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Variation in Australian English

Résumé

Cet article propose de considérer l'anglais australien, variété relativement récente de l'anglais, dans la perspective du développement de sa variation. Il est montré en quoi le terme « anglais australien » ne reflète la réalité linguistique australienne que de façon imprécise, d'abord en faisant un portrait historique des premiers locuteurs et du contexte de formation du dialecte sur le continent australien. Puis les caractéristiques phonologiques de l'anglais australien sont établies aux niveaux segmental et suprasegmental (en ce qui concerne la HRT). Enfin, la variation en anglais australien contemporain – en particulier sa variation sociale – est définie et illustrée pour partie par les résultats de la première enquête sociolinguistique française menée en Australie dans le cadre du projet PAC (La Phonologie de l'Anglais Contemporain : usages, variétés et structure, ERSS Université Toulouse-Le Mirail et CNRS UMR 5610).

Variation in Australian English

0. Introduction

Australian English (henceforth AusE) is a comparatively recent variety of the language, as it is only in 1788 that the English language started to spread in the Australian continent. Today AusE is spoken by 19.6 million speakers over a vast territory of 7.69 million square kilometres, and it has become a linguistic standard in the Asia Pacific region.

There is no doubt that AusE can be distinguished from major standards such as British English, American English or Scottish English for example, although these terms are more convenient than accurate since they do not express social and geographical realities such as RP, General American or Standard Scottish English for instance (see respectively Moore this vol., Carr & Durand this vol. and Durand this vol.). In that same way, it is difficult to argue for a uniform AusE dialect for the whole Australian linguistic community. Although time is certainly much needed as a factor for future geographical variation within Australia (see Cox & Palethorpe 2003 for latest data), certain acknowledged social variations in speech have been a favorite topic for linguists since the 1940s (Baker 1945 and 1947, Mitchell & Delbridge 1965 as founding works).

AusE was never a real concern for linguistics in the northern hemisphere, particularly in Europe. This situation has a twofold origin (Przewozny 2002). Traditionally AusE did not belong to any of the "two streams of English" (Algeo 1986). Furthermore, the recognition of AusE as a stable variety of English in the English-speaking world and as a national standard is a recent phenomenon. Yet a tradition of AusE studies has been firmly established over the last sixty years both in Australia and in New Zealand (for the historical account of that tradition, see Przewozny 2002). The "distinctiveness" of AusE has been acknowledged with regard to its phonology, lexis as well as some syntactic and morphological features.

This article will focus on the phonology of AusE (a brief bibliography of major works on its lexis, syntax and morphology will be given in the conclusion). After having provided the reader with an historical overview of the origins of Australian speech and speakers (Section 1), the main phonological features of AusE will be presented at the segmental level and at the suprasegmental level as far as the characteristic High Rising Tone is concerned (Section 2). Then the article will examine social variation in AusE (Section 3), in particular in the light of the Australian corpus of the PAC project (*The Phonology of Contemporary English : usages, varieties and structure*).

1. The origins of AusE

Although Australia was discovered well before the official British landing at Sydney Cove (Jose 1930; Clark 1993 for a complete history of Australia), the birth of AusE must be dated back to January 26, 1788 when the first penal settlement was established on the eastern side of the continent.

1.1 The pre-1788 social origins of AusE and the transportation era

A picture of AusE requires a glance at the geographical and social origins of the first settlers. Australian society was made up of immigrants. A. G. Mitchell (1995: 5) has underlined the linguistic significance of the proportion of native born Australians in respect to immigrants during a two-century period : "[i]n 1841 just over 20% were Australian born. In

1861, after 73 years, 37.23% of people living in all colonies were born in Australia. The percentage climbed quite steeply to 60% in 1881, to 79.1% in 1901 and, at a more modest rate, to 90% in 1947. From that point there was a slow decline to 78% in 1981."

