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BACHELOR THESIS

Standard Australian English Pronunciation

Standardní australská výslovnost

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the bachelor thesis Standard Australian English Pronunciation is completely my own work and that only sources listed on the works cited page were used in the preparation.

Prague, 10 April 2015

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ANNOTATION

The thesis is focused on English spoken in Australia. In the theoretical part the historical background of Australian English is outlined. The main section describes the basic phonetic and phonological features of the Australian variety. Special attention is paid to the realisational differences in pronunciation between Australian and British English standards. In the practical part six recordings of native Australian speakers are analyzed and compared with the characteristics of the Australian accent.

KEYWORDS

Australian English, standard pronunciation, non-rhotic accent, uptalk

ANOTACE

Tato práce se zabývá popisem australského akcentu na pozadí srovnání standardní britské a australské angličtiny. Teoretická část nastiňuje historický vývoj anglického jazyka na australském kontinentu; následuje podrobná charakteristika hlavních rysů australské výslovnosti. Druhá část práce obsahuje praktické ukázky australské angličtiny. V rozboru šesti nahrávek rodilých Australanů se tyto nahrávky porovnávají s typickými znaky australského přízvuku.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

australská angličtina, standardní výslovnost, nerotický akcent, stoupavá intonace
v oznamovacích větách

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of the English language has been growing steadily during the past decades and a good command of this language is required in various professions and at many different occasions. In the Czech Republic, native accents like General British English (GB)¹ or General American English (GenAm) are often chosen to fill the role of reference accents according to which the correct articulation of unfamiliar sounds can be practiced. However, it is desirable for students of the English language to be exposed to a greater variety of both native and non-native Englishes so that they can be better prepared to face the reality outside classroom and understand various accents from all over the world.

Australian English (AusE) represents a continuum which Czech people can hear relatively rarely in their everyday lives. The initial encounter with this accent tends to take place through movies, songs, or while travelling to this remote country. Furthermore, English teachers may let their students listen to or explore this distant variety in the classroom. In my case, it was the travelling which introduced me to this interesting pronunciation of the English language and I decided to find out more about Australia and its inhabitants. While I was reading different sources about this continent I became especially curious about the English variety Australian people use, how it has evolved and what most contributed to the creation of its unique character.

The aim of this thesis is to present the characteristic features of Standard AusE and compare them to the variety from which AusE originated – the standard British accent. The historical background of AusE is delineated in the theoretical part together with the characterization of Standard AusE and other relevant influences on this variety are also scrutinised. Next follows the description of typical phonetic and phonological features of General AusE, which is one of the three varieties constituting Standard AusE and the one spoken by most Australian citizens.

¹ Cruttenden states that General British (GB), formerly known as Received Pronunciation (RP), is a term now largely preferred to be used to describe this particular variety. General British includes “RP and a range of similar accents which are not strongly regional” (Cruttenden, 80). For a further description of GB, see Cruttenden 80-86.

To outline the AusE accent and its position towards GB even further, six recordings of native Australians reading the same text created by the author are provided and carefully analyzed in the practical part of the thesis. The speakers were chosen deliberately according to their age so that it could be revealed whether the age factor exerts any effect on their pronunciation. The results of the perceptual analysis are presented in a series of tables, including comments on selected features. The conclusion summarizes the main findings of the research and shows whether the assumptions about the phonetic and phonological character of AusE occurred in our sample of authentic Australian accent.

THEORETICAL PART

1. Historical background of Australian English

The history of Australia, a country sometimes called the “second most English country in the world” (Jupp, 1), is connected with and heavily influenced by the history of the United Kingdom, therefore inevitably both English language varieties are closely linked together. The first part of this chapter is focused on the historical background of Australia and the major points in its evolution are briefly discussed. The second part of the chapter provides information on how Australian English (AusE) became a standard variety and what factors contributed to its development.

1.1. Colonial beginnings and the British origin

It was Willem Janszoon, a Dutchman captain, who was presumably the first European to discover Australia in 1606. However, the English were the first who, during the time of the great naval voyages and travelling, really possessed the land and put this remote continent to an unconventional use – creating their penal colony. It was James Cook who “claimed the east coast under instruction from King George III of England on 22 August 1770, naming eastern Australia New South Wales” (n. p.).

Not long afterwards, Cook’s achievement was followed by a large amount of other fleets. The United Kingdom suffered from abundance of criminals at that period and the colonization of Australia provided an ingenious solution to this problem. New South Wales was relatively soon established as the first penal colony and remained in use from 1788 to 1823. Consequently, the majority of the first settlers were convicts and their overseers, marines and members of their families and these people brought their variety of English pronunciation with them to that new and unexplored land. Those people were from all over the British Isles but it is supposed that “the majority of English convicts sent to Australia came from the cities, especially from London and Middlesex, and as time went on, from the growing industrial towns of Lancashire” (Shaw qtd. in Yallop, 4). Therefore, people spoke in many accents but we can assume that the Southern British English was the dominant dialect among the colonists, because most of them arrived from that area of the UK. According to Leitner, any other marked accents and dialects melted together into a “novel form” known as AusE (6).

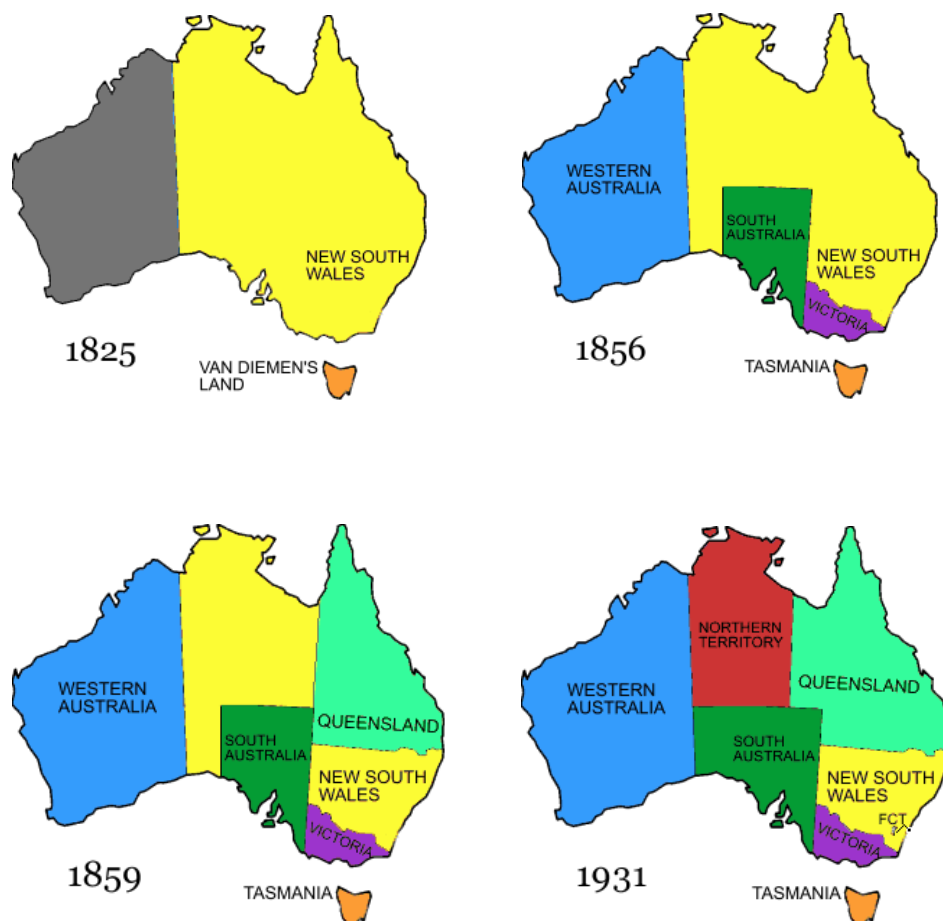
The early colonists brought another distinctive feature of the English language to the newly created colony. The fact that most accents spoken on the British Isles in the 18th century were non-rhotic reflects in the current Australian variety and other Englishes spoken in later colonies, e.g. Singapore and Nigeria. On the other hand, America was conquered two centuries prior to the colonizing of Australia, when the English language was predominantly rhotic and as a result one of the most salient features of American English is rhoticity (Gut, 78). The English varieties employed at two enormous continents, Northern America and Australia, bear witness to this linguistic change that took place in England. The rhoticity represents a distributional difference and is described in more detail in the third chapter.

