

Lexical Stress Variation : Key Disyllable Classes in Australian English



Introduction

Remarks about word-stress in Australian English (AusE) are rather rare. In terms of non compound disyllables authors comment on *address*, *defect*, *incline*, *rebound*, *relay*, *research* (all prefixed multicategorials) and *finance*, *frontier* which are both known to present variation between dialects of English around the world.

Keeping authors' comments in mind I decided to lead a systematic study of word-stress assignment in AusE, focusing on unstable areas for lexical stress in English :

- the multicategorial verb/noun prefixed disyllables (287 words) based on Fournier 2010 and Trevian 2003,
- exceptional disyllables (180 nouns and 22 verbs/adjectives) based on Fournier 2010 and Trevian 2003,

Working on Australian English I also decided to test a sample of loan disyllables from Aboriginal languages (194 words), based on Dixon, Ramson and Thomas 1990.

This study is first and foremost dictionary based but also uses frequencies (COCAE) and oral data when needed (personal corpus of 30 words x 20 speakers). This presentation will focus on main pronunciations.

Multicategorical prefixed disyllables

Multicategorical prefixed words undergo a specific conflict between two logics : isomorphism *versus* prefixed disyllables other than nouns which never take their primary stress on the prefix. (see Deschamps et al 2000) . They can be classified into the three following patterns:

- words following the pattern of **concern** : V01/N01
- words following the pattern of **conflict** : V01/N10
- words following the pattern of **combat** : V10/N10

The lists of words I based my study on were put together to analyse Southern British English (SBE) and my study does not take into account multicategoricals that could only be found in other varieties of English.




Words following the pattern of concern

141 words :

abuse/abuse	concern	disguise	receipt	response/respond
account	consent	disgust	recruit	restraint/restrain
address	constraint/constrain	dislike	redress	result
advice/advise	construe	dismay	reform	retort
affront	contempt/contemn	display	regard	retreat
amend	content	dispute	regret	return
amount	control	dissent	relapse	revenge
appeal	debate	distrain/distrain	release	reverse
applaud/applause	decay	distress	relief/relieve	review
approach	decease	distrust	remand	revolt
array	deceit/deceive	divorce	remark	reward
arrest	decline	effect	remit	success/succeed
ascent/ascend	decree	employ	remove	supply
assault	default	escape	renegue	support
assent	defeat	escheat	repair	surmise
attack	defence/defend	estate	repeal	surprise
attempt	delay	esteem	repeat	surround
attest	delight	estreat	reply	suspense/suspend
attire	demand	exchange	report	traverse
avail	demise	excuse/excuse	repose	trepan
award	demur	exhaust	reprieve	trephine
behoof/behoove	descent/descend	expense/pend	reproach	
belief/believe	design	extent/extend	reproof/reprove	
bequest/bequeath	desire	intrigue	repulse	
collapse	despair	mistake	repute	
collect	despatch/dispatch	offence/offend	request	
command	device/devise	preserve	reserve	
compare	disdain	pretence/pretend	resort	
complaint/complain	disease	pursuit/pursue	resource	
conceit	disgrace	rebuke	respect	

Differences regarding primary stress

- Three words concerned : *collect*, *intrigue*, *remit*. Only AusE has primary stress on the second syllable of the nouns for these 3 items.
- Oral data confirms the differences found in Macquarie Dictionary (MCQ) and Longman Pronunciation Dictionary (LPD).

Word stress	frequency	10	01
collect N	9047	0	7 
intrigue N	1074	2 	8 
remit N	107	N/A	N/A

Results

- 138 words out of 141 (97%) are stressed like in SBE.
- 3 words have a stress pattern that is not found in the other two varieties and can be seen as distinctive of AusE : *collect*, *intrigue*, *remit*.
It should be observed that LPD does not acknowledge a N01 variant in SBE or General American (GAm) for *collect*.
- Overall there are only very few differences concerning the pattern of **concern**, when there is variation in one of the varieties at stake it usually appears in a least one of the other two.

