

General information



General information The way Australians talk is peppered with many words that are unique to our version of English. The history of Australian English starts with kangaroo (1770) and Captain James Cook's glossary of local words used in negotiations with the Endeavour River tribes. The language was pidgin. Australian English- is a major variety of the English language and is used throughout Australia. Although English has no official status in the Constitution, Australian English is Australia's de facto official language and is the first language of the majority of the population. Australian English started diverging from British English after the founding of the colony of New South Wales in 1788 and was recognised as being different from British English by 1820. It arose from the intermingling of children of early settlers from a great variety of mutually intelligible dialectal regions of the British Isles and quickly developed into a distinct variety of English. The aboriginal vocabulary, which is one of the trademarks of Australian English, included billabong (a waterhole), jumbuck (a sheep), corroboree (an assembly), boomerang (a curved throwing stick), and budgerigar (from budgereee, " good" and gar, " parrot"). The number of Aboriginal words in Australian English is quite small and is confined to the namings of plants (like bindieye and calombo), trees (like boree, banksia, quandong and mallee), birds (like currawong, galah and kookaburra), animals (like wallaby and wombat) and fish (like barramindi). As in North America , when it comes to place-names the Aboriginal influence was much greater: with a vast continent to name, about a third of all Australian place-names are Aboriginal. The Aborigines also adopted words from maritime pidgin English, words like piccaninny and bilong (belong). They used familiar pidgin English

variants like talcum and catchum. The most famous example is gammon, an eighteenth-century Cockney word meaning “ a lie”. Australian Peculiarities In 1945 Sidney J. Baker published the book *The Australian Language* which was a milestone in the emergence of a separate Australian Standard. Since 1945 the Australian vernacular continues to flourish. Australian English incorporates several uniquely Australian terms, such as outback to refer to remote regional areas, walkabout to refer to a long journey of uncertain length and bush to refer to native forested areas, but also to regional areas as well. Fair dinkum can mean “ are you telling me the truth? ”, “ this is the truth! ”, or “ this is ridiculous! ” depending on context - the disputed origin dates back to the gold rush in the 1850s, “ dinkum” being derived from the Chinese word for “ gold” or “ real gold”: fair dinkum is the genuine article. G'day is well known as a stereotypical Australian greeting - it is worth noting that G'day is not synonymous with the expression “ Good Day”, and is never used as an expression for “ farewell”. Many of these terms have been adopted into British English via popular culture and family links. Some elements of Aboriginal languages, as has already been mentioned, have been incorporated into Australian English, mainly as names for the indigenous flora and fauna (e. g. dingo, kangaroo), as well as extensive borrowings for place names. Beyond that, very few terms have been adopted into the wider language. A notable exception is Cooee (a musical call which travels long distances in the bush and is used to say “ is there anyone there? ”). Although often thought of as an Aboriginal word, didgeridoo/didjeridu (a well known wooden musical instrument) is actually an onomatopoeic term coined by an English settler. Australian English has a unique set of diminutives formed by adding -o or -ie (-y) to the ends of (often abbreviated)

words. There does not appear to be any particular pattern to which of these suffixes is used. Examples with the -o ending include abo (aborigine - now considered very offensive), aggro (aggressive), ambo (ambulance office), arvo (afternoon), avo (avocado), bizzo (business), dero (homeless person — from derelict), devo (deviant/pervert), doco (documentary), garbo (garbage collector), gyno (gynaecologist), journo (journalist), kero (kerosene), metho (methylated spirits), milko (milkman), vejjo (vegetarian), etc. Examples of the -ie (-y) ending include aggie (student of agricultural science), Aussie (Australian), barbie (barbeque), beautie (beautiful, stereotypically pronounced and even written bewdy), bikkie (biscuit), bitie (biting insect), blowie (blowfly), bookie (bookmaker), brekkie (breakfast), brickie (bricklayer), Brizzie (Brisbane — state capital of Queensland), Bushie (someone who lives in the bush), chewie (chewing gum), chokkie (chocolate), cozzie (swimming costume — mostly used in New South Wales), Chrissie (Christmas), exy (expensive), greenie (environmentalist), kindie (kindergarten), lippy (lipstick), mozzie (mosquito), oldies (parents), possie (position), postie (postman), prezzie (present), rellie (sometimes relo — relative), sickie (day off sick from work), sunnies (sunglasses), surfy (surfing fanatic), swaggie (swagman), trackies (track suit), truckie (truck driver), vedgie (vegetable) etc. Occasionally, a -za diminutive is used, usually for personal names. Barry becomes Bazza, Karen becomes Kazza and Sharon becomes Shazza. There are also a lot of abbreviations in Australian English without any suffixes. Examples of these are the words beaut (great, beautiful), BYO (Bring Your Own restaurant, party, barbecue etc), deli (delicatessen), hoon (hooligan), nana (banana), roo (kangaroo), uni (university), ute (utility

