Canterbury Corpus (CC)

A set of recordings collected by students in an undergraduate class on New Zealand English over the last ten years (under the guidance of Elizabeth Gordon, Margaret Maclagan, and Jen Hay). The speakers in this corpus were born between 1926 and 1978. The Canterbury Corpus can be further divided into two subcorpora:

Older Canterbury Corpus (older CC) speakers were born before 1960.

Younger Canterbury Corpus (younger CC) speakers were born after 1960.

Table 1. The speakers included in the analysis of *have* and (*have*) *got* use in positive present tense utterances with possessive meaning in declarative main clauses and embedded clauses (positive present tense possessives)

Corpus	MU	IA	older CC		younger CC		total
			non-prof	prof	non-prof	prof	
SES							
female	8	8	5	5	7	5	38
male	12	5	5	6	6	4	38
total	20	13	10	11	13	9	76

Table 2. Total number of relevant utterances produced by speakers in the various subgroups (**note**: some speakers contributed only one or two tokens, while others contributed up to fifteen)

Corpus	MU	IA	older CC		younger CC		total
			non-prof	prof	non-prof	prof	
SES							
female	18	34	15	14	37	19	137
male	25	23	22	17	29	20	136
total	43	57	37	31	66	39	273

Table 3. Percentage of speakers in the different corpora who produced at least one instance of *(have) got* in positive present tense possessives vs. percentage of speakers who used only *have* in this context.

	1+ (have) got	only have	total speaker number
MU	55%	45%	20
IA	77%	23%	13
older CC	86%	14%	21
younger CC	100%	0%	22

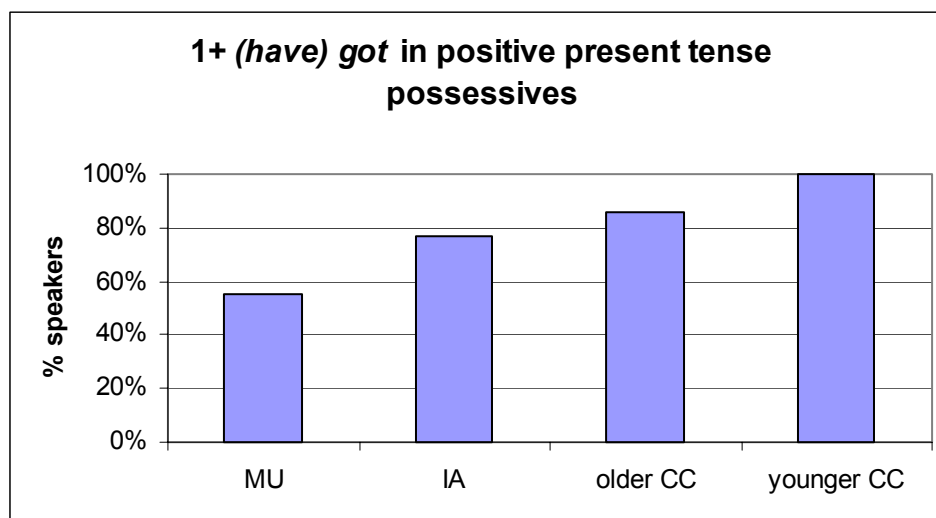


Figure 1. Percentage of speakers in the different corpora who produced at least one instance of *(have) got* in positive present tense possessives.

2.2 Data analysis

Because the use of *have* and *(have) got* is potentially influenced by a number of different social and linguistic factors, I decided to carry out a multivariate analysis of the data, using Goldvarb 2001.

Each utterance in the database was coded for the social background of the speaker (i.e. sex, corpus, socio-economic status), as well as for the **linguistic factors** listed in (3)-(5).