After the first colony had been set up, the number of people was continuously increasing. Unsurprisingly, at the beginning the colonies contained more men than women and the absence of a larger number of women led to many disagreements in the early settlements, the ratio being “around four men for every woman” (n. p.). Regardless of those difficulties, which caused troubles for several years, expeditions were sent to explore the rest of the continent as well. No road existed through the Blue Mountains until after 1815 but it is suggested that once people were able to travel through inland from Sydney and other places, the travelling within Australia increased immensely and contributed to the homogeneity of the AusE accent.. The European influence and especially the ties to the mother country, the United Kingdom, can still be seen today in the names of certain “landmarks” and sights, the names such as New South Wales, Victoria or Queensland represent perfect examples of this bond (n. p.).

Thanks to this historical background of the continent, there are several theories about the advancement of AusE and they have been the matter of discussion among the scholars over the years up to today. Scientists have been particularly interested in revealing why AusE is so homogeneous in its current state with minimal regional variations. This is especially remarkable when we consider the size of the whole country. Wells points out that it is over 3000 kilometres from Perth to Sydney, yet “their accents are practically indistinguishable” (Wells, 593). One theory presents the idea that AusE started no sooner than “with the first generation of native-born Australians as a by-product of the social situation in the early colony” and that the homogeneity was caused by the “high degree of population mobility” (Collins, 76). The mobility first depended on ports. Through them the

most dominant accent brought from England would prevail and remained used in the other corners of Australia as well. The building of a road system would later maintain that one variety with minimal influence of the native inhabitants' speech. Therefore, people from all regions would tend to communicate by one accent to be better understood. Some scholars support a different theory which claims that "a uniform London English was transplanted to Australia in 1788 and that the speakers of other dialects quickly adapted to it" (Collins, 76).

The pictures below portray the territorial evolution of Australia from 1825 to 1931 when the final major change was made and the Northern Territory was created.



Picture 1. Four maps illustrating the colonisation of Australia and the development of its territories from 1825 to 1931. Sourced from World Heritage Encyclopedia™ licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.

Another important factor in the development of AusE is the education. In Australia there are areas where the educational system had been following the British models for a long time, especially from around the late 19th century and some resemblance between those two models can be seen even today. The 19th century as a time mark is significant since it was the late 19th century when General British (GB) started to be accepted as the pronunciation appropriate for education. While keeping the “British educational models”, Australian teachers also tried to imitate the model considered to be the proper pronunciation for teaching – General British (Yallop, 3). However, alteration in pronunciation could not be prevented, which created a further distance between the two English varieties and the differences ultimately led to the separation of AusE as an independent accent.

Recently, AusE has been under another different influence – General American English (GenAm). This can be seen most significantly on the lexical level as “the increasing speed of technological development brings the inhabitants of the global village even closer together” (Taylor in Blair and Collins, 4). However, as it is written in *Lonely Planet* “the only area where Australians actually sound American is in popular song” and that “very few words show any American influence on their pronunciation” (15). Nevertheless, there is at least one phenomenon which appears in AusE and it might be thanks to the influence of GenAm. That feature is called T Flapping or T Tapping and it is a significant part of GenAm, AusE and also New Zealand English. The detailed description of T Flapping is provided in the third chapter.

1.2. Australian variety as a standard

In Australia the question of national identity is intertwined with the accent people speak and this tie was forged “early during the time of first colonies” (Blair and Collins, 1). Even though sociolinguists’ opinions on the connection between language and identity are considerably different, it cannot be argued that in Australia we are able to some extent identify a person according to the “variation in their language use” (Blair and Collins, 2). The path which AusE had to take in order to become a standard had not been an easy one. Originally looked down upon, this variety and its speakers had to fight relentlessly for their place among other varieties of English.

It is interesting to see how the criticism of the pronunciation newly formed in Australia had been increasing steadily from 19th century until the unconcealed harsh remarks during 1930s. According to some scholars “it was not until 1940s that a positive attitude toward AusE began to develop” (Blair and Collins, 3). Indeed, in 1920 the Director of Education in New South Wales even tried to persuade teachers to cease using Australian English accent while teaching. His remark about the language and identity was “It is sad to reflect that other people are able to recognize Australians by their speech” (Delbridge qtd. in Kirkpatrick, 69).

Certain uneasiness about AusE being inferior in some way to other varieties had been voiced quite often for a long period of time. Especially British scholars tended to look suspiciously at the new kind of speech developing in the far away colonies. For example, this opinion from 1829 states “Bearing in mind that out lowest class brought with it a peculiar language and is constantly supplied with fresh corruption, you will understand why pure English is not, and is not likely to become, the language of the colony” (Görlach qtd. in Kirkpatrick, 70). These attitudes correspond with the traditional prejudice aimed at the early colonists – people thought that they were just illiterate ‘half-wits’. Therefore, using the language originated from the speech of such inferior people had to be shameful to some extent. However, an opinion shared by Mitchell and some other language specialists is that the convicts had decent knowledge and enough skills to be farmers, tradesmen or service workers once their punishment was finished.

Arthur G. Mitchell was also the first person who formally described Australian English in 1946 in his book *Pronunciation of English in Australia* and established himself as a defender of this variety. He published his work at a time when “many Australians believed there was no such thing as Australian pronunciation, or, if there was, it deserved only to be suppressed in favour of ‘correct’ pronunciation” (Yallop, 2). He was the man responsible for the idea of accepting Australian English as a national standard. Mitchell’s view was that “Australian pronunciation should not be regarded as a corrupt derivation but as an acceptable norm” (Kirkpatrick, 70). In the beginning, his opinions were not received positively. Only when Mitchell became the “Chairman of the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) in 1952 did the ABC start to accept Australian English” (Kirkpatrick, 70).

There are three publications which helped greatly AusE on the way of becoming a standard, including *A Dictionary of Australian Colloquialism* (1978), *The Macquarie Dictionary* (1981) and *The Australian National Dictionary* (1988). It should be noted that it had taken over 200 years after the British claimed the shores of Australia before these dictionaries were written.

2. Contemporary situation of Standard Australian English

In this chapter the inner division of Standard AusE is provided together with the description of tendencies which are currently noticeable in Standard AusE.