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truck or vehicle) etc. We cannot but mention unique and, indeed, colourful Australian metaphors and similes, as as bald as a bandicoot, as cunning as a dunny rat, as lonely as a country dunny, flat out like a lizard drinking, grinning like a shot fox, look like a consumptive kangaroo, let alone Australian expressions, as a feed, a frostie and a feature, bring a plate, in full feather, rough end of a pineapple, to plant the foot, to big-note oneself, to give it a burl, not to know Christmas from Bourke Street, not to have a brass razoo, dingo's breakfast, to have kangaroos in the top paddock, to have tickets on oneself etc. General Australian Pronunciation Australians have a distinct accent, which varies between social classes and is sometimes claimed to vary from state to state, although this is disputed. Accents tend to be strongest in the more remote areas. (Note that while there are many similarities between Australian accents and New Zealand ones, there are also a number of differences.) In Australia they commonly distinguish between 3 accents, these are as follows: 1. Cultivated. An accent, used by about 10 per cent of the population, on which Received Pronunciation continues to exert a considerable influence. In some speakers the accent is very close to educated southern British, with just a hint of its Australian origin in certain vowels and in the intonation. In its most RP-like form, speakers of other varieties tend to think of it as affected. 2. Broad. At the opposite extreme, this accent, used by about 30 per cent of the population, is the one most clearly identified with the notion of an Australian twang. It is heard in many countries in the voices of the characters portrayed by such actors as Paul Hogan and Barry Humphries. 3. General. In between there is a mainstream group of accents used by most of the population. The Australian vowel system is quite different from other varieties. Other standard varieties

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have tense vowels, lax vowels, and diphthongs. Australian English on the other hand has turned most of the tense vowels into diphthongs, and turned some of what are diphthongs in Received Pronunciation into long vowels, thus replacing the tense-lax distinction (one of quality) with a long-short distinction (one of quantity). The table below shows these.

Received Pronunciation	General Australian	Example
/i:/	/É™ Éª/	see /sÉ™ Éª/
/É':/	/a:/	heart /ha: t/
/u:/	/É™ ÊŠ/	school /skÉ™ ÊŠ/
/e/	/Ã /	bad /bed/
/Êœ/	/a/	cut /kat/
/eÉª/	/Ã Éª/	say /sÃ Éª/
/aÉª/	/É' Éª/	high /hÉ' Éª/

----- /aɪ/ |

----- /aɪ/ |

----- now /naɪ/ |

----- /eɪ/ |

----- /eɪ/ |

----- no /noʊ/ |

----- /eɪ/ |

----- /i:/ | -----

near /ni:/ | ----- /eɪ/ |

----- /e:/ | -----

hair /he:/ | Australian accent is non-rhotic: star /stɑː/. 1. The long ee sound (as in see) is heard as the diphthong er-ee (the first element of which is the schwa, or neutral sound as it is sometimes called), so that see turns into sereee, or, for foreigners, even sehee (sayee). 2. The long oo sound is heard as o, so that soup turns into soap. 3. The long ah sound (as in heart) tends to be fronter, sounding similar to what begins the diphthong i (as in lie), but longer. 4. The short u sound (as in love) tends to be fronter too, sounding as if it begins the diphthong i (as in lie). 5. The diphthong ay (as in play) tends to be wider, as if its first element is the sound a (as in bad), or sometimes it can sound as the sound i (as in lie), so that may turns into my. 6. The diphthong air (as in care) becomes monophthong eh (as in pen), but long. 7. The first element of the diphthong i (as in lie) is pronounced as a short ah sound (as in heart). 8. The first element of the diphthong ow (as in now) is produced at the front of the mouth and it is raised, so that it sounds as a (as in bad). 9. The diphthong ere (as in here) sounds as pure ee (as in see), so that here turns into he. 10. When there is a choice

