



オーストラリア英語の語彙となまりの感想

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Reflections on the Australian English Dialect's Lexicon and Accent

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Abstract: Australian English is one dialect of the language called “English”. It is quite well known around the world as having unique features but is sometimes mistakenly thought of as being more difficult than other dialects. As with other dialects, there are some aspects of Australian English that may be difficult to understand for a novice English learner, however standard Australian English is as easy to understand as the standard versions of other English dialects. This short essay will introduce some of the regional and broader forms of the Australian English dialect.

Introduction:

- a. Ow! Bugger!
- b. That you Timbo? Ya drongo, thought you'd know by now not to walk there bare-foot.
- a. When're ya gonna do up your lawn? Full of cat heads and bindi eyes!
- b. Yeah yeah, so whadaya up to?
- a. Just been watchin the footy but havin a barbie this arvo. You in?
- b. Sounds good. I'll bring some grub, will sangas do?
- a. Davo and Gazza'll be there so don't just bring grub!
- b. No probs. I'll bring an esky full too. See ya at 5ish?
- a. Good-o. See you then. Back to the footy for me. ¹

One would not be surprised to hear this kind of interaction taking place at a number of homes around Australia on a Saturday afternoon. If you are not used to Australian English, you may not understand what is being said. Casual conversations in Australia are filled with colloquialisms, diminutives and localized lexicon all carried out in a unique accent. People from other countries will often say they don't understand Australian English. However, put an Australian in the company of people they are not familiar with and they use a more standard English dialect. This is similar to many countries that have different localized dialects. The people in those countries know how to revert to the standard dialect of their language. In Japan, people from the Tohoku region are able to use the Tokyo dialect, which is the standard for Japan,

¹ 'Translation' at the end.

though when amongst themselves they use their local dialect - one that others from around Japan may find difficult to understand. What are the features of the Australian English dialect? In such a vast country are there many regional dialects or accents? Is the accent very different from other English dialects around the world? This essay will try to answer some of these questions.

To know why Australian English is different to other forms around the world, you have to look at Australian history. Of course the Aborigine of Australia were first to populate the island continent. They spread across Australia and, over thousands of years, differences developed between the various groups in different areas. There were over 200 separate languages and cultures when Europeans came to settle in Australia.

Europeans knew of the existence of Australia from the early part of the 17th century but the English didn't make a colony until Captain Phillip arrived in Sydney cove in 1788. Traveling on the first fleet were people from different parts of the United Kingdom with varying levels of education. On subsequent arrivals were a larger number of Irish. This variety of localized British dialects mixed with the Irish form of English, resulted in the children of the new colony developing a uniquely "Australian English".

There are a number of features that set Australian English apart from the English spoken in the U.K and U.S. Perhaps the most recognized one is the accent. An accent is the sound pattern that a person uses when speaking a language. Everyone speaks with an accent. It is affected by where the person grows up, whom he or she speaks to during that time, and what other aural input they have had throughout their lives. An accent is an important tool in communication and has strong ties to a person's identity.

The Australian accent differs from that of people in the U.K and U.S because of the way the vowels, and to a lesser extent, consonants, are pronounced. The cardinal vowels of Australian speakers are generally closer (the tongue is placed higher in the mouth) than those of other varieties of English. In the past, there have been some differences in the accent of Australians depending on their socio-economic factors, type of employment and education. The differences were labelled 'broad', 'general' and 'cultivated' Australian and these were on a continuum rather than being distinct. However, in the last 30 years there has been a move toward the 'general' form of Australian as the other two forms have lost a lot of social acceptability. Nowadays, the vast majority of people in Australian media use the general form too.

Unlike the U.K and the U.S dialects, where sometimes within a 100 km radius there are a variety of accents, there is not a great deal of regional difference in the Australian dialect's accent even though it is a very large country. There are some minor differences, with people in the south eastern state of Victoria often pronouncing "ce" very similarly to "sa" in some cases, so that "certain" and "Saturn" would sound almost the same. "Castle" is pronounced more like "kyasal" by Victorians too. Otherwise it is very difficult to

differentiate between people from different parts of Australia by their accents, such that people from Perth sound very similar to people from Sydney even though 5000 kilometers separates them.

There is, however, a great variation in ethnocultural accents. Australia is one of the most multicultural countries on earth where almost one in four of the population was either born in another country, or where one or both parents was born in another country. Once in Australia, immigrants generally want to speak the language of their adopted country. However, they also want to retain some of the culture and identity of their country of origin. Many do so by maintaining an ethnocultural accent. Sometimes this is naturally acquired due to constant exposure to non-standard accents. Other times the accent is acquired through choice and is maintained as part of the individual's identity formation. The most common ethnocultural accents in Australia today are the Greek, Lebanese, Chinese and Vietnamese ones, though in different parts of the country Italian and Southern Slavic and other ones are also common.