The speakers of the present-day AusE are usually those who were either born in Australia, or who were brought there while still very young. Cox states that these people and their language can be divided into “three major dialect subgroups”: Standard Australian English, Aboriginal English and Ethnocultural Australian English varieties (Cox and Palethorpe, 341). Standard AusE has become the dominant accent which is spoken by most inhabitants and has remained mostly homogenous. If there exists a geographical variation in pronunciation of Standard AusE, it is “a matter of urban versus rural, the rural accent being somewhat slower and broader than urban, apart from this, accent variability in Australia is social and stylistic rather than geographical” (Wells, 593).

Aboriginal English refers to the variety spoken by indigenous people. Leitner points out that originally, native inhabitants used several hundred languages and dialects. Nevertheless, most of them vanished in the south by late 19th century when Aboriginal English prevailed. Ethnocultural varieties consist of minority dialects which contain features of Standard AusE combined with some non-English language elements. Such speakers may have English as their first language but many communicate through other language as well (Leitner, 6).

According to the classification employed by Mitchell, Wells or Collins, Standard AusE pronunciation is further divided into Broad, Cultivated and General “identified principally by differences in the quality of certain vowels” (Wells, 594). Broad AusE originates from the early colony in New South Wales and it developed when people coming from all over the Britain and speaking various dialects accommodated their language towards the English spoken around London and so it is very similar to London Cockney accent². The Cultivated AusE had been influenced by the effort to imitate General British as best as possible. A study of Sydney speakers done by Horvath also shows that Broad AusE “carried connotations of masculinity and lack of culture”, while Cultivated AusE was associated with “femininity, affectation, snobbishness and affinity with Britain”

² Cockney represents an accent originally used by lower-class people in London. For more information, see Chapter 3 in this work and Wells, *Accents of English 2: The British Isles*, 331-332.

(Cox, *Pronunciation* 13). General AusE developed during the 1870s and 1880s when the immigration from Britain had been at its peak. Currently, it is spoken by the majority of people. Three varieties of Standard AusE are “more similar to each other than they are to other English dialects” (Cox, *Pronunciation* 12).

However, even the linguists expressed carefully their conclusions about distinctions between the above mentioned varieties. We have to realize that people use the language in various ways and the articulation differs among individual speakers. The fluent transition between two or more of those accents is not so surprising. This is especially obvious if a person is trying to adapt his or her speech according to whom they are talking to, which is a feature shared by all people around the world and the reason for this behaviour is simple – we wish to be understood.

3. Characteristic phonetic and phonological features of General Australian English

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, Standard AusE can be further divided into three varieties. The variety predominantly described in this work is General Australian English, which is the accent spoken by the majority of citizens in Australia and it is largely used in television programs, movies and the other media. General AusE is suggested to be “the most rapidly expanding of the three accent categories” (Harrington, 156). In this section, the pronunciation of General AusE is compared to General British (GP) represented by the examples from *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*. The first part analyzes the realisational differences in pronunciation of General AusE, followed by the distributional differences..

Cruttenden mentions two other criteria in segmental level for comparing various types of languages, the systemic differences and the lexical incidence, neither of which seems to be relevant in the current comparative analysis as the literary sources do not supply enough examples. The systemic differences imply contrasts in the phonemic inventory (Ladd, 116). However, the number of phonemes equals in all three Standard Australian Englishes. The rare systemic difference presents itself in the usage of the diphthong /ʊə/. It appears in Cultivated AusE while the native speakers of both General and Broad AusE avoid employing the diphthong. Consequently, it constitutes “a unique case of systemic variability” in AusE (Wells, 600). The lexical features manifest themselves in the individual sounds that occur in particular words. For example, <a> in the word *dance* is pronounced either as /æ/ or /ɑ:/. Nevertheless, these features are quite limited in AusE (Cox, *Transcription* 4). The lexical incidence of <a> in the word *dance* is demonstrated in the practical part.

The analysis is realized mainly on the segmental level, focusing both on vowels and consonants. The intonation presents the only suprasegmental phenomenon explored in this work. The transcription applied in this thesis is the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) from 2005.

When we speak about General AusE, it is important to indicate its relationship to Cockney, originally used by working-class people in London. Wells comments that “at

first hearing, General Australian and Cockney may give the impression of being very similar” (Wells, 594). The Diphthong Shift³ belongs into the characteristics shared by both accents. Cockney English encompasses a list of other features such as the H Dropping⁴. However, according to Cruttenden, predominantly Broad AusE has many features similar to Cockney (Cruttenden, 93). These different opinions could be caused by the fact that the border between General and Broad AusE is not stable and some aspects formerly considered as a part of Broad AusE are now included in the description of General AusE. Nevertheless, one clear rhythmic distinction between them does exist – Broad AusE “uses slow diphthongs with a lengthened first element, apart from this, a larger proportion of Broad speakers than of others were judged to speak unusually slowly” (Wells, 605).

The phonetic differences between General and Cultivated AusE also led to the creation of the ‘Strine’ (i.e. ‘Australian’) series of booklets, whose humour has enjoyed considerable success both in Australia and Britain. The wordplay is based on the “phonetic similarities between those two varieties, where General AusE *flash* may sound to British ears like *flesh*” (Wells, 595) and it is pleasant to observe that Australian people are very well aware of the fact that their language faces different attitudes and seem to be amused by the evidence.

Alistair Morrison, a graphic designer and abstract painter, published his ‘Strine’ series under a pseudonym Afferbeck Lauder. All initiated in 1965 when he applied for copyright of the lyrics of a song *With Air Chew* (i.e. Without You), the application and registration is held in National Archives of Australia. An article in Sydney newspaper inspired him to formulate ‘Strine’ in 1964. The report contained a story about one comical situation which happened at a book signing event. A British novelist, Monica Dickens, was asked by a purchaser ‘Emma chisit?’ and suspecting that the client had just told her the name, Dickens signed the book ‘To Emma Chisit’. Afferbeck Lauder is introduced as ‘Professor of Strine Studies at the University of Sinny’. The first piece called *Let Stalk Strine* was composed in 1965. By 1979 it had sold over 140,000 copies. Other publications include *Nose Tone Unturned*, *Fraffly Well Spoken* and *Fraffly Suite (Talking Strine)*, National Archives of Australia).

³ Diphthong Shift means an alteration from one diphthong into another. See Wells, *Accents of English 1: An Introduction*, 256-257.

⁴ H Dropping refers to the omitting of the initial /h/ sound in the lexical words so that they begin with a vowel. See Wells, *Accents of English 1: An Introduction*, 253-256.

To illustrate the hilarity of the series the lyrics of the song *With Air Chew* accompanied with its translation can be read below.

The lyrics of the song *With Air Chew*:

*With air chew, with air chew,
Iker nardly liver there chew,
And I dream a badger kisser snite and
die.
Phoney wicked beer loan,
Jars-chewer mere nonnair roan,
An we'd dreamer batter mooner pinner
sky.*

*With air chew, with air chew,
Hair mike-owner liver there chew,
Wile yerrony immy dream sigh maulwye
scrine.
Anna strewer seffner barf
Yuma snow-eye Nietzsche laugh,
Cars with air chew immy arm sit snow
you Strine.*

The translation of the song *Without you*:

*Without you, without you,
I can hardly live without you,
And I dream about your kisses night and
day.
If only we could be alone,
Just you and me and on our own,
And we'd dream about the moon up in the
sky.*

*Without you, without you,
How am I gonna live without you?
While you're only in my dreams I'm
always cryin'.
And as true as heaven above
You must know I need your love
'Cause without you in my arms it's no use
tryin'.*

Both parts are available on the website of the National Archives of Australia.

