



# Varieties of Variants of the English Language, Taking into Account the Specifics of Their Pronunciation in Speech on the Example of Local Dialects of the USA, Canada and Australia

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**ABSTRACT**

Pronunciation is the basic process of expressing the English language. After all, it immediately determines how well you speak or use English. How we pronounce depends largely on practice and where we live. Residents of Australia and the United States speak actively and clearly and express English as it is. Correct pronunciation determines excellent knowledge and skills.

**Keywords:**

Pronunciation, clarity, language barrier, universal language, language variability, ideal language, mother tongue

In many ways, compared to British English, American English is conservative in its phonology. Dialects in North America are most distinctive on the East Coast of the continent partly because these areas were in contact with England, and imitated prestigious varieties of British English at a time when those varieties were undergoing changes, and partly merely because many speech communities on the East Coast have existed in their present locations longer than others. The interior of the country was settled by people who were not closely connected to England, as they had no access to the ocean during a time when journeys to Britain were always by sea. As such, the inland speech is much more homogeneous than the East Coast speech and did not imitate the changes in speech from England.

Most North American speech is rhotic, as English was in most places in the 17th century. Rhoticity was further supported by Hiberno-

English, Scottish English, and West Country English. In most varieties of North American English, the sound corresponding to the letter "R" is a retroflex or alveolar approximant rather than a trill or a tap. The loss of syllable-final r in North America is confined mostly to the accents of eastern New England, New York City and surrounding areas, South Philadelphia, and the coastal portions of the South. Dropping of syllable-final r sometimes happens in natively rhotic dialects if r is located in unaccented syllables or words and the next syllable or word begins in a consonant. In England, lost 'r' was often changed into [ə] (schwa), giving rise to a new class of falling diphthongs. Furthermore, the 'er' sound of (stressed) fur or (unstressed) butter, which is represented in IPA as stressed [ɜː] or unstressed [ə] is realized in American English as a monophthongal r-colored vowel. This does not happen in the non-rhotic varieties of North American speech.

The shift of [æ] to [ɑ] (the so-called "broad A") before [f], [s], [θ], [ð], [z], [v] alone or preceded by [n]. This is the difference between the British Received Pronunciation and American pronunciation of bath and dance. In the United States, only linguistically conservative eastern New England speakers took up this innovation, which is becoming increasingly rare even there.

The horse-hoarse merger of the vowels [ɔ] and [ou] before 'r', making pairs like horse/hoarse, corps/core, for/four, morning/mourning etc. homophones.

The wine-whine merger making pairs like wine/whine, wet/whet, Wales/whales, wear/where etc. homophones, in most cases eliminating /w/, the voiceless labiodental fricative. Many older varieties of southern and western American English still keep these distinct, but the merger appears to be spreading.

Differences between British English and American English

American English has many spelling differences from English as used elsewhere (especially British English), some of which were made as part of an attempt to make more rational the spelling used in Britain at the time. Unlike many 20th century language reforms (for example, Turkey's alphabet shift, Norway's spelling reform) the American spelling changes were not driven by government, but by textbook writers and dictionary makers. Spelling tendencies in Britain from the 17th century until the present day (e.g. -ise for -ize, programme for program, kerb for curb (noun), skilful for skillful, chequered for checkered, etc.), in some cases favored by the francophile tastes of 19th century Victorian England, had little effect on American English.

The first American dictionary was written by Noah Webster in 1828. At the time the United States was a relatively new country and Webster's particular contribution was to show that the region spoke a different dialect from Britain, and so he wrote a dictionary with many spellings differing from the standard. Many of these changes were initiated unilaterally by Webster.

Webster also argued for many "simplifications" to the idiomatic spelling of the

period. Many, although not all, of his simplifications fell into common usage alongside the original versions with simple spelling modifications.

Some words with simplified spellings in American English are words such as centre, colour, and maneuver, which are spelled centre, colour, and manoeuvre in other forms of English.

American English also has many lexical differences from British English (BrE). American English sometimes favors words that are morphologically more complex, whereas British English uses clipped forms, such as AmE transportation and BrE transport or where the British form is a back-formation, such as AmE burglarize and BrE burgle (from burglar).

The word corn, used in England to refer to wheat (or any cereal), came to denote the plant *Zea mays*, the most important crop in the U.S., originally named Indian corn by the earliest settlers; wheat, rye, barley, oats, etc. came to be collectively referred to as grain (or breadstuffs). Other notable farm related vocabulary additions were the new meanings assumed by barn (not only a building for hay and grain storage, but also for housing livestock) and team (not just the horses, but also the vehicle along with them), as well as, in various periods, the terms range, (corn) crib, lay by (a crop), truck, elevator, sharecropping, and feedlot.

Ranch, later applied to a house style, derives from Mexican Spanish; most Spanish contributions came indeed after the War of 1812, with the opening of the West. Among these are, other than toponyms, chaps (from chaparreras), plaza, lasso, bronco, buckaroo; examples of "English" additions from the cowboy era are bad man, maverick, chuck, and Boot Hill; from the California Gold Rush came such idioms as hit pay dirt or strike it rich. The word blizzard probably originated in the West.

