Social Variation in Australian English

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Contents

1. Introduction

There are many native speakers of English that can be found over the world and many countries are Anglophone because they have been former British colonies. One of the largest English-speaking countries is Australia, which is also one of the largest continents in the world. The way Australia became an English-speaking country is quite fascinating. This essay will show a historical background on how this happened and it will also show how Australian English pronunciation has changed over time compared to British Received Pronunciation (henceforth RP), which is one of the standard varieties of English. A study will show a difference in pronunciation between Australian English (henceforth Aus E) and RP, as portrayed in an Australian TV series.

1.1 Outline

The background is divided into three main parts, where the first part explains the connection between social variation and language usage. The second part shows a historical overview, which gives a description of the language that the new settlers brought to Australia, and why social differences are more common than regional differences in Australian English. In the third part a description of typical features of contemporary Australian English is given. Based on the research presented in the background there follows a study of social variation in Australian English based on data collected from four characters in an Australian TV series. The data can be found in Appendices on page 32. Further on the results for each character, concerning social class and typical Australian English features, are presented in results and discussion. A summary of the findings in the study, related to the background research, can be found in conclusion.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 Social Variation

People's social background affects what linguistic variety they use when they speak. Every speaker has an accent where the pronunciation of words is associated with a certain geographical area. A speaker also has a dialect where the difference concerns grammar and vocabulary (Jones, 2002 cited in Thomas and Wareing:118). Some dialects are prestigious and used within particular social groups or in particular social situations. One of the most prestigious accents of English is Received Pronunciation (RP), which also is known as the 'Queen's English' or 'BBC English' (2002:119).

It is not possible to draw a clear distinction between social and regional linguistic varieties. Speakers of a variety associated with a certain area are also often associated with a certain position on the social scale (Jones, 2002 cited in Thomas and Wareing:119).

Figure one below shows the relationship between social and regional variation in accents, where there is more variation within low prestige accents and almost no variation within the high prestige varieties of an accent.

Figure 1 *Social and regional variation in accents*

(Trudgill 1983a:29-30, Jones, 2002 "Language and class" in Thomas and Wareing:123)

Highest class: RP

Social
variation

Lowest class:
low prestige accents

regional variation
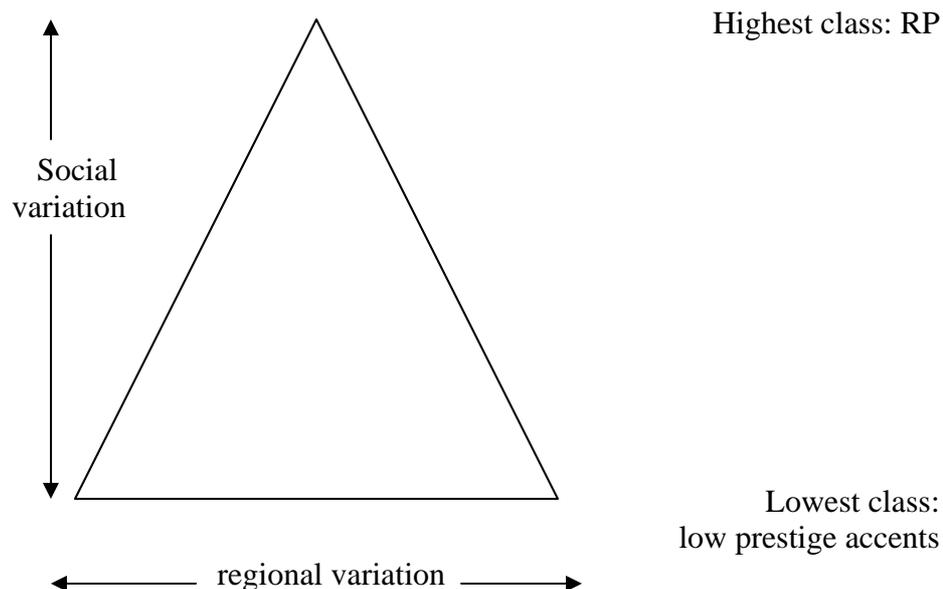
People with "high" socioeconomic positions in society are expected to speak the prestige variety of a language, which is associated with education, etc. In literature, for example, a portrayal of a person is often characterised by an accent or a dialect to show which social layer he or she belongs to (2002:120). People in these "high" positions also seem to use the same accent regardless of regional background, but further down the social scale there are more regional differences in pronunciation (2002:120).