3.1. Realisational differences

Wells states that phonologically, all Australian Englishes remain very close to General British and the Australian vowel system can be set in one-to-one correspondence with GB system (595). In other words, the number of phonemes equals. In the area of phonetics, the situation differs to a large extent.

The term realisational differences means that the “phonetic realisation of some phonemes is different,” when the pronunciation of two languages is compared (Cruttenden, 87). When GB and General AusE are contrasted, there are considerable realisational differences and “it is these differences, together with certain characteristics of voice quality, rhythm, and intonation, which appear to play the principal role in making an Australian accent sound Australian” (Wells, 596).

The description of the main realisational differences and similarities between GB and General AusE is provided in this chapter. Firstly, the vocalic systems are compared followed by the description of consonantal differences.

The picture bellow, made by the author and inspired by Roach’s definitions, exemplifies the IPA transcription symbols for vowels and their place of articulation. The vertical axis represents the position of the tongue and lower jaw and it ranges from close (high) to open (low). The horizontal axis refers to the part of the tongue that is active during enunciation and the vowels are divided into front, central and back (Gut, 61).

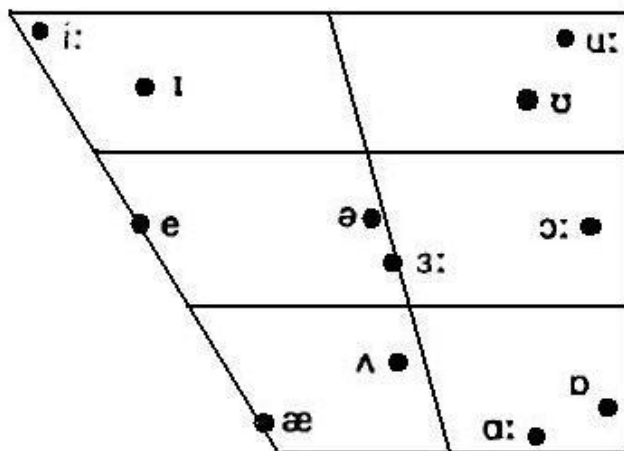


Figure 1. The vowel quadrilateral illustrating positions of vowels. Inspired by P. Roach’s charts (1991).

Traditionally, vowels are divided into monophthongs (also referred to as pure vowels), diphthongs and triphthongs. The description of vowels remains challenging due to the fact that the differences in vowel articulation are “gradual and have no clear boundaries” (Gut, 61).

The diphthongs are subdivided into centring and closing. The centring diphthongs include /ɪə/, /eə/ and /ʊə/. They are named centring because they glide towards central vowel /ə/. The closing diphthongs consist of /eɪ/, /aɪ/, /ɔɪ/, /aʊ/ and /əʊ/. These are called closing because they move towards close /i/ and /ʊ/ (Wells, 599).

This picture below shows the chart of centring and closing diphthongs as realized in GB , inspired by Roach’s description.

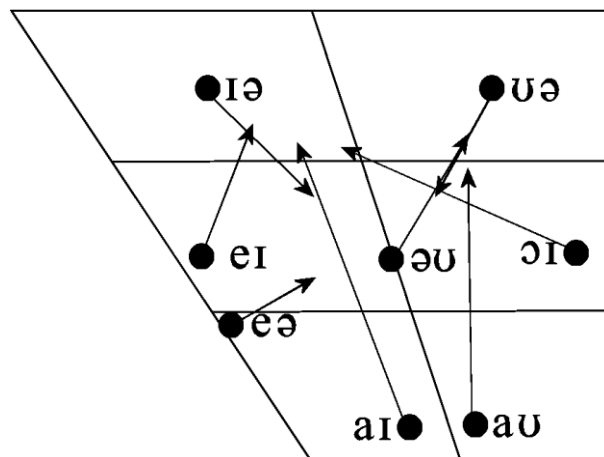


Figure 2. The vowel quadrilateral illustrating centring and closing diphthongs and the directions of their glides. Inspired by P. Roach’s charts from 1991.

The triphthongs are composed of the closing diphthongs and a central /ə/ produced rapidly together with no interruption (Roach). They are not common in AusE, because the words containing triphthongs in GB, such as *fire* or *power*, are usually disyllabic, i.e. divided into two syllables in AusE. Therefore, their “Smoothing is not an Australian habit” (Wells, 600). Smoothing, or monophthongization, represents a tendency of diphthongs and triphthongs to become monophthongs and it appears in most varieties of the English language.

General AusE demonstrates several tendencies, some of them shared with Cultivated and Broad AusE. Let's begin with the examination of two significant features which lie at the core of sounding Australian - the raising of the short front vowels and fronting. The description of those two phenomena together with other characteristics of General AusE is provided below.

- **E Raising [ɛ]**

Examples: *get, red, net*

General AusE, together with two other varieties of Standard AusE, is characterized by the raising of the short front vowels. To the speakers of GB the most striking difference while listening to the speech of Australians can be heard in words containing the vowel /e/ (Wells, 598). Where British citizens would realize the sound as [e], e.g. [get], Australian native speakers mostly articulate the sound as [ɛ], e.g. [gɛt]. This indicates that in AusE /e/ is closer to the /ɪ/ vowel than in GB.

- back /ɑ:/ pronounced as front [a:]

Examples: *start, laugh, car*

The testimony of fronting in General AusE is supposed to be brought by the <a> in *start* which should be “central to front and noticeably fronter” than the long back open vowel /ɑ:/ in GB. “Accordingly we transcribe it /a:/, as against the symbol /ɑ:/ we use for corresponding vowel in GB” (Wells, 599). Therefore, GB /stɑ:t/ should take the form of a [sta:t] in General AusE.

- final /ɪ/ or /i/ pronounced as [i:] or [ə] in other positions

Examples: *city, cities*

A short front close /ɪ/ or weak /i/⁵ is assumed to be replaced by a long front close [i:] in word-final positions or by a short central close-mid [ə], i.e. schwa in other locations. To

⁵ weak /i/ is a non-phonemic symbol which signals the neutralization of quality between /ɪ/ and /i:/ in the position. See Volín, 16.

exemplify, the GB /siti/ alters into [siti:] and /sitiz/ into [sitəz]. Schwa in the non-final positions might be a feature displayed more prominently in Broad AusE.

- **epenthetic schwa**

Examples: *film, known*

General AusE often contains the epenthetic schwa before final nasals /m/, /n/ and /ŋ/. As a result GB /film/ might sound like [filəm] since epenthesis entails the insertion of an extra sound. AusE is not the only variety with this phenomenon, it occurs in the other accents as well, for example in Irish English (Kirkpatrick, 71).

- closing diphthong /eɪ/ pronounced as [aɪ]

Examples: *mate, name, fake*

The transformation from a closing diphthong /eɪ/ into a closing diphthong [aɪ] represents one example of a Diphthong Shift. Consequently, /meɪt/ is altered into [maɪt]. Wells acknowledges two usual directions of the shift: /i:/ → /eɪ/ → /aɪ/ → /ɔɪ/ → /oɪ/ and the second /u:/ → /əʊ/ → /aʊ/ → /æʊ/. The exact time when this phenomenon emerged can be only estimated. However, the place of origin is probably London and apparently “the change was well under way by the first half of the 19th century”. Therefore, the early settlers brought it to Australian colonies. (*Introduction* 257).