Words following the pattern of **conflict**

89 words :

absence/absent
accent
addict
affect
affix
alloy
ally
combine
commune
compact
compound
compress
concept/conceive
concert
conduct
confect
confine
conflict
conscript
conserve
consort
construct
contest

contrast
converse
convert
convict
decrease
defect
descant
desert
digest
discard
discharge
discount
discourse
eject
escort
essay
excerpt
excise
export
extract
impact
implant
import

imprint
incline
increase
indent
insert
inset
instinct
insult
intern
invite
object
perfect
perfume
permit
pervert
prefix
present
proceed
produce
progress
project
protest
purport

rebel
rebound
recall
recoil
record
refit
reflex
refund
refuse
regress
reject
relay
retard
subject
sublease
survey
suspect
transfer
transform
transplant

Differences regarding primary stress (1)

- 5 words are concerned (main pronunciations in bold):




item	AusE	SBE	GAm	Difference
discount	V01/N10	V10/01/N10	V10/01/N10	V
prefix	V01/10/N10	V10/01/N10	V10/01/N10	V
recall	V01/N10	V01/N01/10	01	N
recoil	V01/N01/10	V01/N10/01	V01/N10/01	N
relay	V01/10/N10	V10/01/N10	V10/01/N10	V

- *discount* and *relay* seem to show a difference on V and should be orally tested in a further study.
- prefix was not tested for frequency reasons (<500/4 million)

Differences regarding primary stress (2)

- *recall* is given N10 by MCQ and the oral corpus validates the information though it is rather unstable (12/20 recordings). In AusE *recall* follows the pattern of **conflict** unlike SBE and GAm where it follows the pattern of **concern**.
- *recoil* is given N01 by MCQ but the oral data invalidates the information and *recoil* seems to follow the pattern of **conflict** like in SBE and GAm.

Oral data:

item	Frequency	N01	N10
recall N	13873	8 	12 
recoil N	664	1	8 

Results

- 85 words out of 89 (95%) have the same primary stress in AusE and in SBE.
- 4 words following the pattern of **conflict** (V01/N10) can be seen as distinctive for AusE :

discount, prefix and *relay* (all with a secondary variant in V01 in SBE and GAm)

recall (secondary variant in N10 in SBE only)

- In this alternant type variants are common and usually similar in the three varieties.

Words following the pattern of **combat**

54 words :

abstract
access
annex
combat
comfort
comment
compass
compere
compost
concrete
contact
contour
contract
convoy
debit
decoy
detail
distance
encore

envy
exile
forfeit
incense
index
instance
invoice
offer
preface
prelude
premise
presage
process
profit
prolapse
promise
prospect
purchase
purpose

rebate
recess/recede
rescue
research
respite
retail
revel
succour
suffix
summon/summons
surface
surfeit
surname
transit
transport
trespass

Differences regarding primary stress (1)





















- 11 words are concerned, they all show a difference on V, sometimes on V and N. *Research* and *transport* were eventually added to the list due to an analysis induced by their secondary variants.

item	AusE	SBE	GAm	Difference
annex	V10/01/N10	V01/N10	V01/N10	V
combat	V10/01/N10	V10/01/N10	V01/10/N10	V GAm
concrete	10	10	01/10	VN GAm
contract	V10/01/N10	V01/10/N10	V01/10/N10	V
decoy	V10/01/N10	V01/N10/01	V01/N10/01	V
prolapse	V10/01/N10	V01/10/N10/01	V01/10/N10/01	V
prospect	10	V01/N10	10	V
rebate	10	V01/10/N10/01	V01/10/N10/01	V
recess/recede	V01/N01/10	V01/10/N01/10	V10/01/N10/01	V
research	01/10	01/10	10/01	VN GAm
transport	V01/10/N10	V01/N10	V01/N10	V

Differences regarding primary stress (2)

Oral data:

- *combat* needs to be orally tested in a further study.
- *annex, concrete, contract, decoy, prospect, rebate* and *recess* all show a majority of V10 and are confirmed as following the pattern of **combat** in AusE.
- *recess* and *transport* tested at first for their variant appear to have a primary V10 and to function in V10/N10.
- *concrete* functions like in SBE, *recess, research* and *prospect* like in GAm.
- *annex, contract, decoy, prolapse, rebate* and *transport* are only found in V10 in AusE and can be seen as distinctive from the two other varieties.

item	frequency	01	10
annex V	987	1 	19 
concrete V	12923	3 	16 
contract V	23482	4 	12 
decoy V	697	3 	8 
prolapse	59	freq<500/4 million	freq<500/4 million
prospect V	8013	3 	15 
rebate V	848	2 	17 
recess/recede V	2451	3 	17 
research VN	119115	2/2  	18/18   
transport V	6823	0	20 

Results

- 43 words out of 54 (79%) have the same stress pattern as SBE.
- *annex, contract, decoy, prolapse, rebate* and *transport* can be seen as distinctive of AusE in our study.
- There is a higher tendency in AusE for multicategorical disyllables following the pattern of **combat** to differ from the two other varieties, hence to align to the pattern of nouns.