In Thomas and Wareing (2002: 126) Jones has presented Walker's list of class divisions, proposed for Britain, to show what is meant by social class. Since the people in Australia are of British origin, and the fact that Australia still belongs to the British Commonwealth, these classes might apply to their society as well. It reads as follows:

Class 1: professionals and senior managers: doctors, lawyers, teachers, fund managers,

executive directors, professors, editors, managers (with more that 25 staff under them),

top civil servants.

Class 2: Associate professionals and junior managers: nurses, social workers, estate agents,

lab technicians, supervisors, managers with fewer that 25 staff under them, journalists,

entertainers, actors.

Class 3: Intermediate occupations: Sales managers, secretaries, nursery nurses,

computer operators, stage hands.

Class 4: Self employed non-professionals: driving instructors, builders.

Class 5: other supervisors, craft jobs: charge hands, plumbers, telephone fitters.

Class 6: Routine jobs: truck drivers, assembly line workers.

Class 7: Elementary jobs: labourers, waiters, cleaners.

Class 8: Unemployed.

(Walker, 1997 *The Independent*, 15 December,
in Jones, 2002 "Language and class").

Some people, in any group, are leaders in power and prestige. A speaker often imitates who he believes has the highest social status in that group (Bauer 1994:15-17). Labov (1972b:295) does not agree with this supposition, and says that: linguistic features are not always introduced by the highest class since, as Labov says: "[…] this is not an innovating group." There is evidence that linguistic changes can be introduced in any social class and then be adopted by others, where the most common way is a change within the speech of the lowest class, which, in turn, will spread up the hierarchy. Linguistic change within the highest-status group is often a matter of, more or less, conscious borrowings from outside sources, which eventually will become prestige forms. Labov (1972b:296-297) says that the different classes make dialect innovations independently, and that consciousness is the mark of the upper class, and that both classes are affected by the less conscious dialect innovations (Bauer 1994:15-17).

Many people in Australia, and also New Zealand, do not believe that their class system is equally strictly defined as the class system in the United Kingdom. Burridge and Mulder (2002:11) say that the class divisions are less strictly structured and less explicit in Australia, and people are more easily able to cut across class boundaries. Nevertheless, people in Australia fall into social groups, which has consequences for their language, and social variation in Aus E is shown in different accents distinguished foremost by differences in vowel pronunciation (2002). "The use of one variety over another is governed by a complex of different factors, but principally education, gender identification, and location (urban versus rural)" (2002:11-12).

Trudgill (1974 cited in Jones 2002) made a sociolinguistic investigation concerning social differences in the pronunciation of word final *–ing* in Norwich, England in the late1960s and early 1970s. Trudgill assumed that "[…] the higher a person's social class, the closer to the prestige variety their speech would be" (Jones in Thomas and Wareing 2002:130). The result showed that Trudgill's assumption was right, and that with an increase in formality the speech moves closer to the prestige variety (2002).

1.2.2 Historical overview

To begin with it is important to describe the language of the population of the British Isles before their arrival in Australia, to get a picture of what kind of language they brought with them to the new land. At the end of the eighteenth century, one-third of the population of the Islands spoke their own Celtic languages and almost no English. The English that was spoken consisted of a large number of local varieties and was very far from what we now call Standard English. English, at this time, lacked the support of reference books and spelling and punctuation was inconsistent. In 1755 the first complete dictionary of English (Samuel Johnson's Dictionary) was published (Burridge and Mulder 2002:35-36).

With these language varieties the first British settlers arrived in Australia and also in New Zealand. These first settlers were prisoners sent to colonies in New South Wales, because there was no room for more prisoners in British jails (Melchers and Shaw 2003:6-7). The first British penal colony was established in Sydney over the next 20 years after the arrival of Captain Cook in 1770 (Burridge and Mulder 2002:36). In 1840 all this ceased and it is estimated that 130,000 people were sent to Australia during this period (Melchers and Shaw 2003:6-7).

People with different dialects were brought together during the journey to Australia, and the first settlers were very important for linguistic development in the new land. Aboriginal vocabulary and borrowings from English dialects extended existing resources and developed AusE further (Turner in Burchfield 1994:277). Turner describes this as a situation of dialects in contact where differing forms of English led to a mutual adjustment with "[…] consequent mixing, levelling and simplification of language" (1994:278).