The three phenomena concerning centring diphthongs mentioned below represent the feature called Smoothing, i.e. monophthongization. At the beginning of this section it had been indicated that Smoothing of the triphthongs is not usual for AusE. However, the diphthongs are assumed to undergo the modification relatively frequently.

- centring diphthong /ɪə/ changes into [ɪ:]

Examples: *near, hear, steer*

The centring diphthong /ɪə/ is expected to be pronounced as a long front close [ɪ:], therefore GB /nɪə/ becomes monophthongal [nɪ:]. This phenomenon occurs especially before a voiced post-alveolar approximant /r/.

- centring diphthong /eə/ changes into [ɛ:]

Examples: *bear, stare, fair*

The centring diphthong /eə/ is pronounced as a long front open-mid [ɛ:]. Consequently, *bear* in GB realized as /beə/ is articulated as [bɛ:] in General AusE. It should sound quite fronter and closer to /e/ sound thanks to fronting.

- centring diphthong /ʊə/ changes into [ɔ:]

Examples: *cure, tour*

The centring diphthong /ʊə/ is pronounced as a long back open-mid [ɔ:]. Therefore GB *cure* /kjʊə/ becomes [kjɔ:]. This phenomenon occurs both in GB and General AusE and the use of /ɔ:/ seems to be spreading rapidly. The only difference might be the fact that some scholars think it is happening faster in General AusE than in GB (Wells, *Isles* 600).

Next, two distinct consonantal aspects can be defined.

- **T Flapping** /t/

Examples: *letter, water*

T Flapping, also called T Tapping or T Voicing, represents intervocalic alveolar flapping of the voiceless alveolar plosive /t/ which then sounds more like a regular voiced, alveolar, plosive /d/, e.g. GB /letə/ as AusE [lerə]. Phonetically it is usually a rapid tap rather than a more deliberate plosive (Wells, *Introduction* 248). T Flapping means a feature similar to Cockney English and GenAm.

- **Dark L** /ɫ/

Examples: *lace, Carl*

The difference between clear and dark allophones of voiced alveolar lateral approximant /l/ involves clear /l/ before vowels and dark /ɫ/ in other positions. AusE is supposed to have dark [ɫ] in all locations but GB only in pre-vocalic positions. The word *lace*, in GB /leɪs/, would be articulated as [ɫeɪs]. London Cockney also uses dark [ɫ]. However, an opinion

supported by Blair and Collins claims that a new tendency in AusE contains the vocalisation of dark [ɫ] (69). Borowsky's research suggests that it "tends to be vocalised especially when it is syllabic, when it is followed by a consonant or when it is preceded by a back vowel" (Blair and Collins, 8).

3.2. Distributional Differences

The rules of sound distribution can be referred to as a phonotactic patterning. These rules indicate in which position of the syllable phonemes can occur. Phonotactics consists of two rules, the second one represented by the rule of sound combination defining the legal structures within the clusters of consonants (Gut, 77). The major distributional difference in General AusE is called rhoticity and it expresses one of the similarities between General British and General Australian English which exists due to the historical background. When Australia became the British colony in 18th century, the English language spoken on the British Isles had already been changed from originally rhotic English into the non-rhotic English variety.

- **rhoticity**

Examples: *here, Birmingham, members*

AusE is defined as non-rhotic, meaning that <r> is always pronounced in pre-vocalic positions but coda /r/ is not articulated. However, one phonological instance when coda /r/ is enunciated even in non-rhotic accents does exist. It occurs when "a syllable ending in the spelling <r> is followed by a syllable without onset consonant" (Gut, 78). This is called linking /r/ and can be heard in *far away* /fɑ:rəweɪ/. When there is "a pronounced /r/ between two vowels although there is no spelled <r>", the result is called intrusive /r/ and it is in phrases such as *law and order* /lɔ:rəndɔ:də/ (Gut, 78). However, a slight influence of rhotic accents might arise in the speech of some Australians.

Wells suggests that non-rhotic English appears in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Trinidad, most of England and Wales.

The rhotic accents include those spoken in Scotland, Ireland, Canada, Barbados, western parts of England and most of the USA. In these Englishes /r/ can be found in final and pre-consonantal positions, e.g. /fɑ:rm/ and /fɑ:r/.

Some accents can also be identified as semi-rhotic, “having lost pre-consonantal /r/ but retaining it in certain word-final environments”, e.g. Jamaican English /fɑ:m/ but /fɑ:r/ (Wells, *Introduction* 76).

3. 3. Australian Questioning Intonation

One feature on a suprasegmental level has gained the importance during the past few decades and it is called the rising intonation, uptalk, upspeak or high rising terminal, which in Australia is referred to as the “Australian Questioning Intonation (AQI)” (Kirkpatrick, 71). The rising tone in declarative sentences has started to be applied in English since about 1980 and it appears in circumstances in which a fall would have been implemented by an earlier generation. It is speculated that “it originated in New Zealand, though other claimed sources are Australia, California and British regional accents” (Wells, *Intonation* 37). The AQI can be confusing especially for the older Australian inhabitants and it might generate misunderstandings among the participants of a conversation.

From the phonological perspective, the location of the start of the major pitch movement lies on a tonic syllable⁶ and this can arise “anywhere in the tone unit⁷, not necessarily in the last word” (Bradford, 30). Bradford concludes that the users of the AQI produce a fall-rise contour which begins on the tonic syllable and extends to fall over the rest of the tone unit (30). To native speakers who avoid the AQI it may sound like a pardon-question rise.

The reasons why the AQI became so popular and frequent among citizens are not completely apparent. Firstly, Bradford suggests empathy and AQI would serve as the instrument to express our support. Secondly, the effort to keep the listener focused and

⁶ Tonic syllable carries the tone or the pitch movement, it is usually positioned near the end of the unit on a high-content word. See Roach, 145.

⁷ Tone unit represents the main intonational part. See Roach, 144-148.

involved might play a larger role. To explain the relatively quick expansion, the effect of peer groups and role models as well as some Australian soap operas is considered, e.g. *Home and Away*, *Neighbours*. Nevertheless, the linguists do not fully agree whether the presence of this intriguing pattern in GB proves the influence of the AusE media on the young British audience. They argue that it may not be an impact of General AusE but only “an international feature of the intonation of young people”, however, counterarguments do exist. Therefore, a further investigation involving more social factors might deliver clarifying results (Bradford, 33).

Witnessing so much uproar created by the AQI is interesting. Incidentally, the AQI brought back some issues previously thought overcome – it revealed that some Australians remain prejudiced against Australian English and its development as this opinion demonstrates: “Unknown in this country until the 1970s, great numbers of Australians these days turn all their sentences into questions with this fiendish contrivance” (Watson qtd. in Kirkpatrick, 72).

PRACTICAL PART

The small-scale research presented in the practical part of this thesis aims at revealing which realisational and distributional differences of General AusE described in the theoretical part prevail in the speech of six Australian native speakers. Although the number of respondents is small, we succeeded in obtaining participants from a wide age range, the youngest girl being 12 and the oldest man 72 years old. The perceptual analysis of their recordings helped us to address the following research questions:

- To what extent do the features typically associated with the Australian accent occur in the speech of six native Australians?
- Does the age factor influence the frequency of occurrence of the examined features?