Transportation of convicts was definitively abolished in all states in 1868. Up to the goldrush period beginning in 1851, the Australian population was composed of convicts and free immigrants (whether assisted or unassisted), mainly Irish-, Scottish- or English-born. As Mitchell has suggested (1995: 27), many migrants probably spoke an attenuated form of their own original dialect, as "[t]he breaking down of the regional dialects through enforced mobility began in England before the industrial revolution. (…) There is a lot of evidence of movement among working people in search of work, including difference between place of birth and place of trial in the convict indents." As an illustration, L. L. Robson (Mitchell, 1995: 27) itemized 81 counties of trial for male convicts for the whole transportation era :

London	17 %	male convicts
Lancashire	7.9%	
Dublin	5%	
Yorkshire	4%	
Warwickshire	3%	
17 other counties	2%	
20 other counties	1%	
32 other counties	0.5%	

Although settlers had a wide variety of regional accents (Trudgill (1986: 130-131) also gives details of the various linguistic contributions from Wales, the Midlands and East Anglia), given the high proportion of settlers from the London area, it should come as no surprise that early descriptions of Australian speech likened it to Cockney, the counterpart to this popular dialect being a Standard English in use for administrative purposes (Horvath 1985). Yet the many waves of immigration which followed one another throughout the nineteenth century (thereby providing a constant cultural, social and political link with the mother country) did not prevent observers from acknowledging a "distinctive" Australian way of speaking as early as the 1820s.

From the first decades of the colony, the new Australian society was composed of three main social groups with logically antagonistic relationships (Gunn 1992; Horvath 1985) : the ruling élite of military officers, civilian administrators and landowners; a group of free settlers composed of tradesmen, labourers and clerks; the convicts and their descendants (90 % of native children being from convict parents).

1.2 About the linguistic origins of AusE

The question remains open as to how and when an Early AusE was born. Given the great mobility of settlers between New South Wales, Victoria and Moreton Bay for the first forty years of colonisation, a full phonetic stabilisation could probably not be established before 1830, when the proportion of native Australians had become significant. Yet as we have already pointed out, it was not unusual for observers to comment upon a typical "Australian dialect" and "Australian twang" before 1830. Three theories on the birth of Early AusE have been put forward (for a summary of the means of reconstruction of Early AusE, see Przewozny 2002: 283-293). The first possible explanation for the appearance of a distinctive Australian speech is the "mixing bowl" theory (Bernard 1969a and 1969b) : given that there must have existed social variation in the spoken language of the colony, and given that the native youth would not naturally have followed the linguistic model of their convict parents but rather the linguistic model of the community outside the family (Bernard 1969a:

9 and 1969b: 64), it follows that an Australian pronunciation, named Proto-Broad Australian, must have developed in the 1820s. This Proto-Broad Australian should be understood as an amalgamation of British dialects and as a consequence of voluntary social pressure on the part of the native Australians (Bernard 1969a: 10-11), which in turn led to the development of general and cultivated types of Australian pronunciation.

Göran Hammarström (1980) proposed another answer for the birth of Early AusE : AusE has traditionally been labelled a "transported language". As such, its origins could be a transported Cockney English rather than an amalgamation of various dialects on the Australian soil. This view was supported by Hammarström's contrastive analysis between contemporary Cockney, AusE and RP, an analysis which revealed many similarities between AusE and Cockney (among the many arguments which run counter to Hammarström's thesis are Trudgill's own analyses in 1986, which revealed a considerable Irish linguistic contribution for instance).

The third and most recent explanation was offered by Barbara Horvath (1985) who proposed a reconstruction of Early AusE on the following principles : if we consider a social situation with two main social groups, one of them having power and prestige, and if there is a strong antagonism between these two groups (Horvath 1985: 35), then provided that the situation lasts for long enough, the language will reflect the social situation. For Horvath, the structure of early Australian society could not give rise to a one and only linguistic variety (Proto-Broad AusE) developing into other varieties (General AusE and Cultivated AusE). One has to admit the existence of a Proto-Cultivated form as well. Then resentment of the strong cultural and political pressure from the mother country which was associated with this speech form, combined with a growing sense of nationalism and egalitarianism partly reinforced by the influence of Irish immigrants, may have contributed to the development of a General AusE type of speech (for phonetic, lexical and grammatical similarities between Irish English and AusE, see Horvath 1985: 39 and Trudgill 1986: 139-140).

2. Contemporary AusE: recognised phonological features

In the 1940s, Sidney J. Baker (1945, 1947) and A. G. Mitchell (1946; then Mitchell & Delbridge 1965) initiated the first linguistic surveys of Australian speech in order to measure its phonological and phonetic features. Since then, several phoneme inventories have been established (Clark 1989; Durie & Hajek 1994; Harrington et al. 1997), reflecting different theoretical positions on the part of the linguists, as well as emphasising phenomena such as centralisation and rounding of vowels.

