

International English

Australian English

“Language is a system of arbitrary, vocal symbols which permit all people in a given culture, or other people who have learned the system of that culture, to communicate and to interact” (Widdowson, 1971). Every nationality and ethnic groups have variations of language. The difference between these varieties is described as ‘dialect’. Meaning of the word dialect is; the usage or vocabulary that is characteristic of a specific group of people. Varieties of English are used in more than 72 countries with an estimation of 2,090 million users by 1997, approximately a third of the world population at that time, with non-native speakers in the majority (Crystal, 1997). Australian English is the one of the English variety. This essay will examine the Australian English and compare Australian English with standard British English. Also this essay will argue why non-native speakers should learn Standard British English rather than RP (Received Pronunciation).

A standard language is a variety of a particular language which, through reasons of history and geography, has risen to an elevated status. (Rogers, 2011). Every language has many varieties and these varieties differ by socially and geographically. An example of a variety could be the ‘Cockney English’. This accent indicates that the person who is talking is from lower class and has poor education. This is not true for every person who is talking with cockney accent but cockney accent is commonly used in London by lower working class (My Fair Lady, 1964). The accent that a person used is very important in the past because people were very concerned about where you come from and the accent that a person talks indicates its social status. For example in ‘My Fair Lady’ movie girl changed her accent to Received Pronunciation to find a better job. Nowadays accent still have an importance but it is less important than past.



Fig. 1: Diagram showing the geographical locations of selected languages and accents of the British Isles.

The diagram above illustrates dialects and English language variations that are spoken in The United Kingdom. As you see from the picture there are plenty of variations. There can be more than one accent in a region such as; London has two accents one is cockney and the other one is estuary.

The variety of English which this essay will focus on and analyze is Australian English. Australian English has a very short history; it only exists for 200 years. "Australian English" is not only term that is used to describe this variety. The terms "Antipodean English, Austral English and Australasian English" used to describe this variety in the past. There are nearly 250 languages were used in Australia, at the time of the British colonization. The dominant part of the population in Australia has British ancestors. Australia was colonized for a 200 years and the many settlers first came from London prisons that's why the two of the London accent (Cockney and Estuary) have very important impact on Australian English. As it mention before Australians have British ancestors and a significant amount of these British people are Irish that's why Hiberno-English also had been influence the Australian English. On the other hand, American English has been influenced the Australian English and have very important impact on this language, in recent years.

To observe the Australian English, a n interview was made with Keppie Coutts by using Skype. She is an Australian woman from Sydney who now lives in Los Angeles. It takes about forty minutes to discuss all aspects of Australian English. She studied "English Language" at university that's why she has much information about English language especially 'Australian English'. It did not take long to perceive the difference in her dialect to Standard British English. She stated that, there is no post -vocalic /r/ within this variety, such as speakers of Australian English do not pronounce /r/ any of t hese words; art and hair. There is a fronted /a/ which is a similar feature of Souther n Irish variety of British English.

Examples for this feature can be the words, dark calm and heart. In vocabulary majority of the words came from British English but there is some words come from Aboriginal language such as; kangaroo, billabong (waterhole), koala and dingo. Some these words are known by whole word but many people think they are British English words. Aboriginal words are mostly used for place names, fruits and animals. The most obvious difference in spelling between Standard British English and Australian English is; there is no 'u' in some words such as; word labour is spelled as labor.

British English	Australian English
Accident	<i>Prang</i>
Chicken	Chook
<i>Farm</i>	Station
<i>Game</i>	Brave
<i>Food</i>	Tucker
<i>Mosquito</i>	<i>Mozzie</i>
Soldier	<i>Digger</i>

Fig. 3: A table of some words that is different from British English.

"In England there is one accent that has come to stand out all others, traditionally conveying associations of respectable social standing and a good education. This 'prestige' accent is known as Received Pronunciation or RP." (Crystal, 1988). On the other hand there is a standard language for English which Standard British English and it is used in media, law courts and in schools. Only twelve percent of the population uses Standard British English (Roger, 2011).

Standard British English is accepted and known all over the world. Standard British English have plenty of advantages to a non-native speakers such as every people accepted it and no one will judge the speaker because of its accent. Accent was very important in the past and people can judge you because of your accent. Even if there is no such a big judgement like in the past, today people can still prejudice a person because of its accent. The other advantage of learning standard British English is; Standard British English is an academic way of talking and writing and it is easy to understand by every person. Some accents can be very strong and people cannot be able to understand, such as: Scottish accent. For example a television programme filmed in Scotland was screened by a BBC channel in England with subtitles. Those with Standard British English will have increased opportunity in every aspect, particularly with employment throughout the world, as it is globally understood and recognized. Also standard British English is not linked to any social class; this will prevent any discrimination because of an accent. On the other hand, Standard British English also has disadvantages such as: it is not common as other standard varieties for example; US.

Received Pronunciation is very important in the past because it indicates the higher social class (Crystal, 1988). Received Pronunciation is more formal than other accents. This can be an advantage in some cases and sometimes it can be disadvantage. Also Received Pronunciation is very clear and it can be understood by other people very easily. The only aspect that makes Received Pronunciation unfavourable is; it divides people. Received Pronunciation was accepted as best accent and it indicates high social class. People that have other accents can be judged badly. Nowadays, people start to think negatively about Received Pronunciation and this accent lost its value. Received Pronunciation is still the standard accent of the Royal Family, Parliament, the Church of England, the High Courts, and other national institutions; but less than 3 per cent of the British people speak it in a pure form now (Roger, 2011).

To conclude, English is very common language and used by many country and region. These countries and regions have developed their own variety language where these varieties can be differing in grammar, spelling, pronunciation and vocabulary. Every variety has its own unique words for example; Australian English developed word 'prang' which is meaning 'accident' in Standard British English. This is not only for Australian English all other varieties have words like this. Standard language is the most favorable variety of English; it can be either Standard British English or Standard American English. They are both easy to understand and they both do not cause any discrimination. If it is understood by other people, the accent that a person use should not have an importance.

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Appendix:

Interview Questions

- 1-Could you give me some background information about Australian English? (Anything you know)
- 2-What languages have influenced Australian English?
- 3-Do you ever have problems understanding British English? In what ways?
- 4- Do British or American Speakers have problems to understanding you? (If so why do you think?)
- 5-What the biggest difference that you can notice between Standard British English and Australian English?
- 6-What was kind of difficulties do you faced about language when you moved to LA.
- 7-Are there any specific words for your language? (Australian English)
- 8-Can you give me some examples of vocabulary differences between Australian English and British English? Such as "prang" is used for word "accident".
- 9-What are the main differences in pronunciation/accent between Australian English and British English? Can you give me examples?
- 10-What about usage and grammar rules? Are there any differences that you know of between Australian English and British English? Can you give me some examples?