Exceptional disyllables

- My study is based on the list of exceptional disyllables in SBE (186 words). Five words were absent from the MCQ (*acquest, appui, auberge, lucarne, visite*). A further study using a database recently developed by our research team will enable me to use a complete list of exceptional disyllables as found in MCQ.
- The present study looks at :
 - nouns and non prefixed disyllables other than nouns in 01
 - prefixed verbs and adjectives in 10

Nouns and non prefixed disyllables other

175 words : than nouns in 01

(as)certain	capsize	elite	khedive	octet	rupee
abysm	carafe	ellipse	Kultur	panache	sardine
abyss	caress	epergne	lament	parole	savoy
adept	carouse	esquire	lapel	patrol	schottische
(adj)ado	cartel	etui	latrine	peruke	sedan
affair	cashier	event	levant	petite	senor
affray	catarrh	excess	locale	police	septet
aha	cement (n)	fascine	macaw	polite	serai
amir	cerise	fatigue	machine	prescript (adj)	serene
amour	champagne	frequent (v)	mahout	prestige	sextet
arrear	chemise	fusee	Malay	quartet	shallot
assize	chicane	galore	manure	quintet	sincere
august	chorale	galosh	maraud	rapport	sourdine
austere	cigar	gamboge	marine	rattan	stampede
banal	coiffure	gravure	mature	ravine	tisane
battue	commode	grimace	meringue	real	tolu
bazaar	corral	guffaw	miaow	rebore	trapeze
behalf	cravat	guitar	minute (adj)	recluse	trombone
bohea	cuirass	hallo(a)/hello	moraine	recourse	urbane
bombard (v)	cuisine	harangue	morale	refrain	valise
burnous/burnouse	dacoit	hurray/hurrah	morass	regime	velour
cabal	decoke	hotel	morel	reheat	verbose
cadet	degree	humane	morose	remorse	virtu
calash	demesne	hussar	motel	remount	vizier
campaign	demy	imam	motet	renown	volute
canal	dessert	Japan	moustache	rethink	
canoe	detent	japan (v)	naive	revers	
canton	divine	jejune	nawab	revue	
capote	domain	jocose	nizam	romansch	
caprice	duet	July	Noel	routine	

Words regular in AusE and exceptional in SBE and/or GAm




- 6 words out of 181 (3%) : *finance* (v), *garage*, *impasse*, *mama*, *motif*, *papa*

Item	AusE	SBE	GAm	Frequency	N01	N10	V01	V10	Exceptions in dictionaries
finance	10/01	V01/N10/01	V01/10/N10/01	12369	0	19	1	18	V in SBE and GAm
grimace VN	624	2/2	18/18	624	2	18	2	18	
garage	10/01	10/01	01	8788	3	16	3	17	VN in GAm
impasse	10	01/10	10/01	903	3	10	N/A	N/A	in SBE
mama	10/01	01	10	803	2	18	N/A	N/A	in SBE
motif	01/10	01	01	1654	4	16	N/A	N/A	in AusE, SBE and GAm
papa	01/10	01	10	4093	2	18	N/A	N/A	in AusE and SBE

- Oral data shows that the speakers usually have non exceptional lexical stress (i.e 10) for these 6 items.

Non exceptional variant

- 4 words have a non exceptional variant : *banal*, *carafe*, *esquire* and *nizam*.
- *carafe* and *nizam* were not tested orally for frequency reasons.

Item	AusE	SBE	GAm	Frequency	01	10
banal Q	01/10	01	01	577	14 	6 
esquire N	01/10	01	10/01	729	10 	2 

- The oral data study confirms a non exceptional variant for both *banal* and *esquire*.

Prefixed verbs and adjectives in 10

- 22 words :

common (adj), *conjure*, *connate* (adj), *conquer*, *constant* (adj), *decent* (adj), *destine*, *differ*, *edit*, *enter*, *injure*, *perfect* (adj), *perjure*, *proffer*, *prolate*, (adj), *prolix* (adj), *proper* (adj), *prosper*, *prostrate* (adj), *recent* (adj), *sever*, *suffer*.