Despite the fact that Australia is a very large country Aus E has very little regional variation. Instead there are some social differences to find in AusE (Burridge and Mulder 2002:37). "Variation in broadness can be seen in all parts of the country […] with minor regional effects repeatedly restricted to variation in the proportions of speakers from each accent category who live in a particular area" (Blair and Collins 2001:18). There are three different accents of AusE, namely Broad, General and Cultivated.

1.3 Accents of Australian English

AusE is usually regarded, as being just one dialect but that does not mean that the speech community is "linguistically uniform". There are many varieties of AusE, from one extreme where the features are heavily marked to another where they are less marked (Delbridge et. al 1997). Mitchell and Delbridge (cited in Moore 2003:23*)* emphasise that the sounds in *beat [bɪ+t], boot [bʊɵt], say [saɪ], so [sʌɵ], high [hɒɪ]* and *how [hæo]* are distinctive markers for the Australian accent. The vowels in the lexical sets FLEECE, FACE, PRICE, GOOSE, GOAT, and MOUTH are considered being of importance when distinguishing between the various accents of AusE (Wells 1996:597). Lexical sets are used as a standardised concept to refer to large groups of words that share the same vowel (Melchers and Shaw 2003:17).

In Delbridge's (Lindqvist et. al 1998:51-52) description of the *Macquarie Dictionary* (first published in 1981) he says that for every headword the pronunciation of every variety is given in a way that every speaker, whoever they may be, can find their own pronunciation of the word, and each variety is regarded as equally acceptable.

There are many Irish features to find in AusE. The Catholic Church in Australia became more Irish in character in the 1860s due to increasing immigration from Ireland, and decided to follow a different path regarding, for example, education (Leitner 2004:107). Many of these features are due to the large number of teachers with Irish origin (Bradley 2003:144). An Irish feature is for example HRT (High Rising Tone), which AusE shares with New Zealand English. Horvath (1985) observed HRT and found that it was used by teenagers, females and lower working class, and the most common function is to get the listener's attention (Melchers and Shaw 2003:106).

When comparing AusE with RP the two varieties are very close phonologically, but not phonetically, which means that the vowel systems within these two varieties can be compared

to each other. The main differences between AusE and RP are that the Australians have unstressed, word-internal [ə] and word-final /iː/, while RP has [ɪ] (see examples on page 13).

Together "with certain characteristics of voice quality, rhythm, and intonation, which appear to play the principal role", the characteristics of Australian English are formed. (Wells 1996:595-596). Figure two below shows where the different vowel sounds are pronounced in the mouth.

Figure 2 *Vowel Quadrilateral showing where each sound is pronounced*
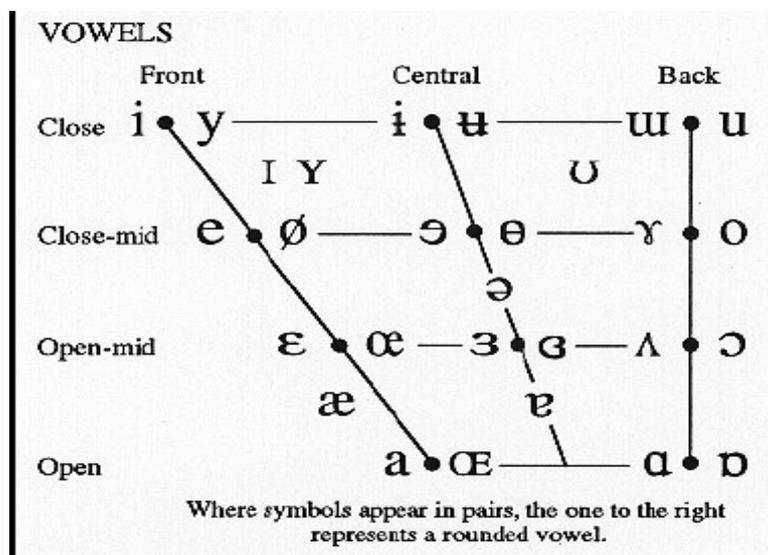
(www.phon.ucl.ac.uk)

Among the salient features of all AusE is that the front, short, unrounded vowels (i,e, ɛ, æ and a) and rounded vowels (y, ø, œ and ɶ) tend to be closer than in RP, i.e. the vowels are pronounced with the mouth more closed and the tongue higher than in RP. Front vowels are pronounced in the front of the mouth. Whether the vowels are unrounded or rounded has to do with how the lips are shaped when pronouncing these sounds. An example of this could be the AusE pronunciation of *ten*, which sounds more like [tɪn]. The fronting tendency in AusE also

affects the pronunciation of NURSE, where this vowel can be pronounced more front as well as closer than is shown with the symbols in the tables below. To illustrate the pronunciation it would be something like [neːs] compared to the more common, or RP pronunciation [nɜːs].