between the er (teacher) and the short ee (ladies) in an unstressed syllable, the er sound replaces the short ee in most cases but in the -ed ending where the long ee is often produced. So boxers and boxes sound the same (both with the er sound) whereas studied and studded sound differently (the first word has the long ee and the second one has the er). 11. Vowels next to a nasal consonant tend to retain the nasality more than in RP: such words as down and now are often strongly nasalised in the broad accent, and are the chief reason for the designation of this accent as a twang. The phonetic basis for the three accent types emerges from a consideration of these qualities. The broad accent makes much use of tongue movements which are more open or further forward than the RP norms. The cultivated accent is, literally, further back. Australian English Vowels Until recently, most Australian phoneticians used the symbols originally used by Mitchell (Mitchell, 1946; Mitchell & Delbridge, 1965) to make broad (or phonemic) transcriptions of Australian English vowels. Clark (1988) proposed a new system which more accurately represents the actual pronunciations of an "average" speaker of general Australian English. Clark's vowel symbols are an attempt to relate the actual pronunciation of each vowel by an average speaker of General Australian English (averaged across > 60 speakers) to the closest cardinal vowel. These pronunciations are derived from an acoustic study (Bernard, 1970; Bernard and Mannell, 1986) which will be dealt with in a separate course on Acoustic Phonetics. Cox (1996), Harrington, Cox and Evans (1997) examined further detailed acoustic data of Australian English vowels spoken by both adolescents and adults. The conclusions of those studies resulted in a further revision of Clark's proposals for the transcription of Australian English vowels. This new system is

contrasted with that of Mitchell and Delbridge (used by the Macquarie Dictionary) in the table below. Mitchell (1946) | Harrington, Cox & Evans (1997) | Example word | i | i | heed | hid | head | had | hard | hut | hot | horde | hood | shoot | heard | suppose | hate | hide | howl | hope | hoist | hear | hair | tour |

Consonants — Australian English consonants are similar to those of other non-rhotic varieties of English. A table containing the consonant phonemes is given below. Consonant phonemes of Australian English[8]

-----	Bilabial
-----	Labio- dental
-----	Dental
-----	Alveolar
-----	Post- alveolar
-----	Palatal
-----	Velar
-----	Glottal
-----	Nasal
-----	----- m
-----	-----
-----	-----
-----	----- n
-----	-----
-----	-----

-----	----- Å<
----- Plosive	
----- p	----- b
-----	-----
-----	-----
----- t	----- d
-----	-----
-----	-----
----- k	-----
Éi	-----
----- Affricate	
-----	-----
-----	-----
-----	-----
-----	-----
----- tÊf	-----
dÊ'	-----
-----	-----
-----	-----
----- Fricative	
-----	-----
----- f	----- v
----- î,	----- ã°
----- s	----- z
----- Êf	-----

Ê' | ----- | ----- |

----- | ----- |

----- h | ----- |

----- Approximant |

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----- r |

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Non-rhoticity * Australian English is non-rhotic; in other words, the r sound does not appear at the end of a syllable or immediately before a consonant. A final -er is pronounced as lowered [É] in most speakers, or [É™] for some. So the words butter [bÉ¼É™], here [hÉ²É] and park [paËk] will not contain the /r/ sound.[9] Linking- and intrusive- or epenthetic /r/ *

The /r/ sound can occur when a word that has a final in the spelling comes before another word that starts with a vowel. For example, in car alarm the sound /r/ can occur in car because here it comes before another word beginning with a vowel. The words far, far more and farm do not contain an /r/ but far out will contain the linking /r/ sound because the next word starts with a vowel sound. * An intrusive /r/ may be inserted before a vowel in words that do not have in the spelling. For example, drawing will sound like " draw-ring", saw it will sound like " sore it", the tuner is and the tuna is will both be /tʏnər rɪz/. * For some speakers, a subtle epenthetic /r/ may be added after the /r/ (M.-D. /r/) sound in words like " no" [nɔr], " hello" [hɛlər], " don't" [dɒnt] and " low"[lɔr].[citation needed] Intervocalic alveolar flapping *