(3) Possession relation

- alienable: *we've got books* (cc94-12b, male, older, non-prof)
- inalienable: *they've often got rattly doorhandles* (cc94-31b, male, older, non-prof)
- kinship: *I got three brothers* (cc94-12a, female, younger, non-prof)

(4) Duration of possession relation

- temporary: *they've got some lace now* (cc94-18, female, older, non-prof)
- permanent: *I've got a B.Sc - in computer science* (cc96-4, male, younger, prof)

(5) Nature of thing possessed

- concrete: *I've got a trinket box that I made* (cc94-18, female, older, non-prof)
- abstract: *he's got big ideas* (cc94-24, female, younger, prof)

2.3 Results

The only significant factor influencing the use of *(have) got* over the database is the corpus a speaker belongs to. MU speakers are considerably less likely to use *(have) got* in positive present tense possessives than speakers from the more recent corpora.

Table 4. Goldvarb factor weights for *(have) got* use in positive present tense possessives ($p = 0.000$)

MU	IA	older CC	younger CC
0.240	0.431	0.623	0.575

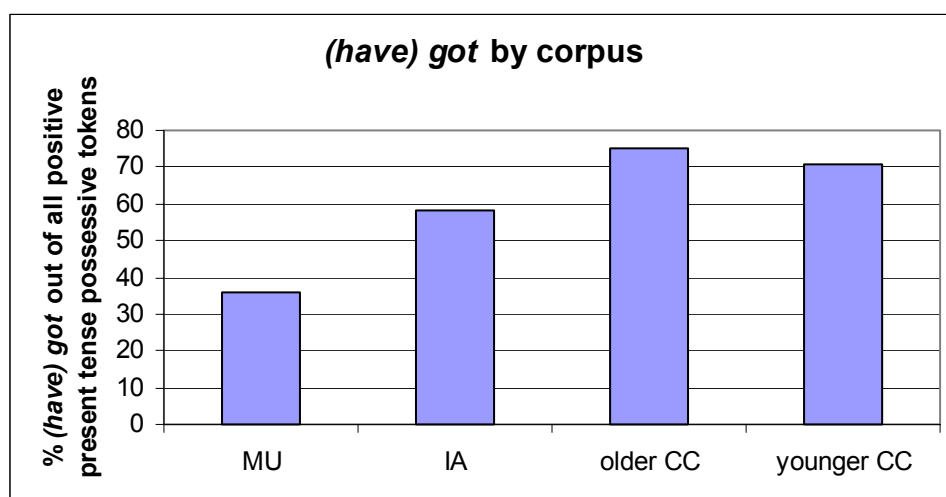


Figure 2. Percentage of *(have) got* tokens in present tense possessive utterances produced by speakers from the different subcorpora.

Since reliable information on socio-economic status is available only for the speakers in the Canterbury Corpus, I carried out a separate analysis only on the Canterbury Corpus data. As can be seen from Figure 3 and Figure 4, there is an interaction between between class and sex, as well as between age and sex.

Non-professional males are considerably more likely to use *(have) got* than their female counterparts, whereas among professionals, the *(have) got* rate is higher for females (Figure 3).

Among older CC speakers, males are considerably more likely to use *(have) got* than their female counterparts, but among the younger CC speakers, females have a higher *(have) got* rate than males (Figure 4).

In order to take these interactions into account in the Goldvarb analysis, two combined factor groups were created, and both were retained as significant (Table 5).

Table 5. Goldvarb factor weights for *(have) got* use among Canterbury Corpus speakers ($p = 0.036$).

female professional	0.484	older female	0.369
male professional	0.308	older male	0.730
female non-professional	0.419	younger female	0.542
male non-professional	0.745	younger male	0.361