In general BATH words have /aː/ in words like *laugh, pass, last,* etc. Australians from the eastern states, "[…] consider /aː/ high-class, even indicative of affectation, pedantry, or snobbishness, as against the popular pronunciation with /æ/." However, in the south /aː/ is quite common, except for the pronunciation of *dance* /daːns/ in Sydney, which is /dæns/ (Wells 1996:599). In some BATH words, where the vowel is followed by a nasal (/m/, /n/) and then another consonant, like in *plant* or *dance*, this TRAP vowel /æ/, mentioned above, is often heard. This is probably due to the American influence of AusE or derived from one of the accents of English that was brought to Australia by the first British settlers (Melchers and Shaw 2003:104-106). Bradley (2003:146) says that there is both regional and social variation in the realisation of /æ/ and /aː/. He also suggests that this reflects the social and historical characteristics of the first settlers. The settlers came from all over the British Isles with the majority from cities such as London, Middlesex and Lancashire and also from eastern Ireland. Of all the convicts, who were sent to Australia, about 45 % were from urban areas. For example, as much as 71 % of the Scottish convicts were born in urban areas. This gives a picture of a population with a difference in origin but predominantly urban (Yallop 2003:132). Trudgill (1986 in Yallop 2003:135) suggests that the mobility of the convicts within the British Isles may have prepared them for mobility within Australia. This might have made the population more open to accommodate to each other's differences in their speech. According to Yallop (2003:135) this mobility is significant for the fact that there are few regional varieties in AusE.

Places that were settled in the early nineteenth century, mainly by lower class individuals, use intermediate proportions of /æ/ and /aː/. This occurs mainly in Sydney, Hobart and

Brisbane. In the mid-nineteenth century Melbourne was settled with a population consisting of a more mixed nature. In this area there is a higher proportion of /aː/ used mostly in formal speech. Apart from /aː/ being a high sociolect form it is used as such despite regional factors. The highest proportion of /aː/ is found in Adelaide, which was settled late in the nineteenth century. This suggests that there was an ongoing change in pronunciation during this period in southeastern England, since the British settlers brought differences in pronunciation when arriving in Australia in different periods of time. The usage of either /æ/ and /aː/ is so evident that even non-linguists can easily distinguish between these two sounds when spoken in different regions in Australia. Bradley and Bradley (2001) say that today many Australians have negative feelings about the usage of /aː/ in words like *dance*, which indicate that there is an increasing resistance towards /ɑː/ in the prestige form RP and a preference for Am E /æː/. There is also a similar situation for the realisation of [æ] and [ɔ] in, for example, *mall, Albany, Malvern*. In Melbourne [æ] is usually found and occasionally [ɔ], and in Perth the situation is reversed. The preferred /æ/ pronunciation is probably due to the fact that [ɔ] is not a usual pronunciation of orthographic 'a'. In this case [ɔ] is considered being closest to RP and thereby the more prestige form (Bradley 2003:148-149).

The realisation of [ʌ] in, for example STRUT, can be described as something in between half-open and open, and more fronted than centred, something in between [æ]and [ɒ] (Wells 1996:597). The centring diphthongs (/ɪə/, /eə/, and /ʊə/) tend to be monophthongal, like for example the pronunciation of NEAR, where RP has the distinct diphthong /ɪə/ and Aus E has the RP pronunciation or the monophthong /iː/ (Melchers and Shaw 2003:104-106). According to Wells (1996:599) the centring diphthongs are, in particular, monophthongal before /r/, and /ʊə/ is absent from the Broad and General varieties. The starting-point of the pronunciation of /eə/ is much closer than in RP, and the difference in pronunciation between, for example

shed and *shared* is a difference in length, [ʃed] versus [ʃeːd]. One exception concerning this is the pronunciation of *beard*, which has /ɪə/ in all varieties of Aus E. (Wells 1996:600). The RP pronunciation of *shed* and *shared* is /ʃed/versus /ʃeəːd/, and *beard* has the same pronunciation as AusE.