4. Method

First of all, specific words which were supposed to embody the differences and illustrate the essence of the General Australian English had to be selected and put into a cohesive text. The text was preferred to individual words as we wished to secure the naturalness of the speakers' production. Eleven primary features are analyzed due to the fact that they appeared repetitively in the descriptions of General AusE and some of them in other two varieties of Standard AusE as well. For each phenomenon two to four words were chosen to demonstrate the alteration. Some of the words were taken from the available literary sources defining AusE, e.g. *Gimson's Pronunciation of English* by Alan Cruttenden and *Australian English Pronunciation and Transcription* by Felicity Cox.

Each realisational and distributional difference is compared among the speakers and with reference to GB presented in the spoken examples in *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*.

The full version of the text created by the author with highlighted target words follows:

My best friend's wedding

It has been a year since my best friend's boyfriend got on one knee and asked Monica to marry him. It is the reason why I ended up here, in a nice city called Birmingham, one of the biggest cities in the UK, where the wedding took place yesterday. It was clear from the beginning that this would be a lovely wedding. Monica invited many people - family members, friends and neighbours. On the wedding day, I had to get up very early. Not wanting to be late I had set up my alarm clock before going to bed. For my breakfast I ate some toasts with peanut butter and drank a bit of tea. I rushed to prepare some coffee for Monica, too. Then I went to help the bride with her hair. The wedding gown was absolutely fabulous and it was made mostly of lace and satin. Monica looked so beautiful holding the bouquet of red roses. There had been extreme excitement in the air and we had to make sure everything was in order.

After two hours the ceremony was about to start. Monica's father escorted her slowly down the aisle towards the altar, where the groom stood waiting for her. After the vows they kissed and a great cheer went up from the crowd. Outside the church rice was thrown on them by wedding guests. The ceremony was followed by an amazing party. The first dance had been reserved for the newly wedded couple. As a part of entertainment an amusing short film portraying the history of the couple was watched, because the funny circumstances of their relationship were widely known among the guests.

The event is over now. I am on tour throughout the city having only a few hours left before the plane takes me home again. Monica and her husband flew to New York for their honeymoon. I hope they have many happy years ahead of them.

The participants come from different parts of Australia and the crucial factor of their selection was their age. The aim was to have the recordings from a teenager (10 to 15), a person in their twenties (25 to 29), a person in their forties (45 to 49) and a person in their seventies (70 to 75).

All six respondents were contacted via e-mail or social network by the author of the thesis and asked to record themselves reading the story *My best friend's wedding* in a quiet environment. They were instructed to read the text silently at first and not to rush through the reading while being recorded. All participants used either a mobile phone or a dictaphone and sent their recordings in mp3 format. Furthermore, the respondents were asked to write some additional information about their occupation, place of birth, current place of living and their education to illustrate their background.

The description of their sex, age, place of origin and occupation:

Speaker 1 – girl; 12; born in Perth; student (British father, 46, who has lived in Australia for 30 years, Czech mother)

Speaker 2 – man; 26; born in Armidale, lives in Sydney, manager

Speaker 3 – man; 27, born in Dubbo and lives in Sydney; print producer

Speaker 4 – man; 29; lives in Sydney; spent a year in Melbourne; engineer

Speaker 5 – man; 46; born in Perth and has lived there his whole life; marine engineer

Speaker 6 – man; 72; born in Kalgoorlie, lives in Perth; soldier, now retired

The participants are friends and acquaintances of the author and they expressed great enthusiasm about taking part in the small research.

The achieve education of the respondents is quite homogeneous and the place of their current residence is either Sydney or Perth.

The analysis is purely perceptual based on the author's listening to the target words. The author heard them being played repeatedly (three times) with two-day gaps in between and marked the productions for all speakers in the Excell table using the IPA-based transcription. No other person was involved in the process. The final data were subsequently categorized according to the examined features into separate tables which are presented in the following part.

5. Results

In this chapter, the results of the comparison between General AusE and GB are listed. The realisational differences are described first, followed by the analysis of the distributional differences. It is obvious from the amassed data that not all characteristics covered in the theoretical part were present in the speech of all native speakers. However, the majority of the investigated features can be clearly identified in their production. The results include only segmental aspects, AQI was not analysed.

5.1. Realisational differences

All realisational differences are presented in a series of tables that are organized in the same way; the target words written in normal spelling are followed by the British transcription and then the transcriptions of all Australian respondents (S1 – S6), ordered from the youngest to the eldest, are given.

- **E Raising /e/**

Word	GB	S1 (12)	S2 (26)	S3 (27)	S4 (29)	S5 (46)	S6 (72)
bed	/bed/	[bɛd]	[bɛd]	[bɛd]	[bɛd]	[bɛd]	[bɛd]
went	/went/	[wɛnt]	[wɛnt]	[wɛnt]	[wɛnt]	[wɛnt]	[wɛnt]
set	/set/	[sɛt]	[sɛt]	[sɛt]	[sɛt]	[sɛt]	[sɛt]
wedding	/wedɪŋ/	[wɛdɪŋ]	[wɛdɪŋ]	[wɛdɪŋ]	[wɛdɪŋ]	[wɛdɪŋ]	[wɛdɪŋ]

Table 1. Occurrence of E Raising in the speech of six Australian native speakers compared to GB.

The recordings proved that the habit to raise the /e/ sound is widespread. Some words, e.g. *bed* were produced with a stronger e-rising than the rest. However, none of the /e/ sounds were raised to such an extent that it could be interpreted as the word *bid*.

- back /ɑ:/ pronounced as front [a:]

Word	GB	S1 (12)	S2 (26)	S3 (27)	S4 (29)	S5 (46)	S6 (72)
start	/sta:t/	[sta:t]	[sta:t]	[sta:t]	[sta:t]	[sta:t]	[sta:t]
father	/fa:ðə/	[fa:ðə]	[fa:ðə]	[fa:ðə]	[fa:ðə]	[fa:ðə]	[fa:ðə]
part	/pɑ:t/	[pa:t]	[pa:t]	[pa:t]	[pa:t]	[pa:t]	[pa:t]
after	/ɑ:ftə/	[a:ftə]	[a:ftə]	[a:ftə]	[a:ftə]	[a:ftə]	[a:ftə]

Table 2. Occurrence of front /a:/ in the speech of six Australian native speakers compared to back /ɑ:/ in GB.

This fronting tendency is also frequently used in available samples. The only exception occurs in the word *father*. The first speaker pronounced it a bit more back than the rest of the participants. It could have been caused by the fact that her father is originally British.

- final /ɪ/ or /i/ is pronounced as [i:] or [ə] in other positions

Word	GB	S1 (12)	S2 (26)	S3 (27)	S4 (29)	S5 (46)	S6 (72)
city	/sɪti/	[sɪti]	[sɪtiː]	[sɪti:]	[sɪtiː]	[sɪtiː]	[sɪti:]
cities	/sɪtiz/	[sɪtiːz]	[sɪtəz]	[sɪtiːz]	[sɪtəz]	[sɪtiːz]	[sɪtiːz]

Table 3. Occurrence of the monophthongs /i:/ in final and /ə/ in other positions in the speech of six Australian native speakers compared to GB.

In this case, there are more differences between individual speakers. Most people said the final /i/ in the word *city* long or half-long, except the first speaker. According to Cruttenden, the word *cities* was supposed to be pronounced as /sɪtəz/. However, it is even less frequent. Apparently, the production with schwa gets further from the border between General AusE and Broad AusE and nowadays it might be found mainly in Broad AusE (Cruttenden, 6th edition, 90).