A couple of notable late 18th century additions are the verb belittle and the noun bid, both first used in writing by Thomas Jefferson.

With the new continent developed new forms of dwelling, and hence a large inventory of words designating real estate concepts (land office, lot, outlands, waterfront, the verbs locate and relocate, betterment, addition, subdivision),

types of property ( log cabin, adobe in the 18th century; frame house, apartment, tenement house, shack, shanty in the 19th century; project, condominium, townhouse, mobile home, multi-family in the 20th century), and parts thereof ( driveway, breezeway, backyard, dooryard; clapboard, siding, trim, baseboard; stoop (from Dutch), family room, den; and, in recent years, HVAC, central air, walkout basement).

Ever since the American Revolution, a great deal of terms connected with the U.S. political institutions have entered the language; examples are run, gubernatorial, primary election, carpetbagger (after the Civil War), repeater, lame duck, and pork barrel. Some of these are internationally used (e.g. caucus, gerrymander, filibuster, exit poll).

Typical examples are the vocabulary of railroading (see further at rail terminology) and transportation terminology, ranging from names of roads ( Interstate, freeway, parkway, etc.) to road infrastructure ( parking lot, overpass, rest area), and from automotive terminology to public transit (e.g. in the sentence "riding the subway downtown"); such American introductions as commuter (from commutation ticket), concourse, to board (a vehicle), to park, double-park, and parallel park (a car), jump (as a red light), double decker, terminal (as a noun), or centre (of a city) have long been used in all dialects of English. Trades of various kinds have endowed (American) English with household words describing jobs and occupations ( bartender and barkeep, longshoreman, patrolman, hobo, bouncer, bellhop, roustabout, white collar, blue collar, employee, boss (from Dutch), intern, busboy, mortician, senior citizen), businesses and workplaces ( department store, supermarket, thrift store, gift shop, drugstore, motel, main street, gas station, hardware store, savings and loan, hock (also from Dutch)), as well as general concepts and innovations ( mail "letters and packages," automated teller machine, smart card, cash register, dishwasher, reservation (as at hotels), pay envelope, movie, mileage, shortage, outage, blood bank). Already existing English words—such as store, shop, dry goods, haberdashery, lumber—underwent shifts in

meaning; some—such as mason, student, clerk, the verbs can (as in "canned goods"), ship, fix, carry, enroll (as in school), run (as in "run a business"), release, and haul—were given new significations, while others (such as tradesman) have retained meanings that disappeared in England. From the world of business and finance came breakeven, merger, delisting, downsize, disintermediation, bottom line; from sports terminology came, jargon aside, Monday-morning quarterback, cheap shot, game plan (football); in the ballpark, out of left field, off base, hit and run, and many other idioms from baseball; gamblers coined bluff, blue chip, ante, bottom dollar, raw deal, pass the buck, ace in the hole, freeze-out; miners coined bedrock, bonanza, peter out, and the verb prospect from the noun; and rail-roadmen are to be credited with make the grade, sidetrack, head-on, and the verb railroad. A number of Americanisms describing material innovations remained largely confined to North America: elevator, power cord, ground, gasoline; many automotive terms fall in this category, although many do not ( hatchback, compact car, SUV, station wagon, tailgate, motorhome, truck, pickup truck, to exhaust).

In addition to the above-mentioned loans from French, Spanish, Mexican Spanish, Dutch, and Native American languages, other accretions from foreign languages came with 19th and early 20th century immigration; notably, from Yiddish ( chutzpah, schmooze, and such idioms as need something like a hole in the head) and German ( hamburger, kindergarten, gesundheit, hinterland, wiener, scram, deli, and apparently cookbook, fresh "impudent," what gives?, and perhaps the often criticized use of hopefully as a sentence modifier).

With respect to morphology, American English has always shown a marked tendency to use substantives as verbs and form compound words. Examples of verbed nouns are interview, advocate, vacuum, lobby, expense, room, pressure, rear-end, transition, feature, profile, buffalo, weasel, express (mail), belly-ache, spearhead, skyrocket, showcase, merchandise, service (as a car), corner, torch, exit (as in "exit a place"), factor (in mathematics), gun "shoot," author (which disappeared in English around

1630 and was revived in the U.S. three centuries later) and, out of American material, proposition, graft (bribery), bad-mouth, vacation, major, backpack, backtrack, intern, ticket (traffic violations), hassle, blacktop, peer review, dope, and OD. Compounds coined in the U.S. are for instance foothill..