2.1 Segmental features

The following readings are advised for further analyses : Mitchell & Delbridge 1965; Turner 1994; Cox & Palethorpe 2001; Cruttenden 2001; Wells 1982 (also Mannell & Cox's website (2004) for audio samples).

The phonemic inventory of AusE consists of 24 consonants and 20 vowels. AusE is referred to as belonging to the British stream of English dialects. Wells (1982: 595) and Gimson (Cruttenden 2001: 90) acknowledge a similar set of phonemes and phonemic contrasts as in RP (see Durand this vol., for fundamental vocalic differences between Scottish English and RP as a counterexample). The differences between RP and AusE are thus at the realisational level.

2.1.1   Consonants*

* Following Gimson's model (Cruttenden 2001: 149) for English consonants and Mannell's table (Mannell & Cox 2004).

	Plosive	Affricate	Fricative	Nasal	Approximant
Bilabial	p b			m	(w)
Labiodental			f v		
Dental			θ ð		
Alveolar	t d		s z	n	l
Post-alveolar		tʃ dʒ	ʃ ʒ		r
Palatal					j
Velar	k g			ŋ	w
Glottal			h		

AusE is defined (Cruttenden 2001; Wells 1982) as a non rhotic variety of English (on rhoticity see Moore and Durand this vol.). There is no glottal stop /ʔ/. There is no vocalisation of /l/, with a dark /ɫ/ in all positions (but see Borowsky 2001 for phonological restrictions on an acknowledged vocalisation of dark /ɫ/). Other recognised consonantal phenomena are the voicing of /t/, and /h/-dropping.

2.1.2   Vowels

Monophthongs			
Short vowels		Long vowels	
ɪ	pit	iː	heed
e	pet	ɛː	hair
æ	pat	aː	hard
ʌ	putt	ɔː	hoard
ɒ	pot	uː	food
ʊ	put	ɜː	heard
ə	about		

Diphthongs			
Centring diphthongs		Closing diphthongs	
ɪə	here	eɪ	say
ʊə	tour	aɪ	high
		ɔɪ	toy
		əʊ	so
		aʊ	how

Gimson (Cruttenden 2001), Wells (1982) and Turner (1994, in particular for an accurate and contemporary analysis of Australian realisations on the ternary spectrum of Mitchell & Delbridge 1965; cf. Section 3.1) recognise Australian front short vowels (/æ/ as in *trap*, /e/ as in *dress*, /ɪ/ as in *pit*) as raised (closer) vowels on the trapezium of English vowels. Hence *TRAP* words exhibit a vowel sound around Cardinal vowel [ɛ], and *DRESS* words present a glide towards [ɪ]. /ɪ/ does not occur in unaccented final position, but is replaced by /iː/ (compare AusE *city* /ˈsɪtiː/ with RP /ˈsɪtɪ/) and by /ə/ in unaccented non final position

(compare AusE *trinity* /ˈtrɪnəti:/ with RP /ˈtrɪnɪtɪ/, Turner 1994: 294). The central short vowel /ʌ/ (*strut*) is fronted towards Cardinal vowel [a]. /ɒ/ (*pot*) is closer, while /ʊ/ (*put*) undergoes no significant change (see also Trudgill 1986: 133 on the movement of AusE short vowels in phonological space, as well as Cox & Palethorpe 2001).

As for Australian specificities in long vowels, /i:/ (*beat*) can be realised as [əi:] and fronted /u:/ (*boot*) as [əu:], with lowered first elements. Both long vowels are slightly diphthongal in AusE. /ɜ:/ (*heard*) and /ɑ:/ (*start*, *palm*, *bath*) are also fronted. The latter phoneme has a quality close to Cardinal vowel [a], and should be noted /a:/ in AusE. The phoneme /ɔ:/ (*hoard*) does not undergo any fronting.

