

Multicultural Australian English: Insights from a rapidly changing community

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Contemporary Australian society is incredibly diverse with roughly half of the population either born overseas or having an overseas-born parent, and larger cities such as Sydney exhibit particularly high levels of linguistic diversity in the community. Research on Australian English (AusE) speech patterns has traditionally been based on the mainstream variety, generally within an Anglo-centric, monolingual conceptualisation. However, in recent years there has been increased focus on ethnolectal variation and non-mainstream varieties of AusE. In this presentation, I will provide an overview of a project designed to contribute to a more inclusive model of AusE that embraces difference by examining the speech of adolescents from a diverse range of backgrounds, considering relationships between phonetic variation, community diversity, and identity in the Australian context. Results from initial analyses examining some traditional markers of mainstream AusE speech will be presented, indicating patterns of change away from mainstream AusE among speakers from diverse communities. Discussion of key conceptual and methodological challenges will also be included.