

## Variation in Mainstream and Aboriginal Australian Englishes spoken in Warrnambool: A study of disfluency features

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An investigation of disfluency behaviour is presented for two varieties of Australian English: Mainstream (MAE) and Aboriginal (AAE). MAE is the most widely spoken variety of Australian English and is predominantly spoken by Australians of Anglo-Celtic background. AAE is spoken by First Nations Australians who form 3.2% of the population of Australia [1]. AAE differs from MAE in its grammar, lexicon, phonology and pragmatic systems [2]. Research on the phonetic characteristics of AAE is in its infancy, but differences between AAE and MAE have been observed in segmental properties, prosody and voice quality (see [3] and references therein). Qualitative observation of differences in pausing behaviour has been noted between the two varieties, but not investigated quantitatively. More broadly, there is a gap in research into the sociolinguistic patterning of disfluency behaviour in normally fluent speakers, but those studies available show interesting regional-, gender- and age-based variation. How the disfluency characteristics of Australian English compare with other varieties of English, and whether there are differences in AAE versus MAE, are yet to be investigated.

Sociolinguistic interview recordings of 10 AAE (6F, 4M) and 10 MAE (4F, 6M) speakers from Warrnambool, Victoria, were analysed by the second and third author, with consistency checks undertaken. Disfluency profiles based on the TOFFA framework [4] were developed for each speaker, enabling analysis of top-level disfluency types (response latencies, silent pauses, filled pauses, repetitions, prolongations, self-interruptions) and detailed subcategories within these for both varieties.

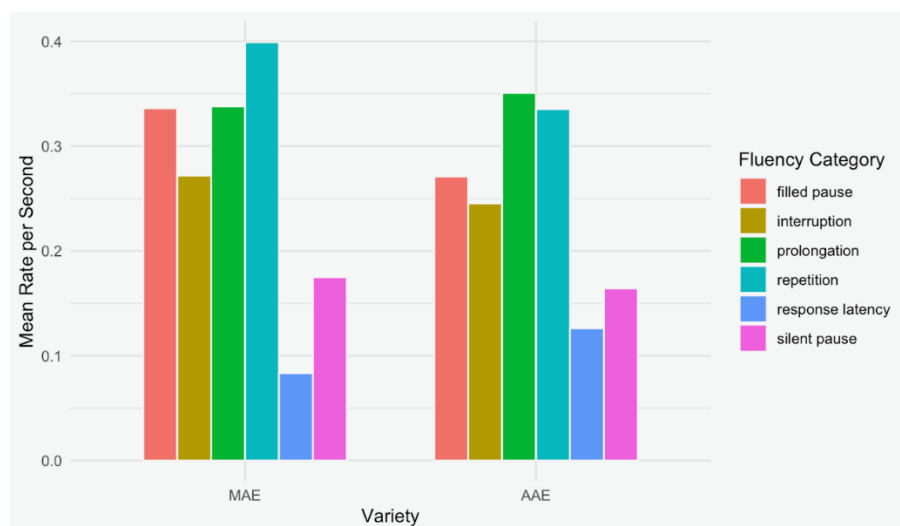


Figure 1. Mean rates of occurrence of each disfluency type across speakers for MAE and AAE.

Figure 1 shows the mean rate of occurrence per second of each of the top-level disfluency types for MAE and AAE across speakers. Preliminary analysis shows that response latencies, i.e. the occurrences of a period of silence of > 200ms before an interviewee responds to a question, were used more frequently in AAE than MAE while turn-internal silent pauses were used at similar rates across varieties. Filled pauses and repetitions both occurred more often in MAE than AAE. Further, the results demonstrate differences in the profile of disfluency types used in MAE and AAE compared with British varieties, for example, both use prolongations more extensively than Standard Southern British English and York English which instead exhibit greater usage of filled pauses [cf. 5]. More detailed analyses of variation in MAE and AAE in the top-level categories and their subcategories will be presented, including statistical evaluation of the impact of variety, gender and age. Implications of the findings for the role of disfluency features in the phonetic characterisation of varieties of English will be discussed.

[1] Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) 'Census Quick Stats.' <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/>

[2] Dickson, G. (2020) 'Aboriginal English(es).' In L. Willoughby and H. Manns (eds.), *Australian English Reimagined: Structure, Features and Developments*. London: Routledge, 134-54.

[3] Loakes, D., K. McDougall and A. Gregory (submitted) '/t/ production in Mainstream and Aboriginal Australian Englishes in Warrnambool and Mildura: a sociophonetic acoustic study.'

[4] McDougall, K. and M. Duckworth (2017) 'Profiling fluency: an analysis of individual variation in disfluencies in adult males.' *Speech Communication* 95: 16-27.

[5] McDougall, K., M. Duckworth and T. Hudson (2015) 'Individual and group variation in disfluency features: a cross-accent investigation.' *Proc. 18th ICPHS*, Glasgow, Paper 0308.