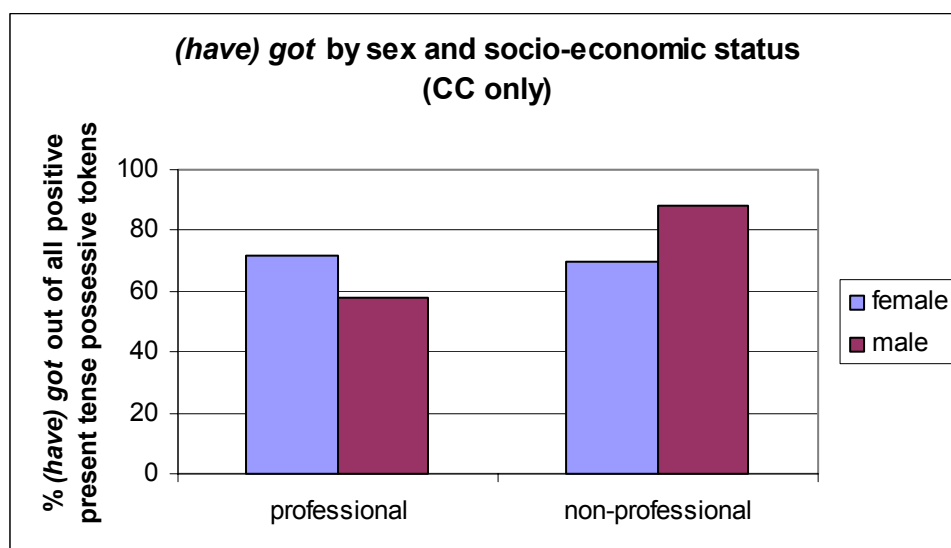


Figure 3. The influence of sex and socio-economic status on the use of *(have) got* in positive present tense possessives.

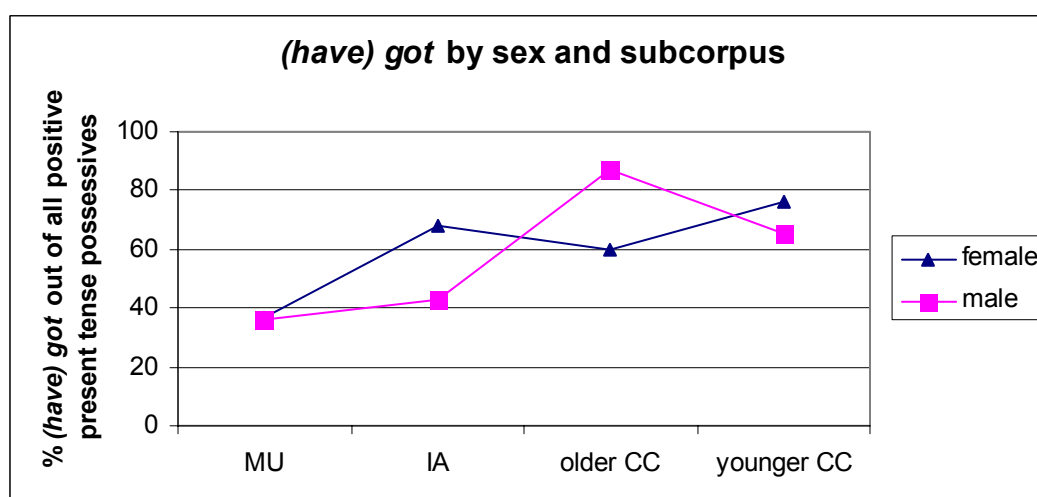


Figure 4. *(have) got* usage by male and female speakers in the four subcorpora.

As can be seen from Figure 4, female speakers seem to lead the way in *(have) got* use in the Intermediate Archive. The difference between male and female IA factor weights almost turned out to be significant in a separate Goldvarb analysis of the Intermediate Archive data (Table 6), and it may well become significant once more IA speakers are added to the database.

Table 6. Goldvarb factor weights for *(have) got* use among Intermediate Archive speakers ($p = 0.074$).

female	male
0.599	0.356

Because of the relatively small number of positive present tense possessive tokens produced by the speakers in the various groups, it is difficult to confirm the statistical significance of the influence of the three linguistic factors considered in the analysis (possession relation, duration of possession relation, and nature of thing possessed).