Intervocalic /t/ (and for some speakers /d/) undergo voicing and flapping to the alveolar tap [ɾ] after the stressed syllable and before unstressed vowels (as in butter, party) and syllabic /l/, though not before syllabic /n/ (bottle vs button [batn]), as well as at the end of a word or morpheme before any vowel (what else, whatever). For those speakers where /d/ also undergoes the change, there will be homophony, for example, metal and petal will sound like medal and pedal. In formal speech /t/ is retained. When coating becomes coatin', the t remains voiceless, thus [kɛtɪn]. [t] in the cluster [nt] can elide. As a result, in quick speech, words like winner and winter can become homophonous. This is a quality that Australian English shares most notably with North American English. T glottalisation * Some speakers use a glottal stop as an allophone of /t/ in final position, for example trait, habit; or in medial position, such as a /t/ followed by a syllabic /n/ is often replaced by a glottal stop, for

example button or fatten. Alveolar pronunciations nevertheless predominate. Yod-dropping and coalescence * Many speakers have coalesced /tj/ and /dj/ into /tʃ/ and /dʃ/ respectively. Pronunciations such as /tʃeɪn/ and /dʃeɪn/ (exactly like June) for tune and dune respectively being standard. This palatalisation can lead to additional homophony where dew, due and Jew come to be pronounced identically. /t/ and /d/ in the clusters /tr/-/tw/ and /dr/-/dw/ are similarly palatalised. * Word initial /sj/ and /zj/ have merged with /s/ and /z/ respectively. Other cases of /sj/ and /zj/ are often pronounced respectively [ʃ] and [ʒ]. * Similarly /lj/ has merged with /l/ word initially. Remaining cases of /lj/ are often pronounced simply as [j] in colloquial speech, though this is stigmatised particularly in the case of the word Australia,[citation needed] so it is often pronounced as four syllables to avoid the /lj/. * /rj/ has merged with /r/. [citation needed] * /nj/ and other common sequences of consonant plus /j/, are retained. Pronunciation Differences in stress, weak forms and standard pronunciation of isolated words occur between Australian English and other forms of English, which while noticeable do not impair intelligibility. The affixes ary, ery, ory, bury, berry and mony (seen in words such as necessary, mulberry and matrimony) can be pronounced either with a full vowel or a schwa. Although some words like necessary are almost universally pronounced with the full vowel, older generations of Australians are relatively likely to pronounce these affixes with a schwa while younger generations are relatively likely to use a full vowel. Words ending in unstressed -ile derived from Latin adjectives ending in -ilis are pronounced with a full vowel (/é' el/), so that fertile rhymes with fur tile rather than turtle. In addition, miscellaneous pronunciation

differences exist when compared with other varieties of English in relation to seemingly random words. For example, the vowel in yoghurt is pronounced as /ɛː/ ("long 'O'") rather than /ɒ/ ("short o"). Similarly, vitamin is pronounced with /iː/ ("long 'I'") in the first syllable, rather than /ɪ/ ("short 'I'"). Despite this, advertisement is pronounced with /ɛː/. Brooch is pronounced with /ɛː/ as opposed to /ɒ/, and Anthony with /ɪ/ rather than /t/. Bibliography Please note: The references listed below do not represent required reading for this module. This is simply a listing of the references cited in this module. On-campus students may, if they wish, use this list as a guide to further reading. External students should note that they will not be disadvantaged because of their inability to gain access to the following books and articles as they are optional additional reading only.

Bernard, J. R. (1970) "Toward the acoustic specification of Australian English", *Zeitschrift für Phonetik, Sprachwissenschaft und Kommunikationsforschung*, Band 23, Heft 2/3

Bernard, J. R. and Mannell, R. H. (1986) "A study of /h_d/ words in Australian English", *Working Papers of the Speech, Hearing and Language Research Centre, Macquarie University*

Clark, J. E. (1989) "Some proposals for a revised phonetic transcription of Australian English" in Collins, P. & Blair, D. (eds) *Australian English: The Language of a New Society*, Univ. Queensland Press.

Cox, F. M. (1996) *An acoustic study of vowel variation in Australian English*, Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Macquarie University.

Cox, F. M. (2006) "The acoustic characteristics of /hVd/ Vowels in the Speech of some Australian teenagers", *Australian Journal of Linguistics*, 26, 147-179.

Cox, F. M. (2006) "Australian English Pronunciation into the 21st Century" *Prospect: Australian Journal of TESOL*, 21, 3-21.

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study of broad, general and cultivated Australian English vowels", *Australian Journal of Linguistics*, 17, 155-184.