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It is hard to imagine a Kiwi broadcasting company demanding that presenters use the Queen's English on New Zealand radio or TV stations. But back in the 1950s, at the height of the cultural cringe and dissatisfaction with the *colonial twang*, this was the reality for many aspiring journalists. Fast forward 70-80 years and where are we now?

The voices we hear nowadays on NZ radio and TV seem to be more like our own. And perhaps the recognition that *New Zild* is here to stay is not only sinking in; some might even say that it is embraced with great pride. Our accent was voted the sexiest accent in the world, according to a report in the *Independent* (April 2019). We can argue about the validity of that claim and the exact reasons for it – sex appeal of accents is rarely linked to anything linguistic! Nevertheless, our way of speaking English, or, more accurately, our ways of speaking it are making headlines around the world.



Sweet as is Kiwi as

Language Matters

One interesting development in our journey towards embracing NZ English has been the commercialisation of the phrase *sweet as*. When I left for my first job, in England, 10 years ago, I was proudly sporting a red *Global Culture* T-shirt, with the phrase *sweet as* plastered over its front in big letters and a short description of its meaning in small letters below. (It certainly made for entertaining conversation when people misread it and

kept wondering why it was on the wrong body part, on the front of a T-shirt rather than the back of pants – or should I say, *trousers*.)

While souvenir shops and other commercial ventures, like the reusable bags from Pak'n Save, pounced on this bit of Kiwiana with great enthusiasm, the linguistic community has remained largely silent on the matter. Apart from one article by Laurie and Winifred Bauer, there is hardly any detailed analysis of its use. The main reason for the silence is that, while *sweet as* is salient to speakers

(we are aware of it), it has been (at least, until recently) not especially frequent. But this is changing.

In the past, we might have seen a handful of adjectives, typically *sweet* or *Kiwi*, followed by the comparative *as*, in descriptions of an entity, occurring after the verb: *his car is sweet as*; *this bach is Kiwi as*. Alternatively, we might hear *sweet as* on its own, meaning something like *OK*. What we are now beginning to see is a widening use of the formula [adjective + *as*] with more adjectives (*happy, funny, flash, ugly, dumb, mean, whakamā*), and not just with gradable adjectives (which can be intensified) – we also have *pregnant as* (just how pregnant can one be?). It also appears in other positions in the sentence: *his big as car could hardly fit*.

What is more, although *sweet as* used to be confined to speech, except for Pak'n Save reusable bags and Global Culture T-shirts, [adjective + *as*] may also be making its way into written NZ English: “*What were you thinking? Running around in the rain with it. It's pretty scratched, and dented as. You're a neglectful musician.*” (Becky Manawatu, *Auē*, 2019, Mākarō Press, pages 103-104). While still relating speech, the example is found in print and my hunch is that such uses will continue to spread to other genres too, including (actual) writing.

This feature of NZ English grammar certainly seems to be growing in popularity, confirming that we are becoming more comfortable in our own, *sweet as* Kiwi English tongue.

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Los Angeles Times

Time to trash your mask? Not so fast

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

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Thursday announced that people who are fully vaccinated against Covid-19 may participate in activities indoors without wearing face masks or observing social distancing, even those in crowded settings. It had previously said vaccinated people could lose the mask when outdoors.

But don't toss out your face mask and rush out on the town just yet. It's not quite as simple as the CDC suggests. For one thing, its guidance is filled with exceptions. It doesn't extend to buses, trains or planes. Or hospitals and nursing homes. Or prisons, or homeless shelters, or businesses that require face coverings, or . . . Moreover, this guidance does not supersede state and local orders. But the bigger complication is this: How do you know whether people have been fully vaccinated?

Viewpoint

It's not as if you can tell from looking at them. What you can be sure of is that the odds are good that most of the strangers passing through a public place, masked or not, are not fully vaccinated. Only about one-third of the population has been, which means they received their final shots more than two weeks ago.

This well-intentioned announcement is likely to confuse, and lead to more resistance to mask wearing among unvaccinated people, as well as put pressure on state and local health officials to drop mask mandates earlier than is wise. Science and data back up the CDC's overall point that vaccinated people are in little danger if they hang out with unmasked and unvaccinated people indoors. Nevertheless, there's still a risk of sparking new infections when you let unvaccinated and unmasked people mix.