- No difference was found either for a primary or a variant and these 22 words are exceptional in AusE as well.

Exceptional disyllables : results

Out of 208 words I was able to test 203 words. Only 7 words differ between AusE and SBE. The correlation of the two systems for this rather unstable area of English is very high (97%).

Loan disyllables from Aboriginal languages

194 words – list of Dixon, Ramson and Thomas 1990

56 absent from MCQ – 138 words :

ballart	cooboo	koori	nardoo	wandoo
bardi	cooee	kopi	nonda	wanna
belah	coolie	kultarr	numbat	warran
bendee	cowal	kylie	nunga	weelo
bettong	dalgite	lowan	penda	wilga
bilby	dibbler	lubra	pindan	wilgie
binghi	dilly	mado	pinkie	wiltja
bingy	dingo	mala	pitchi	wirrah
bobuck	dowak	mallee	punty	wodgil
bogey	dugite	mardo	quandong	wogoit
boggi	dunnart	marlock	quenda	wombat
boko	euro	marri	Quinkan	wongi
bondi	galah	marron	quokka	woylie
boobook	geebung	mimi	sallee	wurley
boodie	gibber	mindy	taipan	wurrung
boorie	gidgee	mogo	tamma	yabber
bora	gilgai	Moomba	tammar	yabby
borak	gilgie	morwong	tarwhine	yacca
boree	gruie	mugga	toa	yakka
brolga	gundy	mulba	towri	yarra
budda	gympie	mulga	tuan	yarran
bugeen	humpy	mungite	tuart	yelka
bundy	jarrah	munjon	tula	
bungwall	jerran	muntry	tungoo	
callop	jingy	murnong	tupong	
carbeen	jumbuck	murri	turram	
cobra	karri	myall	waddy	
colane	kipper	naga	wagyl	
cooba	koonac	nanto	wallum	

Loan words from Aboriginal languages

	10	10/01	01	Totals
Noun	117	1	4	122
Adjective	1	0	0	1
Multicat Adj/Noun	3	0	0	3
Multicat Verb/Noun	11	1	0	12
Totals	132	2	4	138
Percentages	96 %	1 %	3 %	100 %

- 126 nouns and adjectives : 121 follow the usual stress pattern of disyllables in 10 (96%).
- The 4 exceptional words are : *boree*, *colane*, *nardoo* and *wandoo*. For three of those words, the exceptional stress might be explained by a saliance in the original language, represented by an english speaker with the geminate graphic vowel (*cf shampoo* in Hindi). However *tungoo*, *bendee*, *gidgee* and *mallee* are non exceptional. The trisyllable *potoroo* also bears lexical stress on its final.

item	SBE/GAm	AusE
contract V	01/10	10
prolapse V	01/10	10/01
rebate V	01/10	10
annex V	01	10
decoy V	01	10
transport V	01	! 10
recall N	01 (SBE /10)	10/01
research VN	SBE 01/10 GAm 10/01	! 10
collect N	10	01
intrigue N	10/01	01
remit N	10/01	01
discount V	10/01	01
prefix V	10/01	01/10
relay V	10/01	01/10

item	SBE/GAm	AusE
finance V	01 (GAm /10)	10
grimace VN	01/10	! 10
motif	01	! 10
impasse	SBE 01/10 GAm 10/01	10
mama	SBE 01 GAm 10	10
papa	SBE 01 GAm 10	! 10
garage	SBE 10/01 GAm 01	10

item	AusE
boree	01
colane	01
nardoo	01
wandoo	01

Conclusion

- Overall the correlation in terms of lexical stress for the 487 words tested between SBE and AusE is very high : 94,8% (difference = 25 words)
- 5 words show a primary lexical stress that is not to be found in LPD either as a primary or a variant in both SBE or GAM : *a collect*, *a motif*, *to annex*, *to decoy* and *to transport*. They can be seen as distinctive in AusE.
- The loan words from Aboriginal languages (a sample of 194 words) generally align to the lexical stress pattern of English.
- This study is based on three areas of English that are particularly sensitive to variation. Given the high level of correlation between AusE, SBE and GAM, it appears that, unlike their vowel systems, the stress pattern is not distinctive of these three varieties .

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