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How do you react to Americanisms in the speech of New Zealanders? Do you hate them, love them, or are you indifferent? Do you try to avoid them in your own speech, or do you try to adopt them, because they make you sound cool? To judge by letters to the press, Americanisms used to be avoided and hated, but today our attitude to them is far more relaxed.

Below I present a list of 10 language features where there are (at least) two possible ways of saying the same thing. I have tried to find a range of types. As you read through them, ask yourself which you prefer, and whether any of them actually annoy you.

1. Assuming that for you *pass* and *gas* do not rhyme, the first syllable of *pasta* rhymes with (a) *pass* or (b) *gas*.
2. The past tense of *dive* is (a) *dove* (*He dove into the pool*) or (b) *dived* (*He dived into the pool*).
3. I say: (a) *The dress fit her perfectly* or (b) *The dress fitted her perfectly*.
4. I would expect to see in the newspaper, when the person concerned has not yet taken responsibility (a) *It is important*



I say, you say

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- that he take responsibility or (b) *It is important that he should take responsibility*.
5. The stress on the word *oregano* falls (a) on the second syllable or (b) on the third syllable.
 6. I say (a) *I took the elevator to the tenth*

- floor* or (b) *I took the lift to the tenth floor*.
7. I would say (a) *I took a few days off over New Year's* or (b) *I took a few days off over the New Year*.
 8. I would say (a) *I'll mow the lawn on the weekend* or (b) *I'll mow the lawn at the weekend* or (c) *I'll mow the lawn in the weekend*.
 9. I would say (a) *I saw someone sitting in the middle of the sidewalk* or (b) *I saw*

someone sitting in the middle of the pavement or (c) *I saw someone sitting in the middle of the footpath*. There is another option here: (d) The three options above don't all mean the same thing.

10. I would expect to read (a) *We appealed the court's decision* or (b) *We appealed against the court's decision*. In all these cases, the (a) option would, at some point during the 20th century, have indicated that the speaker/writer was American (not that all Americans say all of these things, but saying them is – or was – indicative of being American).

The (b) options are all traditionally British, though many Britons no longer use all of them. Until the 1960s these would have been used by New Zealanders, too.

Where there is a (c) option it was, possibly still is, New Zealand usage (sometimes Australian, too). I would be surprised if you didn't use the American preference somewhere.

All the American options listed here are heard in New Zealand from New Zealand speakers these days, but they are not all preferred by the whole community. 9(d) would be true for many Americans, and for many Britons for whom a *footpath* is rural.

The trouble with a list like this is that what is American changes and that many of us do not know what is or is not originally American. Often a more accurate view would just be that we do not like a given usage, and that may have nothing to do with its source.

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THE IRISH TIMES

The populist Covid-19 surge

Views from around the world. These opinions are not necessarily shared by *Stuff* newspapers.

Surging Covid rates in some of Europe's central and eastern states are demonstrating a worrying correlation between vaccine scepticism and populist politics. Historic popular distrust of government, it would appear, is contributing to distrust in official vaccine messaging and to higher rates of infection.

The phenomenon is marked in the German-speaking states of Austria, Germany and Switzerland, currently top of the European league of the unvaccinated. All three are seeing surging Covid rates. More than 55 million Germans are fully vaccinated, but 22 per cent of adults remain unvaccinated. And polls show a strong correlation

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between refusal to vaccinate and support for far-right parties.

The Czech Republic and Slovakia have also reported fresh surges in coronavirus infections and again have had to start limiting non-urgent hospital care to cater for admissions of Covid-19 patients. With 58.7 per cent of the total population vaccinated, the Czech Republic ranks below the EU average of 64.6 per cent. Slovakia's vaccination rate is even lower, at 44.8 per cent.

The outgoing populist Czech government had rejected imposing lockdowns, but the installation of the country's fifth minister of health during the Covid pandemic is likely to bring a more proactive approach.