Though there are few variations in standard accent across the country, there are quite a few differences in the lexicon depending on which region of Australia you live. In the conversation at the beginning of this paper the words "bindi eye" and "cat head" are used. These are two common types of bur or thorns in Australia. In the eastern states they are referred to as bindi eyes and cat heads. In Western Australia and South Australia they are referred to as "double-gee's" and "jo-jo's" respectively. There are quite a few other regional lexical variations, from the names given to glasses of beer in different states ("pot" in Queensland; "schooner" in NSW; "glass" in Western Australia), to the names for swimwear ("togs" in Queensland; "cossies" in NSW; "sluggos" in Western Australia). The lexical variation doesn't seem to have any pattern and can cause confusion.

The regional variation in lexicon in Australia is one aspect of Australian English, but there are also a number of lexical items and methods of creating diminutives, in addition to numerous colloquialisms, that are unique to the Australian English dialect. Many Australians create diminutives by ending a word with an "ee" sound, usually spelt by adding a "y" or "ie" at the end of the word. "We had a great barbie Saturday arvo after Chrissy. Everyone was there, even the posty dropped by. Had some chockies and bickies for the kids after they'd finished their sangas so they were happy" can be translated to "We had an enjoyable barbecue on the Saturday afternoon after Christmas. Many people came, even the local postman. We gave some chocolates and biscuits to the children after they'd finished their sausages so they were happy." Of course not everyone talks like this all the time. This is a very casual form of speaking that would be used in informal situations but at the same time it is not uncommon to hear these types of abbreviations or diminutives.

There are other areas where Australians employ diminutives. Even in the most common form of greeting in Australia, a shortened form of the words is used. "G'day" is expanded to "Good day". Use of this form of greeting in its expanded form though is almost unheard of in modern English, yet in its abbreviated form it

is used throughout Australia on a daily basis. Elsewhere, many names are changed to create nicknames. Someone with the surname "Davis" or with a first name of "David" will often be called "Davo". "Timothy" might be called "Timbo". The ending sound "ee" (sometimes in the form of a "y") is also very commonly used with people's nicknames. Hence people with the surnames "Lane", "Bell", or "Paul" will often be called "Laney", "Belly", and "Pauly" at some stage in their lives.

Places, actions and jobs are often abbreviated in this manner too. The "servo" is your local service station or gasoline stand, a "garbo" is someone who collects the garbage on weekday mornings, and in winter everyone is affected in some way by the "footy" or football - whether it be Rugby Union, League, Australian rules or soccer. At the footy it is not considered wise to become too "aggro", that is, not become too aggressive. These diminutives occur in various sections of Australian society and have become part of being Australian for many in the country. Others, however, despise these and would prefer them not to be associated with Australia at all.

Though there are many unique aspects to the Australian English dialect, in particular regional parts of it, there are far more similarities to its general form and the U.K and U.S dialects. The vast majority of Australians have no trouble understanding people from those countries and being understood by them. Recently, the power of the media and international interaction is having an effect on the way Australians speak. The strength of American mass media has influenced Australia and young Australians today will use terms and phrases from the U.S ahead of more local ones. "Cool" is far more often heard than "beaut" which was a common way of saying something was good in days gone by. In the past, spelling of words in Australia took the English standard, but recently the American standard has become more popular so that younger Australians will spell the word color whilst older Australians will spell it colour.

The Australian English dialect has a relatively short history. There have been many changes and developments throughout that time and it is still developing though, as with many other dialects, it is becoming more homogenized with other English dialects. It has many unique features but overall its general form is far more similar than different to the other major English dialects. It has been, and will remain, one of the major English dialects for as long as Australia remains a relatively major economy in the world. However, its features, like those of other English dialects, will continue to become more similar to the other varieties of English as globalization develops.

Further reading

Cox, F., & Palethorpe, S. (2007). An illustration of the IPA: Australian English. *Journal of the International Phonetic Association*, 37, 341-350.

Cox, F., & Palethorpe, S. (2001). The changing face of Australian English vowels. In D. B. Blair & P. Collins (Eds.), *Varieties of English Around the World: English in Australia* (pp. 17-44). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

“Translation” of the opening conversation:

- a. Ouch! That hurt.
- b. Is that you Timothy? That was silly of you! I thought you would know by now not to walk there without shoes on.
- a. When are you going to restore your lawn? It has a lot of thistles and thorns in it at the moment!
- b. I see! So what have you been doing recently?
- a. I've been watching the rugby but I'm going to have a BBQ this afternoon. Would you like to come?
- b. That sounds like a good idea. I'll bring some food, do you think sausages will suffice?
- a. David and Gary will be coming too so don't just bring food!
- b. Ah, I understand! I'll bring an ice box full of drinks too. See you at about 5pm then?
- a. That would be good. See you then. I'm going back to watch some more rugby now. Bye!