Figure 5 suggests a marked increase in the use of *(have) got* with inalienable possessions from the Mobile Unit recordings to the Intermediate Archive. Unfortunately, the number of relevant tokens produced by the MU speakers is very small, but I would expect that this trend will be confirmed as more speakers are added to the database.

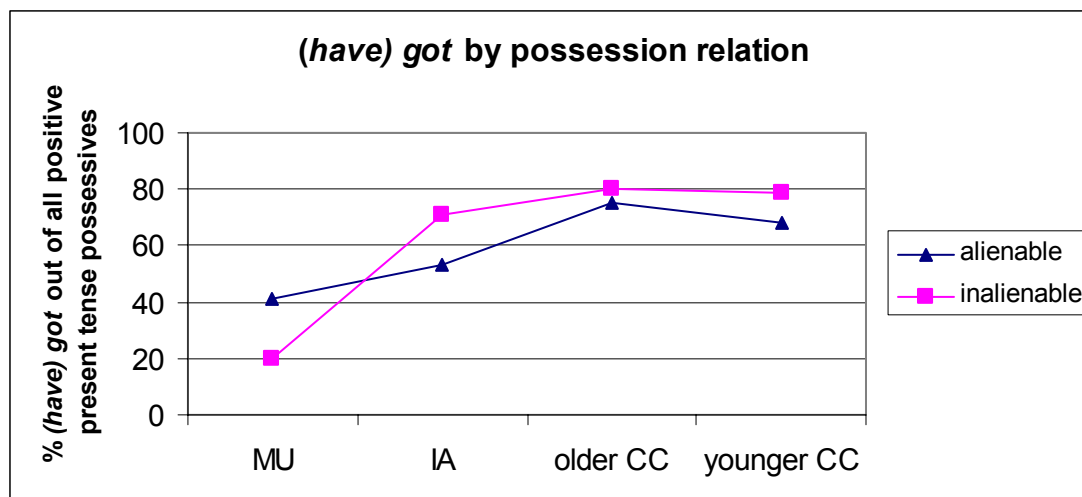


Figure 5. The use of *(have) got* with alienable and inalienable possessions in the different subcorpora.

In the Canterbury Corpus, there seems to be an interaction between class and possession relation. While non-professionals have similar *(have) got* rates for alienable and inalienable possessions (Figure 6), professionals are considerably more likely to use *have got* with inalienable possessions than with alienable ones.

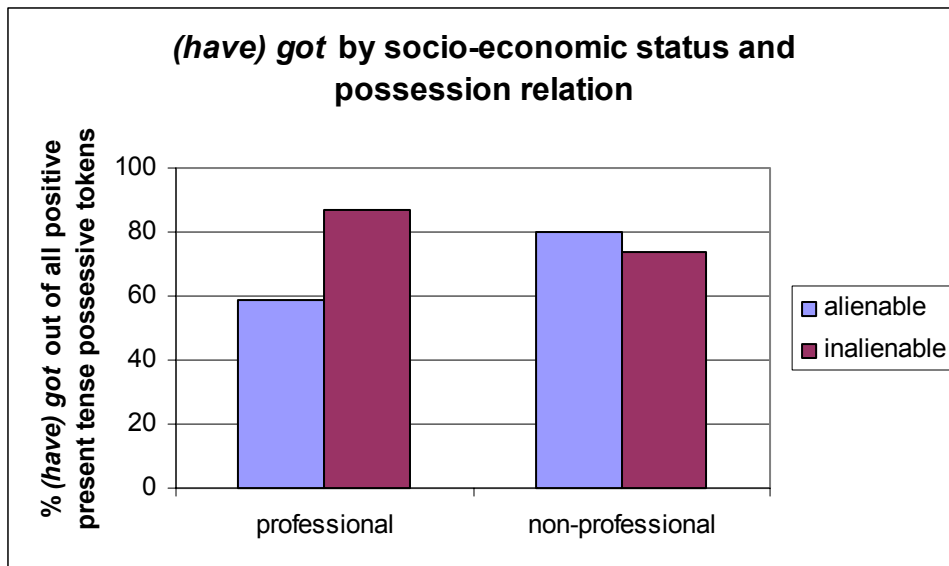


Figure 6. The influence of possession relation on the use of *(have) got* among professional and non-professional speakers in the Canterbury Corpus.