- epenthetic schwa

Word	GB	S1 (12)	S2 (26)	S3 (27)	S4 (29)	S5 (46)	S6 (72)
film	/fɪlm/	[fɪlm]	[fɪl̩m]	[fɪlm]	[fɪlm]	[fɪl̩m]	[fɪl̩m]
known	/nəʊn/	[nəʊən]	[nəʊən]	[nəʊən]	[nəʊən]	[nəʊən]	[nəʊən]

Table 4. Occurrence of epenthetic schwa in the speech of six Australian native speakers compared to GB.

The presence of epenthetic schwa was identified in all productions in the word *known*. The word *film* was realized either with a very weak and hardly audible schwa or none at all. The diphthong /əʊ/ sounded shifted closer to /oʊ/.

- closing diphthong /eɪ/ pronounced as [aɪ]

Word	GB	S1 (12)	S2 (26)	S3 (27)	S4 (29)	S5 (46)	S6 (72)
neighbours	/neɪbəz/	[naɪbəz]	[naɪbəz]	[naɪbəz]	[naɪbəz]	[naɪbəz]	[naɪbəz]
day	/deɪ/	[deɪ]	[deɪ]	[dæɪ]	[dæɪ]	[daɪ]	[daɪ]
late	/leɪt/	[leɪt]	[leɪt]	[læɪt]	[læɪt]	[læɪt]	[laɪt]
waiting	/weɪtɪŋ/	[waɪtɪŋ]	[waɪtɪŋ]	[waɪtɪŋ]	[waɪtɪŋ]	[waɪtɪŋ]	[waɪtɪŋ]

Table 5. Occurrence of the shift /eɪ/ into /aɪ/ in General AusE compared to GB.

This diphthong shift from /eɪ/ into /aɪ/ can be assessed as relatively frequent in our data. Especially the word *neighbours* contains this diphthong shift in all available recordings. The word *waiting* is another case of this phenomenon present in the speech of all participants. *Day* differs slightly as the pronunciation /deɪ/ might be preferable among younger speakers. It is obvious how the pronunciation of *day* changes from the fully open /aɪ/ in S6 – S5, less open /æɪ/ in S4 – S3 into mid-open /eɪ/ in S2 – S1 as it is losing its /a/ quality and becomes more of an /e/. The same process can be identified in the pronunciation of the word *late*.

- centring diphthong /ɪə/ changes into [ɪ:]

Word	GB	S1 (12)	S2 (26)	S3 (27)	S4 (29)	S5 (46)	S6 (72)
clear	/kɪə/	[kɪɪ:]	[kɪɪ:]	[kɪɪ:]	[kɪɪ:]	[kɪɪ:]	[kɪɪ:]
year	/jɪə/	[jɪɪ:]	[jɪɪ:]	[jɪɪ:]	[jɪɪ:]	[jɪɪ:]	[jɪɪ:]
here	/hɪə/	[hɪɪ:]	[hɪɪ:]	[hɪɪ:]	[hɪɪ:]	[hɪɪ:]	[hɪɪ:]
cheer	/tʃɪə/	[tʃɪɪ:]	[tʃɪɪ:]	[tʃɪɪ:]	[tʃɪɪ:]	[tʃɪɪ:]	[tʃɪɪ:]

Table 6. The change of /ɪə/ in GB into /ɪ:/ in the speech of Australian native participants compared to GB.

The monophthongal /ɪ:/ can be heard in all recordings. With some speakers, there is also a weak /ə/ sound at the end of the pronounced word. This is especially notable with the youngest speaker where it could be caused by the influence of her British father. The oldest speaker also uses this weakly audible /ə/ sound and it might have been caused by his upbringing during the time, when AusE still had to face the remarks about being a tarnished variety of GB. Therefore, he might be continuously trying to adapt his speech towards GB.

- centring diphthong /eə/ changes into [ɛ:]

Word	GB	S1 (12)	S2 (26)	S3 (27)	S4 (29)	S5 (46)	S6 (72)
hair	/heə/	[hɛ:]	[hɛ:]	[hɛ:]	[hɛ:]	[hɛ:]	[hɛ:]
air	/eə/	[ɛ:]	[ɛ:]	[ɛ:]	[ɛ:]	[ɛ:]	[ɛ:]
there	/ðeə/	[ðɛ:]	[ðɛ:]	[ðɛ:]	[ðɛ:]	[ðɛ:]	[ðɛ:]

Table 7. The change of /eə/ in GB into /ɛ:/ in the speech of native Australians compared to GB.

The centring diphthong /eə/ sounds fronter and closer to /ɛ:/ and all recordings confirm this tendency as the change exists in the speech of all participants. The only variation occurs in the production of *there*, which is a bit shorter for most respondents.

- centring diphthong /ʊə/ changes into [ɔ:]

Word	GB	S1 (12)	S2 (26)	S3 (27)	S4 (29)	S5 (46)	S6 (72)
sure	/ʃʊə/,/ʃɔ:/	[ʃɔ:]	[ʃɔ:]	[ʃɔ:]	[ʃɔ:]	[ʃɔ:]	[ʃɔ:]
tour	/tʊə/,/tɔ:/	[tɔ:]	[tʊ:ə]	[tʊ:ə]	[tʊ:ə]	[tʊ:ə]	[tʊ:ə]

Table 8. The change of /ʊə/ into /ɔ:/ in the speech of six Australian respondents compared to GB.

The replacement of the centring diphthong /ʊə/ by the back monophthong /ɔ:/ can be identified in both GB and our data. The main reason why it is analyzed here is to see whether the age exercise any influence on the pronunciation of this diphthong. From the table it can be assumed that the change has been well established in the word *sure*. However, the word *tour* is not so conclusive. The older speakers tend to produce this word according to its original pronunciation but the first part is significantly longer with the minor presence of /ə/ sound. The youngest speaker pronounced /ʊə/ in both words like [ɔ:].

- T Flapping /t/

Word	GB	S1 (12)	S2 (26)	S3 (27)	S4 (29)	S5 (46)	S6 (72)
beautiful	/bju:tɪfl/	[bju:ɾɪfl]	[bju:ɾɪfl]	[bju:ɾɪfl]	[bju:ɾɪfl]	[bju:ɾɪfl]	[bju:ɾɪfl]
butter	/bʌtə/	[bʌɾə]	[bʌɾə]	[bʌɾə]	[bʌɾə]	[bʌɾə]	[bʌɾə]

Table 9. Occurrence of T Flapping in General AusE in the speech of Australian native participants compared to GB.

T Flapping occurs in the speech of all native Australians. These results confirm that T Flapping belongs to prominent markers according to which General AusE pronunciation can be distinguished from GB. There is only one minor difference in the speech of the oldest speaker as it seems that his /t/ is not as distinctive/prominent as /t/ of others speakers. Therefore, the age might play a minor role influence on the presence of T Flapping.