As is commonly stated (Trudgill 1986: 134-135 for example), Australian diphthongs are typically wider and slower, "with the first element being emphasized more than the second, with a resultant tendency to monophthongisation" (Trudgill 1986: 135). Closing diphthong /eɪ/ (*say*) can be realised as [aɪ] or [æɪ]. /aɪ/ (*high*) can be realised as [ɑɪ] with a rounding to [ɒɪ]. The first element in /ɔɪ/ (*hoy*) is raised so as to keep the distinction from /aɪ/ (*high*). /əʊ/ (*so*) and /aʊ/ (*how*) have a converging quality. The centring diphthongs /ɪə/ (*here*), /ɛə/ (*hair*) and /ʊə/ (*tour*) are in the process of being monophthongised to /ɪ:/, /ɛ:/ and /ɔ:/, respectively. In fact /ɛə/ is considered as having completed its monophthongisation to /ɛ:/. As a consequence of this completion, and as is shown in the table of Australian vowels, the phonemic inventory of AusE presents us with 2 centring diphthongs (as opposed to 3 in RP) and 5 closing diphthongs, and thus with 7 short vowels (taking account of schwa) and 6 long vowels (instead of 5 long vowels in RP).

2.2 Suprasegmental features

The major Australian feature is the Australian Questioning Intonation, more commonly labelled High Rising Tone (HRT), composed of a high head plus a rising nucleus (Wells 1982: 604; for historical developments of its study in Australia, see Przewozny 2002: 312-314). A HRT is normally typical of yes-no questions. But it may also be found in answers to questions, illustrating an expression of uncertainty (Lakoff 1975). In that case the speaker is seeking approval or confirmation of his or her answer. Another common use of the HRT is when the speaker is requesting a heightened participation from the listener.

In AusE, the HRT is also used in declarative sentences when a fall would normally be expected (see Adams 1969, Burgess 1973, Allan 1984, Guy & Vonwiller 1984, Horvath 1985). Horvath (1985) and Guy & Vonwiller (1984) have underlined that there is gender variation in the use of the Australian HRT. Female working class adolescents are the main users of the HRT. But on the whole, the difference between male and female speakers is not considerable. Still the figures seem to be relevant : 60% of females use a HRT, while only 40% of males use it. Lastly working class teenagers use the HRT more frequently with female middle class adult interviewers than with interviewers of other backgrounds. This feature tends to confirm that the HRT would be the expression of insecurity (a sort of social insecurity felt by a working class adolescent speaker in front of a middle class adult speaker) and respect.

As to the origins of this recurrent HRT, two main hypotheses may be suggested. The first one favours the influence of certain dialects on AusE, such as a Scottish influence (see Durand this vol.). For some (Hill 1994), it is New Zealand English (Bell & Holmes 1990) which influenced AusE. The second explanation is a psychological one, which seems to be deep-rooted in the tradition of a so-called linguistic and cultural inferiority complex on the part of Australian speakers (Przewozny 2002). The HRT would therefore function as the

expression of a search for approval on the part of the speaker, a search activated by this complex of inferiority.
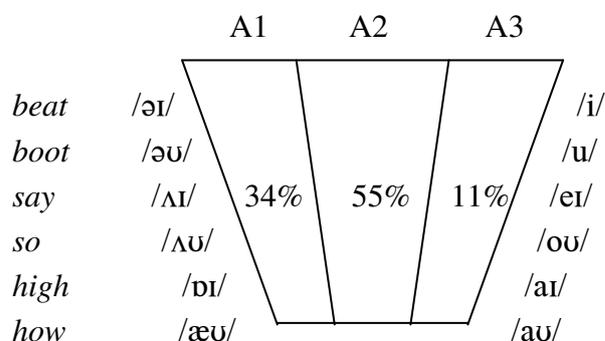
The development of a HRT in Great Britain as the result of an Australian influence has been commented upon many times. A well-known explanation seems to be the programming of Australian soap operas on British television. Gimson (Cruttenden 2001: 83) also suggests the increasing number of Australian and New Zealand assistants in London shops.

3. Variation in AusE

3.1 Social variation in AusE

The vowels of AusE were first documented impressionistically by Baker and Mitchell in the 1940s (see Przewozny 2002 for a detailed historical account), then instrumentally by Mitchell & Delbridge in 1965 as well as by Bernard in the 1960s.

