

Unit 12 - New Zealand



The objectives for this unit are:

- reading: read a text about New Zealand English words and phrases falling out of use.
- New Zealand English: learn some idiomatic expressions.

Unit 12 - New Zealand - Reading: Key phrases

The following words and phrases appear in the video and text in this unit of the online course:

Kiwi (informal) a person from New Zealand; from, of, or relating to New Zealand

When you go to New Zealand, if you want to understand the Kiwis, you need to learn some Kiwi slang.

harrumphing express dissatisfaction or disapproval.

Your grandfather is harrumphing about the younger generation again.

stoically able to suffer pain or trouble without complaining.

She stoically accepted her illness.

rant loud or angry complaint.

I find his rants against the government boring.

pedantic too worried about small details or rules

His insistence on always doing things this way is a bit pedantic.

pounce move suddenly to attack or catch something.

The cat pounced on the mouse as it came out of the hole.

heck (informal exclamation) used to show that you are slightly annoyed or surprised.

Oh, heck! I'm going to be late!

interloper a person who is present in a place where they do not belong.

She felt like an interloper at the family reunion.

pervasive existing in all parts; spreading gradually to all parts of a place or thing.

There's a rather pervasive smell in this hotel.

cringe feel embarrassed or uncomfortable about something.

I cringe when I think about what I said.

make headway make progress, especially if it is slow and difficult.

We are making headway with the negotiations.

baffling confusing; difficult to explain.

Many countries' customs are baffling to foreigners.

Unit 12 - New Zealand - Reading: Kiwi words under attack

Some of the silliest things get on my nerves. Words, for example.

Reading my paper the other day, I came across the word 'lorry'. The story in question – about Greenpeace activists who used a truck to get access to Britain's tallest building, which they then climbed to protest against oil exploration in the Arctic – was sourced from a British newspaper, *The Times*.

In *The Times*, 'lorry' is perfectly acceptable. It's a word peculiar to the version of English spoken in Britain, so would be familiar to that paper's readers. But what on earth was it doing in a New Zealand publication? I vaguely recall occasionally hearing, as a child, people of my parents' generation speaking of lorries, but even then it was rare. Today it seems as archaic as the once-common practice of referring to Britain as 'home'.

It must be decades since I heard the word used in conversation. Many younger New Zealanders probably have no idea that a lorry is what we call a truck. In fact my *Shorter Oxford Dictionary* (which is actually quite long) tells me it originally meant a low, flat wagon with no sides, although the word's origins are obscure. My point is that 'lorry' has no place in a New Zealand newspaper and should automatically be substituted with the local equivalent, which everyone knows and understands.

After harrumphing about this to my wife, who stoically endures my frequent rants about the misuse of the language, I turned the page of my paper and was immediately confronted by another word alien to New Zealand English: 'airplane'.

This report came from *The Washington Post*. 'Airplane' is an American term, and just as out of place in a New Zealand paper as 'lorry'. There are several alternatives: 'aircraft', 'airliner', 'plane', or even 'aeroplane' (which pedantic aviation types seem to prefer), all of which are in common New Zealand usage.

In my days as a news editor I would have pounced on words like 'lorry' and 'airplane' like a fox terrier pounces on a rat. But either the sub-editors who prepared these stories for publication couldn't be bothered spending a few seconds making the necessary changes, or it just didn't seem important enough to bother with.

Perhaps it didn't even occur to them that these are not words that New Zealanders use. Such indifference to language, by journalists of all people, irritates the heck out of me because language is a vital expression of culture.

During the past 150 years, New Zealand has developed its own rich, colourful and often highly inventive vocabulary – a variant of the English language that's uniquely ours. Expressions such as 'away laughing' (finish or do something with no problem), 'mates' rates' (getting a good deal from someone), 'pæck a sæd' (be moody or bad tempered), 'clobbering machine' (the systems in society that create conformity), 'tikl tour' (scenic route), and 'a box of fluffles' (very happy) are instantly understood by us but mystify outsiders. Our language is one of the things that marks us as different, even from our near-neighbours the Australians (with whom we share many slang terms while simultaneously having an idiosyncratic vocabulary of our own).

If we value this distinctiveness, we should be prepared to man the barricades against linguistic intrusions from other variants of English; hence my chagrin at the use of words such as 'lorry' and 'airplane'.

Interlopers like these are appearing more frequently, aided by globalization and technology. We are being exposed more than ever to pervasive forms of English used elsewhere, such as in America.

Unfortunately, journalists are aiding and abetting this process. I cringe when I hear or read Americanisms such as 'race car', 'oftentimes' or 'sailboat' used in local news media. It may be only a matter of time before 'tramp' becomes 'hiker' to conform to American usage and I worry that 'cookies' and the ghastly 'buddles' are making headway too, when 'biscuits' and 'mates' serve perfectly well. Why we seem so eager to adopt such terms, when there are long-established local equivalents, is a bit of a mystery.

The French have been grappling with this problem for centuries. They even have an official institution, the *Académie Française*, whose function is to resist the advance of English. This involves creating French equivalents of invasive English words such as 'email', 'software', 'chat' and 'networking' (note how many are related to the digital revolution). But it seems to be a losing battle, which serves to remind us how contagious language can be.

In the meantime, of course, common-sense English is also under constant assault from silly neologisms. One of the most baffling – heard every time you fly – is the term 'power off', as in 'please power off your electronic devices'. For heaven's sake, what's wrong with 'switch'? Similarly, it seems the word 'pupils' is on the way out; schoolchildren are now routinely referred to as 'students' regardless of age.

Kiwi words under attack: check your understanding

According to the article, are these words considered to be New Zealand English or not?

Not New Zealand English		New Zealand English	
mate	hiker	aircraft	
biscuit	truck	sailboat	
cookie	lorry	airplane	
tramper			

Unit 12 - New Zealand - Colloquial English

These New Zealand English words and phrases are taken from the text you read in the previous section:

truck a large road vehicle for carrying heavy goods and materials; a lorry.
Emergency supplies arrived by truck.

away laughing finish or do something with no problem.
He's done the shopping and is away laughing.

mates' rates getting a good deal from someone.
I got the computer really cheap. Trev sold it to me at mates' rates.

pack a sad be moody or bad tempered.
Don't be late, mate, or he'll pack a sad.

clobbering machine pressure from society to conform with accepted standards.
If you try to be different, the great big clobbering machine will get you.

tiki tour scenic route
We took a wrong turn and had to take a tiki tour back to Wellington.

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a box of fluffies a very happy state; wonderful, great
Everything is a box of fluffies.

tramper a person who goes on long walks; a hiker
The trampers took a tiki tour so they wouldn't get hit by any trucks on the road.

New Zealand English: Practice

Use the correct words to complete the sentences.

- 1 The _____ turned left at the end of the street and parked for the night.
- 2 She's done her homework and is _____.
- 3 I got a good deal on the car. I bought it at _____.
- 4 He's been _____ ever since he broke up with his girlfriend.
- 5 The Kiwi _____ doesn't like anybody to stand out from the crowd.
- 6 We took a _____ around Lake Taupo at the weekend.
- 7 Everything is a _____ at work at the moment.
- 8 We met a lovely pair of British _____ coming down The Remarkables.