- **Dark L**

Word	GB	S1 (12)	S2 (26)	S3 (27)	S4 (29)	S5 (46)	S6 (72)
lovely	/lʌvli/	[lʌvhi]	[ɫʌvhi]	[ɫʌvhi]	[lʌvhi]	[ɫʌvhi]	[lʌvhi]
clock	/klɒk/	[kɫɒk]	[kɫɒk]	[kɫɒk]	[kɫɒk]	[kɫɒk]	[kɫɒk]
looked	/lʊkt/	[ɫʊkt]	[ɫʊkt]	[ɫʊkt]	[ɫʊkt]	[ɫʊkt]	[ɫʊkt]
couple	/kʌpəl/	[kʌpɐɫ]	[kʌpɪ]	[kʌpɪ]	[kʌpɪ]	[kʌpɪ]	[kʌpɐɫ]

Table 10. Presence of dark /ɫ/ in the speech of six Australian native respondents compared to GB.

It is supposed that in General AusE dark /ɫ/ can be found even in pre-vocalic positions. This fact was partially supported by the data as all speakers pronounced *clock* with dark /ɫ/. However, three speakers pronounced the first /l/ in the word *lovely* as a clear /l/. Another tendency of the speakers is to use syllabic /l/ instead of /ə/ which is shared with GB.

5.2. Distributional differences

The only distributional difference this thesis focuses on is rhoticity. GB and General AusE are both supposed to be non-rhotic languages and the table below supported this assertion.

Word	GB	S1 (12)	S2 (26)	S3 (27)	S4 (29)	S5 (46)	S6 (72)
order	/ɔ:də/	[ɔ:də]	[ɔ:də]	[ɔ:də]	[ɔ:də]	[ɔ:də]	[ɔ:də]
red	/red/	[rɛd]	[rɛd]	[rɛd]	[rɛd]	[rɛd]	[rɛd]
short	/ʃɔ:t/	[ʃɔ:t]	[ʃɔ:t]	[ʃɔ:t]	[ʃɔ:t]	[ʃɔ:t]	[ʃɔ:t]

Table 11. The pronunciation of six native speakers of non-rhotic General AusE compared to also non-rhotic GB.

The table clearly portrays that General AusE is a non-rhotic language as well as GB. No influence of rhotic GenAm can be found in the examined productions. The word *red* contains discussed E Raising and pre-vocalic /r/ which was supposed to be heard.

5.3. Lexical incidence

The lexical incidence differences involve the occurrence of different phonemes in the same word when compared between two or more accents. Such differences are quite limited in AusE with only a few examples available. One of them is the word *dance* where <a> tends to be pronounced either as a short front open /æ/ or a long back open /ɑ:/. Cox supports the opinion claiming that the most suitable for AusE would be the vowel /ɑ:/ (Cox, *Transcription* 4). The vowel /æ/ supposedly prevails in GenAm.

The actual data obtained from the native speakers are portrayed in the table.

Word	GB	S1 (12)	S2 (26)	S3 (27)	S4 (29)	S5 (46)	S6 (72)
dance	/dɑ:ns/	/dɑ:ns/	/dæ'ns/	/dæ'ns/	/dæns/	/dɑ:ns/	/dæns/

Table 12. The lexical incidence of <a> in the word dance.

It can be seen that the lexical incidence varies in the data. Whether the place of origin or the occupation of participants had any influence could not be confirmed from our small-scale research.

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this thesis was to outline the pronunciation features which capture the nature of Standard Australian English. The theoretical part offered a summary of the most significant phenomena which identify General Australian English, one of the three varieties falling into Standard AusE. Although the primary focus remained on General Australian English, some of the investigated elements are shared by the Cultivated and Broad accents, too. Special attention in the analysis comparing the General AusE and General British sound systems was paid to the realisational and distributional differences as lexical incidence and systemic differences occur rarely in General AusE. The described historical background directs the readers' attention towards the origin of AusE so that they can better understand the foundations of its current state. Unsurprisingly, the British roots are deeply embedded in the Australian accent, however, soon after the establishment of the first colonies the Australian accent developed into a distinct variety. Certain features of General AusE overlap with other English accents, for example the intervocalic alveolar flapping can be also found in General American or prevalence of Dark L in Scottish English. Nevertheless, other features contribute to the unique character of Australian English, e.g. E Raising or differences in the production of diphthongs. Some other aspects similar to General American English can be found in General Australian English, e. g. T Flapping.

In the practical part two research questions were addressed. First of all we were interested in the extent to which the examined features arise in the speech of six Australian respondents. However, one has to bear in mind the small number of participants involved in the analysis, which does not allow any broad generalizations. In the area of realisational differences the most noticeable aspects revealed in our sample include E Raising, fronting of back /ɑ:/ articulated as [a:] and T Flapping. The assumption that final /ɪ/ or /i/ would be realized as [i:] at the end of the word or as [ə] in other positions was fulfilled only partially, since the appearance of [ə] might have moved more towards the Broad continuum of Standard AusE, leaving General AusE only with [i:] in the final positions. The word *known* exemplifies the presence of an epenthetic schwa, however the data indicate that its usage might be otherwise limited, e. g. *film*. The Dark L, produced in the pre-vocalic positions, can be seen as a distinctive element applied by all respondents with the only exception in the word *lovely*, where the first /l/ remained clear in the speech of S1, S4 and S6. The

Smoothing of centring diphthongs /ɪə/, /eə/ and /ʊə/ into long [ɪ:], [ɜ:] and [ʊ:] respectively has turned out to be quite a regular pattern. The only relevant distributional difference, rhoticity, plays an important role in the character of AusE and refers to one of the similarities between AusE and GB. The scarce lexical incidence was explored in the word *dance* and the data conceded minimal or nonexistent influence of external factors such as age or a place of origin. On the suprasegmental level, the Australian Questioning Intonation or uptalk was discussed in the theoretical part. As it would be more suitable to investigate the instances of a rising tone in statements in an unaffected speech and not in prepared text, this interesting feature was excluded from our analysis.

The most surprising finding that the available data suggest relates to the shift from a closing diphthong /eɪ/ to [aɪ] and back. It had been presumed, that this change was used frequently and without exceptions in most words, e. g. *neighbour*. Accordingly, the Australian realization is likely to be [naɪbəz] as opposed to the British /neɪbəz/. Interestingly, our data illustrated a slightly different trend - younger speakers pronounced /eɪ/ instead of [aɪ] in the items *day* and *late*. Naturally the length of words might have played a certain role, too. All in all, this tendency might be suitable for further research where the participants should be chosen according to their age, each age group consisting of at least 10 speakers. The aim of this study would be to verify the hypothesis our limited data imply: younger speakers of General AusE produce the closing diphthong /eɪ/ instead of [aɪ] in words such as *neighbour*, *game* or *mate*.

Secondly, we wished to discover whether the age factor had any impact on the frequency of occurrence of the examined characteristics. The focus was aimed at four age groups - teenagers (10 to 15), people in their twenties (25 to 29), people in their forties (45 to 49) and people in their seventies (70 to 75). The only feature which is likely to be caused by the age factor was the move from the closing diphthong /eɪ/ to the closing diphthong [aɪ] and back. The younger speakers pronounced [eɪ] or [æɪ] instead of the anticipated [aɪ] in certain words. With all the remaining phenomena neither the age nor any other factor proved to play any significant role.

From the didactic perspective, the recordings obtained from six native Australians for the purposes of this thesis could be incorporated into the teaching of various accents at schools in the Czech Republic. The author had had no experience with this particular accent prior to her travelling abroad and it can be assumed that the introduction of other

varieties in English classes would represent a welcome change for pupils. The quality of the documentation seems to be high with minimal background noise, therefore there should not arise any problems with the listening activities. The students could be provided with the text the speakers read and then they could try to find out the most prominent features of Australian English.

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