When we fit a Goldvarb analysis over professional CC speakers only, the alienable-inalienable distinction is retained as significant (Table 7). In an analysis of the non-professional dataset, the distinction is not retained.

Table 7. Goldvarb factor weights for *(have) got* use among professional Canterbury Corpus speakers ($p = 0.037$).

alienable	inalienable
0.421	0.767

The duration of the possession relation does not appear to have any effect on the occurrence of *have* and *(have) got* in the ONZE data, but *(have) got* use does seem to be influenced by the nature of the thing possessed. In all four subcorpora, the *(have) got* rate is higher with concrete possessions than with abstract possessions. I expect that this trend will become significant as further utterances are added to the database.

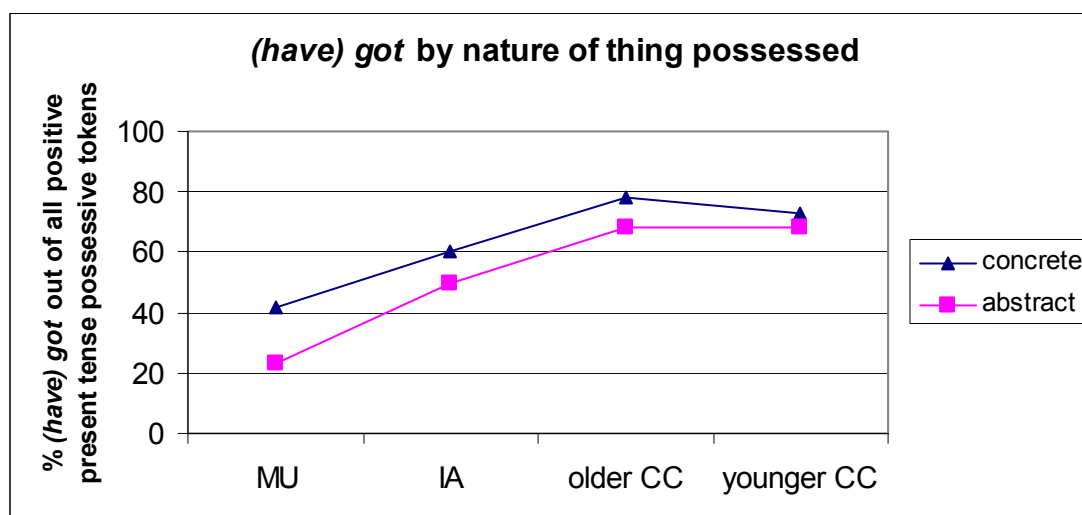


Figure 7. *(have) got* use with concrete and abstract possessions in the different subcorpora.

3 Conclusions

The results of the corpus study presented here show that there has been a clear increase in the use of *(have) got* in New Zealand English, which parallels the developments reported for British English and American English. It looks like female speakers may have led the change towards *(have) got* in the Intermediate period, which is a time when we also seem to find a marked increase in the use of *(have) got* with inalienable possessions. In the Canterbury Corpus, where *(have) got* is firmly established as the favoured variant among all speakers, non-professionals show a strong preference for *(have) got* in all contexts, but professionals are considerably more likely to use *(have) got* with inalienable possessions than with alienable ones. The influence of possession relation on *(have) got* use certainly merits further investigation, especially since it appears to contradict the expectation that *(have) got* should be most strongly favoured with alienable possessions, which have to be got before they can be had.

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