The major point in the Mitchell-Delbridge national sociolinguistic survey is that a ternary spectrum was defined to describe social variation in pronunciation : on one side of the spectrum (shown in the diagram below) is A1 or Broad AusE used by 34% of the population in 1965; on the other side of the spectrum, A3 or Cultivated AusE (the closest variety to RP), spoken by 11% of speakers; and A2 or General AusE, spoken by 55% of the linguistic community. What must be emphasised is that the ternary spectrum does not represent three distinct types of pronunciation corresponding to rural or working, middle, and upper classes. It should be read as a continuum of types of pronunciation which overlap each other. The three types A1 A2 A3 were defined according to the variations noticed in the quality of the vowels of the six keywords *beat*, *boot*, *say*, *so*, *high*, *how* (Mitchell & Delbridge's symbols, 1965: 33) :

	A1	A2	A3
beat	/əɪ/		/i/
boot	/əʊ/		/u/
say	/ʌɪ/	34% 55% 11%	/eɪ/
so	/ʌʊ/		/oʊ/
high	/ɒɪ/		/aɪ/
how	/æʊ/		/aʊ/

Cox (1996, 1998, 1999), as well as Cox & Palethorpe (2001) proposed some acoustic analyses of Australian vowels and demonstrated that there have been changes in the past forty years (for summaries of changes in monophthongs and diphthongs from the 1960s to the 1990s, see Cox & Palethorpe 2001: 25 and 34). Nowadays when one listens to Australian speakers, it seems that a clearcut distinction between Broad AusE, General AusE and Cultivated AusE is less obvious to make. In this respect, one is entitled to challenge the ternary spectrum and ask whether the Broad and Cultivated types could be converging towards General AusE.

There is a background to this convergence hypothesis. In her sociolinguistic survey of Sydney speech, Horvath (1985) concluded that in an urban context, informants preferred to use General AusE rather than the much stigmatised Broad type, or the posh and affected Cultivated type of pronunciation. This conclusion seems to match her converging hypothesis for Early AusE.

Some more clues in favour of the convergence hypothesis may be a general increase of /æ/ over /ɑː/ in words such as *castle* or *dance* (Bradley 1991: 232) illustrating a shift away from Cultivated AusE and RP, and the lowering of /æ/ (Cox 1999: 18) away from any stigmatised variety of the spectrum (see also Section 3.2.2 of the present article). Cox (1998) has also suggested a tendency away from Cultivated AusE towards General AusE in the monophthongisation of /ɪə/, as well as a movement from Broad AusE to General AusE in the retracted first element of /əʊ/. These clues seem to confirm (Collins & Blair 2001) that Australian speakers do not feel at ease about their linguistic link either to a Cultivated accent on the verge of Standard British English, or to a Broad, uneducated and rural type of pronunciation.

3.2 Investigating variation in AusE within the PAC Project

3.2.1 Aims and methodology

The PAC Project is a project coordinated by Jacques Durand and Philip Carr. Its four main goals are 1) to give a picture of spoken English in its diversity and its unity, 2) to test phonological and phonetic models from a synchronic and diachronic point of view, 3) to favour communication between specialists in speech and in phonological theory, and 4) to provide data and analyses in order to improve the teaching of English as a foreign language. Among the criteria of the experiment, the methodology is a Labovian one, including two lists of words and a text to be read, as well as formal and informal conversations with the speakers (for detailed information on the aims, protocol and transcription in the PAC project, see Durand & Pukli 2004, Carr, Durand & Pukli this vol. and Durand & Pukli this vol.).

The scope of the PAC investigation in Australia is twofold: first, to produce a phonological inventory of AusE and to test phenomena such as rhoticity and the /t/-/d/ opposition. Second, in the line of Horvath's convergence hypothesis, to evaluate AusE in sociolinguistic terms and the relevance of the ternary spectrum today.

The Australian PAC corpus was built in August 2003 with 10 informants. Following the PAC criteria, "the protocol [was] neutral as to the selection of informants" (Durand and Pukli 2004: 5). Such parameters as location, gender, age were controlled, and details relating to education, professional status, ethnicity, languages spoken within the community, etc. were recorded in order to complete the social portrait of the informants. Lastly, as "social diversity is less easy to achieve with small groups of speakers (…) it has been found profitable to study family networks which allow for better comparison of age-grading" (Durand & Pukli 2004: 5). The PAC interviewers in Australia have mainly focused on three family networks. The informants were all born in Australia. AusE is their first language. There are male and female speakers (ideally their proportion should be equal, but this could not be achieved for this 2003 survey). The informants are aged from 9 (for the youngest female informant) to 59 (for the eldest male informant), hence covering three age groups (20-, 20+, 40+). The speakers were required to have a basic level of reading skills in order to perform the reading tasks (the 9-year-old girl was thus excluded from the reading of the word lists and the text, but she read the first chapter of her favourite children book). The informants also reflect distinct social groups (working class in White Cliffs and Denniliquin, upper middle class in Sydney). The survey covers a quite large geographical area: from Sydney to Wentworth, and from White Cliffs to Dubbo. The recordings were made with a minidisk recorder. They are to be segmented, transcribed and analysed using PRAAT, a speech analysis software created by Paul Boersma and David Weenink at the University of Amsterdam (see Durand & Pukli this vol.).