The usage of the weak vowels /ɪ/ and /ə/ is limited, and mainly used in the environment of a following velar (/k/). In this position /ɪ/ is very frequent in the suffixes *–ing* and *–ic*, while /ə/ is rare (Wells 1996:601). Some people in Australia do not contrast between these two sounds, for them [ɪ] and [ə] are in complementary distribution, which means they are allophones of a single phoneme (1996:601). An example of this is the pronunciation of *paddock* [ˈpædɪk], which in RP is [ˈpædək].

Because of different weak vowels or the absence or presence of /r/ there are many homophones in AusE, which are distinct in many other accents of English. Some example are *boxes-boxers*, which are both pronounced /ˈbɒksəz/, compared to the RP pronunciation /ˈbɒksɪs/-/ˈbɒksəz/, the same goes for *founded-foundered*, *tended-tendered*, etc. (Wells 1996:601). This phenomenon sometimes causes misunderstandings and Wells (1996:601-602) mentions an occasion when an Australian newsreader worked on British television, and the viewers complained about him saying that the Queen had *chattered* with the factory workers, when she actually had *chatted*. The Australian newsreader also said that the hospital had to continue with their work, during an electricity breakdown, by using *tortures*, when the newsreader actually meant *torches*.

"The suffixes spelt *–ate, -ess, -est, -et, -id, -ist, -less, -let, -ness* accordingly all have /ə/ in Australian speech." So does *–age*, as in *cabbage* /ˈkæbəʒ/, *village* /ˈvɪlədʒ/ (compare British /ˈkæbɪdʒ/, /ˈvɪlɪdʒ/) (Wells 1996:602). The words *it, is* and *him* are also affected by this tendency in pronunciation, where there is difference in pronunciation of stressed and

unstressed *it*, where the latter is pronounced /ət/. A result of this might for example be that

pack it and *packet* are both pronounced /ˈpækət/. Another result is that weak *it* and *at* are

phonetically identical, just as weak *is* and *as* (1996:602).

Studied and *studded* are homophonous i.e. the pronunciation of these words are more

similar to each other in RP with /-ɪd/, but they are distinguished in Aus E as /ˈstʌdiːd/ and

/ˈstʌdəd/ (1996:602).

 AusE is mainly nonrhotic i.e. they do not pronounce /r/ in final position, like in *car*. The

phenomenon of H-dropping initially in words, where for example him can be pronounced

[ɪm], can also be found in AusE (Melchers and Shaw 2003:104-106).

Mitchell and Delbridge (cited in Yallop 2003:140) see Australian pronunciation as a

continuum with three contrastive accents without sharp boundary lines, with some variation

from speaker to speaker.

According to Delbridge (in Lindquist et al. 1998:54) the "rough" origin of Australian

English has resulted in comments like "the most brutal maltreatment that has ever been

inflicted on the mother-tongue of the great English-speaking nations". When the local

population started to become aware of the differences between the ways they spoke and the

language of the motherland they accepted the view that "theirs was a pretty 'crook' form of

English, a distortion of English, distinguished only by its ugliness and its carelessness"

(Delbridge in Lindquist et al. 1998:54). The common view among literary people in Australia

was that something had to be done about the state of AusE (1998).

Delbridge (in Lindquist et al. 1998) goes on to say that a new attitude emerged in the

1940's when a young Alexander George Mitchell came back from his PhD program in

London University and began analysing the phonology of the Australian accent. Mitchell

declared that: […] "Australian English (a term hitherto non-existent) was not a careless

distortion of any other variety of English, but a variety in its own right, developed by

perfectly normal processes in the course of the past 150 years, that indeed there was nothing wrong with it!"(1998). His declaration was brushed aside by the literary people in Australia with words like: "That man […] must have rubber ears if he thinks that there's nothing wrong with the sound of our excruciating vowels! He is insulting the Australian nation because he believes that any old things is good enough for us" (1998). But Mitchell did not give up, and after hearing a chairman describing Australian English as "[…] objectionable in its monotony and 'in the throatiness and distortion of its vowels, due to a tendency to speak with the lips and teeth closed', he decided to dedicate his life to analysing Australian English together with other people with the same goal.