Finally, a great deal of common English colloquialisms from various periods are American in origin ( OK, cool, darn, gnarly, hot, lame, doing great, hang (out), no-brainer, hip, fifty-fifty, gross, doofus, diddly-squat, screw up, fool around, nerd, jerk, nuke, nut-ball, 24/7, heads-up, thusly, way back), and so are many other English idioms (get the hang of, take for a ride, bark up the wrong tree, keep tabs, run scared, take a backseat, have an edge over, stake a claim, take a shine to, in on the ground floor, bite off more than one can chew, off/on the wagon, for the birds, stay put, inside track, stiff upper lip, bad hair day, throw a monkey wrench, give the hairy eyeball, under the weather, jump bail, come clean, come again?, will the real x please stand up?); some English words now in general use, such as hijacking, disc jockey, boost, bulldoze, and jazz, originated as American slang. Americanisms formed by alteration of existing words include notably pesky (from pest), phony (from fawney), rambunctious (from rumbustious), pry (as in "pry open," from prize), putter (verb, from potter), buddy (from brother), sundae (from Sunday), and skeeter (from mosquito). Adjectives that arose in the U.S. are for example capsule, deadpan, lengthy, submittable, upcoming, wrathful, leery, logy, cluttered (up), bossy, cute and cutesy, vanilla, flippy, gloppy, peppy, glitzy, picayune, grouchy, scroungy, wacky, grounded (of a child), punk (in all senses), sticky (of the weather), and through (as in "through train," or meaning "finished").

General American English Pronunciation (GAEP) is a kind of standard pronunciation found in American dictionaries such as the Merriam Webster. (On the next page you will see the main characteristics of this kind of pronunciation followed by some examples.) We should not confuse Standard American English Pronunciation with Standard American English. The latter is the name for the grammar and vocabulary of the written and spoken variety

generally used in the fields of education, law and government.

GAEP is not the only kind of pronunciation found in the United States of America. There are several others but the two main kinds are: the New England accent and the Southern English accent.

The English started to colonize America in the early 1600s. They came from different areas of the UK and were from different social classes. The Puritans settled in New England and other settlers in Virginia. Those who settled New England mostly came from the South East of England and the London area and were from the middle and lower classes. The settlers in Virginia were mostly from the upper classes. Both these groups were in touch with England and had non-rhotic accents.

The reason why American English is generally rhotic is that during the colonization period many parts of England were rhotic, for example, the South West -as we saw when we looked at Cornish English. Also, many settlers came from Ireland and Scotland which are also rhotic.

### **Australian English**

AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH Short form AusE. The English language as used in Australia. It has a short history, reflecting some 200 years of European settlement, and an even shorter period of recognition as a national variety, the term being first recorded in 1940. It is only since then that features of AusE have been regarded as distinctively and respectably Australian, instead of as evidence of colonial decline from the norms of the STANDARD ENGLISH of England.

### **Background**

Initially, and uniquely, a majority of the British colonies in Australia were penal. As they expanded and as free colonies were developed, immigrants using languages other than English were insignificant. Relations with the Aborigines were generally poor and after an initial intake of words from their languages (such as boomerang, dingo, kangaroo, koala, kookaburra, wombat) were not conducive to extensive borrowing. The settlers were almost

all Anglo-Celtic and geographical isolation was of great importance. The preoccupations of the colonists were the discovery and exploration of a new land, rich in exotic flora and fauna, and pastoral occupations such as raising sheep and cattle under circumstances vastly different from 'the Old Country'. In the late 20c, however, Australians are predominantly urban and increasingly multicultural. The major areas of lexical growth are international, as in computing and surfing. In the 19c, the situation was the reverse.

### Pronunciation

The most marked feature of the Australian accent is its homogeneity, with no regional differences as marked as those in BrE and AmE, though recent studies have associated particular phonological characteristics with state capitals. There is, however, a social continuum in which three varieties are generally recognized: Broad Australian, General Australian, and Cultivated Australian. Of these, Cultivated Australian most closely approaches British RP and Broad Australian most vigorously exhibits distinctive regional features. It is generally assumed that the Australian accent derives from the mixing of British and Irish accents in the early years of settlement. However, although most convicts and other settlers came from London, the Midlands, and Ireland, the influence of the original accents cannot be conclusively quantified. The present spectrum was probably established by the early 19c.

The major features of AusE pronunciation are: (1) It is non-rhotic. (2) Its intonation is flatter than that of RP. (3) Speech rhythms are slow, stress being more evenly spaced than in RP. (4) Consonants do not differ significantly from those in RP. (5) Vowels are in general closer and more frontal than in RP, with /i/ and /u/ as in tea, two diphthongized to /əɪ/ and /əʊ/ respectively. (6) The vowel in can't dance may be /æ/ or /a/. (7) The schwa is busier than in RP, frequently replacing /ɪ/ in unaccented positions, as in boxes, dances, darkest, velvet, acid. (8) Some diphthongs shift, RP /eɪ/ towards /ʌɪ/, as in Australia, day, mate, and /aɪ/ towards /ɒɪ/, as in high, wide. (9) Speakers whose first

language is not English or who have a bilingual background (Aboriginal, immigrant) often use sounds and a delivery influenced by the patterns of the first or other language. (10) The name of the letter h is often pronounced 'haitch' by speakers wholly or partly of Irish-Catholic background.

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