A supplementary tool was designed for the Australian informants in the form of a third list of words. List 3 should help to clarify the definition of Australian speech and speakers. It is a tool for comparing the Mitchell-Delbridge corpus established in 1965, which is still accepted as a standard point of reference, and the following corpora preceding our own survey in August 2003. List 3 is therefore based on the six keysounds (the vowel sounds in *beat*, *boot*, *say*, *so*, *high* and *how*) which have proved to be fundamental in the variation of Australian pronunciation. In order to follow more closely the requirements of the PAC project, every other element which was used in major speech analyses from the 1960s to the 1990s has been added to List 3 (see Cochrane 1970 and Bernard 1967 on the length of vowels in an H-D frame, Harrington, Cox & Evans 1997 on the quality and quantity of vowels (Australian National Database of Spoken Language corpus), Bradley 1989 and 1991, as well as Horvath & Horvath 2001 on /æ/ and /aː/ in nasal clusters or fricative contexts, and Tollfree 2001 on the reduction of /t/).

3.2.2 Some preliminary results

The PAC data awaits a complete instrumental analysis. Nevertheless, on the basis of auditory and statistical analyses, a few observations may be offered relating to variation. Although some features which are commonly considered characteristic features of AusE are lacking, such as /h/-dropping, the Australian PAC corpus seems to confirm all the recognised phonological features of AusE, and some of the phonetic ones such as variation in plosive /t/ or variation between /æ/ and /aː/ as shown below.

In AusE, plosive /t/ may be voiced in intervocalic medial position (*attitude*), intervocalic final position (*lot of*) or initially in certain keywords (*Tasmania*), the contrast between /t/ and /d/ being neutralised (for a discussion on tapping, fricating and glottaling of /t/, see Tollfree 2001). List 3 was used to test this neutralisation. The results were doublechecked with the text and interview data. The results with three representative speakers were as follows:

In the reading context of List 3 :

- WC1 (male speaker, aged 39, White Cliffs, lower General AusE): one case of neutralisation in the word *mutton*, but not in *attitude* and *beauty*, nor in initial position in *Tasmania*, three words supposedly famous for /t/-voicing in AusE.
- SY1 (male speaker, aged 59, Sydney, General AusE): two cases of neutralisation in *Saturday* and *getaway* (with the informant's tiredness as a possible factor).
- SY3 (female speaker, aged 30, Sydney, Modified to General AusE in informal contexts): not a single case of neutralisation. The contrast between /t/ and /d/ was carefully maintained, but the young lady was constantly using her "best English", or Modified AusE.

In the informal context of conversation (hence connected speech), all three informants neutralised the contrast between /t/ and /d/ in a high number of words, whatever their age, gender and type of pronunciation.

Variation between /æ/ and /aː/ in AusE has been much discussed by linguists. Wells (1982: 599) states that /aː/ is used for the *start*, *palm* and *bath* sets of words. Yet in some words, Australian speakers prefer /æ/, mainly in a Vowel + Nasal + Consonant context (nasal clusters such as *advantage*, *chance*, *demand*, *example* or *plant*). Wells adds that some geographical variation has been observed: in the eastern regions /aː/ is considered as high-class or affected and /æ/ is seen as popular, whereas in the southern regions /aː/ is a common

pronunciation (hence *dance* in Melbourne /daːns/ and Sydney **/dæns/**). Bradley (1989: 263) underlines some regional, social, stylistic and age variation between /æ/ and /aː/ in particular for the words *dance, advance, plant* and *grasp*. The same author (1991: 227) notes that speakers tend to choose /æ/ before a nasal cluster. He makes the geographical hypothesis (1989: 263 and 1991) that for those words which vary, /aː/ is more frequent in Sydney or Adelaide than in Melbourne, Brisbane and Hobart where /æ/ is commonly heard.

