

SOME ELEMENTS OF AUSTRALIAN SPEECH: VOWEL SOUNDS

By
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Abstract

The increasing use of English as a means of global communication, often between non-native speakers, has led to wider exposure to, and awareness of, different varieties and accents of English. In this paper, the author, an Australian native speaker teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Thailand, attempts to highlight some of the features of Australian pronunciation which distinguish it from other varieties. In particular, it is contrasted with the British "prestige" variety Received Pronunciation (RP). The emphasis in the paper is on vowel sounds since these are often the elements of Australian pronunciation most easily distinguishable to the listener.

Introduction

The increasing use of English as a global language has many implications both for learners and teachers of the language (see Van Essen, 2004, for example). One important development is that English is increasingly being used as a medium for interaction between users for whom English is not their first language. Indeed, many researchers (see Graddol, 1997, for example) have pointed out that the number of non-native English speakers vastly outnumbers native speakers and this disparity is likely to continue to grow. This broader use of English has, amongst other things, led to greater attention being given, both in research and teaching, to different varieties and dialects of English.

Traditionally, and even still today in some quarters, certain varieties of English, notably British "Received Pronunciation" (RP) and General American (GenAm), are seen as "prestige" varieties. This has led to being proficient in such varieties becoming an idealized goal, particularly in terms of pronunciation and accent, for many non-native learners of English. Other varieties of En-

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