Variation between /æ/ and /aː/ may also be considered as a clue to social variation between Broad, General and Cultivated AusE. For Bradley (1989: 263 and 1991: 229-231), /aː/ remains the prestige form and is sometimes viewed negatively. /æ/ is used in higher proportion by working class suburbs. Cox (1999: 18) and Cox & Palethorpe (2001: 40) suggest that the lowering of /æ/ may be the result of sociolinguistic hypercorrection in response to a prestigious alternative. Indeed the raising of /æ/ which is characteristic of Broad AusE seems to have disappeared from various acoustic analyses : in prenasal environments (*dance*), /aː/ is prestigious. Many speakers seem to prefer the /æ/ alternative, lowered, in order to avoid the prestigious but affected /aː/. Horvath & Horvath (2001) also confirm a thin social variation, with working class speakers more likely to use **/æ/**, and middle class speakers more specifically choosing /æ/ for the word *grasp*. Finally the variation between /æ/ and /aː/ can also be considered as a clue to a new gender variation (Bradley 1991: 229), where males use /æ/ in higher proportion (but see Horvath & Horvath 2001 for a different opinion).

Diagram: occurrences of /æ/ and /aː/ in Word List 1 and Word List 3 of the PAC protocol*:

LIST 1	**WC1** LowG.	**SY1** G.	*SY2* Cult.	*SY3* G. to M.	*SY4* G.	*SY5* G.	*DE1* G.	**DE2** LowG.	*DE3* G.
bard	aː	aː	ɛː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː
bared	aː	aː	ɛː	ɛː	ɛː	ɛː	ɛː	aː	ɛː
barred	aː	aː	aː	æ	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː
bad	æ	æ	æ	æ	æ	æ	æ	æ	æ
bard	aː	aː	ɛː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː
pant	æ	æ	æ	æ	æ	æ	æ	æ	æ
plant	æ	æ	æ	æ	aː	æ	æ	æ	æ
master	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː
afterwards	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː
ants	æ	æ	æ	æ	æ	æ	æ	æ	æ
aunts	aː	æ	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː
dance	æ	æ	aː	aː / æ	aː	æ	æ	æ	æ
father	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː
farther	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː
LIST 3	**WC1**	**SY1**	*SY2*	*SY3*	*SY4*	*SY5*	*DE1*	**DE2**	*DE3*
hard	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː
dance	æ	æ	aː	æ / aː	æ	æ	æ	æ	æ
advance	æ	æ	aː	aː	æ	æ	æ	æ	æ
plant	æ	æ	aː	æ	æ	æ	æ	æ	æ

grasp	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	æ	aː	aː	aː
giraffe	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː
mask	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː	aː

* WC : White Cliffs area   LowG. : Lower General AusE
  SY : Sydney area (city and Northern suburbs)   G. : General AusE
  DE : Denniliquin area   Cult. : Cultivated AusE
  WC1 : male speaker   M. : Modified AusE
  SY2 : female speaker

The following facts have been observed in the PAC data:
- *bard*, *bared*, *barred*: the word *bared* is consistently pronounced /bɛːd/ by female speakers, but /baːd/ by all male speakers. SY2 shows a tendency to use the phoneme /ɛː/ in the word *bard* as well. It should not be concluded here that there is some gender variation in *bared* (/bɛːd/ /baːd/), since this systematic variation only occurs in one word. It could simply be suggested that WC1, SY1 and DE2 linked /aː/ with the vowel sound of *bard* or that they confounded the word with *barred* ("surrounded with bars").
- vowel followed by a fricative (*master*, *afterwards*, *father*, *grasp*, *giraffe*) : there is general agreement on the choice of /aː/, except once when SY5 pronounces /græsp/.
- vowel followed by a nasal + consonant : this is the context in which there appears to be much variation among the female informants from Sydney : SY4 says *plant* /plaːnt/ in List 1 but /plænt/ in List 3, then *dance* /daːns/ in List 1 but /dæns/ in List 3. SY2 says /daːns/ in both lists, but /plænt/ in List 1 and /plaːnt/ in List 3. SY3 is clearly hesitant: although she finally chooses /daːns/ in List 1, she chooses /dæns/ in List 3, then hesitates again with /daːns/ and chooses *advance* /ədˈvaːns/ for the next word.

    It appears that these variations are not surprising since dictionaries give the choice between /æ/ and /aː/ as two possibilities. Wells (1990: viii) states that /æ/ is "widespread among educated speakers of British English but which are not, however, considered to belong to RP" for such words as *plant, aunt, dance, grasp, giraffe, mask. The Macquarie Dictionary* (Delbridge 1981: 43) acknowledges variation for the words *plant, dance, advance* and *grasp* (the pronunciation /dæns/ being "the one more widely used" than /daːns/).
    The following conclusions may be drawn from the PAC data : no clear (systematic) geographical or gender variation could be observed in the NSW area under study. As far as previous studies are concerned, it can be confirmed that speakers generally prefer /æ/ to /aː/ in the prenasal contexts of the words *dance* and *advance*, and /aː/ for the word *grasp*. In particular, the six keywords *dance, advance, plant, grasp, giraffe* and *mask* confirm Horvath & Horvath's statement (2001: 350) that there is commonly more chance to get /æ/ in the first three words, and /aː/ in the last three words (with, in Sydney alone, a percentage of 93%, 86%, 82%, 30%, 4% and 0% for /æ/, respectively).
    When a speaker deliberately and unsystematically chooses an affected pronunciation instead of his or her normal pronunciation, it is a sign of variation towards Modified AusE. This fourth type of pronunciation is used by speaker SY3. Her hesitation between /daːns/ and /dæns/ is one instance of Modified AusE among several others in List 3. It is still more obvious in her reading of word lists 1 and 2 and the text. SY2, who is the mother of SY3,

generally uses the prestigious form /aː/ in prenasal contexts, but in that case the informant speaks a natural Cultivated type of AusE, therefore not Modified (this auditory conclusion has been established on the basis of seven years of listening to SY2 and SY3 in every day conversation). Interestingly in the PAC word lists, the alternative choice /aː/ occurs in *dance* and *advance* only in the context of SY2's Cultivated AusE and SY3's Modified AusE (and yet it is not systematic in the words *pant* and *plant*).

The PAC data also seems to infirm the stereotype of working class speakers (in the present study in Denniliquin and White Cliffs areas) generally preferring the /æ/ form, as the corpus looks quite homogenous between the three areas and the different social environments under study.

5. Conclusion

The first analysis of the PAC data confirms the main recognised features of AusE at the segmental and the suprasegmental levels. The author of the present article is quite conscious that the conclusions which were presented here rely on a corpus of ten informants, and that a larger PAC survey has yet to be implemented.

As was stated in Section 3.1, it seems that a clearcut distinction between Broad, General and Cultivated AusE is less and less easy to make. As a confirmation of David Blair's forecast (2003, personal interview), only one speaker of Cultivated AusE could be recorded in the PAC survey, and none of Broad AusE. Yet Cultivated AusE has not disappeared from the Australian spectrum, nor has Broad AusE (Harrington et al. 1997 ; Cox & Palethorpe 2001). Indeed the three types of pronunciation on the spectrum could not possibly have vanished in forty years time, for the simple reason that Australian society (as any other human society) is not as classless as it is sometimes asserted. But Broad AusE and Cultivated AusE seem to have undergone some changes towards more neutrality. On the basis of our data and that of previous studies, it may be hypothesised that the same converging phenomenon has been taking place in rural areas (White Cliffs area and Denniliquin area), thus not only in urban contexts. Though WC1 is an opal miner in the desert of NSW, with rural origins and a working class social background, it is not possible to say that he is a Broad speaker anymore in the Mitchell-Delbridge sense. It seems that WC1, as well as DE2 (also from a rural area with a working class background) follow the same converging pattern as SY1, a businessman in Sydney who was brought up in an upper middle class environment.

Two monographs by Collins & Blair (1989) and Blair & Collins (2001) (from which some of the papers used in the preparation of the present article were taken) cover most of the linguistic research on Australian English in its phonology, lexis, morphology and syntax. Another recommended work is Clyne (1991) on trends in the Australian linguistic research and contemporary issues, and a useful overview of Aboriginal languages, community languages, and language policy in Australia.

Acknowledgements

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