Delbridge (in Lindquist et al. 1998) continues to say that meanwhile there had been enormous changes in the population of Australia, which had gone from monolingual to multilingual. The native Aboriginals had been taken into consideration and there was a public debate on what place they had in the Australian life. A major immigration programme was introduced and resulted in the fact that almost one in three of the population were born overseas. Australia had become both multilingual and multicultural, and language has been a central issue since the mid 70s. A *National Policy on Language* was introduced by the Commonwealth government in 1987, after consulting the linguistic societies of Australia. The policy's four tenets were:

- English for all
- Support for Aboriginals and Torres Strait languages
- A language other that English for all (through both mother tongue maintenance and second language learning)
- Equitable and widespread language services.

(Delbridge in Lindquist et al. 1998)

 A lot has happened since the 1940s, and a standard for AusE is steadily developing (Delbridge in Lindquist et al. 1998). Burridge and Mulder (2002:12) mention a new category that has developed recently due to the multicultural society, which is an ethnic-broad variety characterised by its own grammar, etc.

In table one below, the differences in the pronunciation of vowels between AusE and RP are shown together with the differences in vowel pronunciation between the three varieties of AusE.

Table 1 The differences in vowel realisation between RP and the three varieties of Aus E

Lexical Sets	RP	Broad Aus E	General Aus E	Cultivated Aus E
BATH	ɑː	aː	aː	aː
NURSE	ɜː	ɜː	ɜː	ɜː
FLEECE	iː	əːɪ	+i	ïi
PALM	ɑː	aː	aː	aː
FACE	eɪ	ʌːɪ, aːɪ	ʌɪ	ɛɪ
GOAT	əʊ	ʌːʊ, aːʉ	ʌʉ	öʊ
GOOSE	uː	əːʉ	ʊʉ	ʊu
PRICE	aɪ	ɒːɪ	ɒɪ	aɪ
MOUTH	aʊ	ɛːo	æo	aʊ
NEAR	ɪə	ɪə, iːə, iː	ɪə, iːə, iː	ɪə
SQUARE	ɛə	eə	eə	eə
START	ɑː	aː	aː	aː
CURE	ʊə	ʊə, ɔː, uːə, uː	ʊə, ɔː, uːə, uː	ʊə, ɔː, uːə, uː

From this general description of AusE, the following three sections will go on to explain specific features for each variety of AusE; Broad, General and Cultivated.

1.3.1 Broad

Blair and Collins (2001:1) report that Mitchell, known as the founder of AusE studies, claimed that what we know as Broad was formed in New South Wales as early as the 1830s. This early form of Broad AusE was spoken by children in that environment. It was similar to the contemporary speech of London or southeast England (Yallop 2003:133). The Broad

variety developed as a rural, male variety in the north of Australia (Leitner 2004:108). Voiced taps, which are a common feature in American English, for example the pronunciation of /t/ in, for example *Betty, letter, better*, where /t/ is realized as [ɾ]. This tapping is typical for male speech in Broad varieties (Blair and Collins 2001:54). In Australian television programmes a Broad speaker is often portrayed as stupid and incompetent (2001:274).

Broad AusE differs from RP (Received Pronunciation) in the realisation of vowel sounds in some lexical sets. Broad is different from General in having wider, more shifted diphthongs. There is also a difference in diphthong length compared to General AusE. The nasal vowel in the beginning of the Broad pronunciation of MOUTH is an example of the Australian 'twang' (See *Table 2* below). Broad is also distinct from Cultivated and RP in PRICE and MOUTH where the pronunciation of vowels starts in a different place in the mouth. The pronunciation of PRICE is pronounced far back in the mouth while the vowel in the beginning of MOUTH has a more fronted pronunciation compared to RP. (Melchers and Shaw 2003:104-105).

The low-prestige form of the *–ing* suffix is common in the Broad variety, such as [ˈrɒɪdn] for *riding* etc. The prestige form of *–ing* is pronounced [ɪŋ] (Wells 1996:602).

Another interesting feature of the Broad accent is the pronunciation of the pronoun *you.* In this variety it is often realised as the weak form /jə/ often even /j/, which can result in a pronunciation as /jaːnt/ for *you aren't* and /jæftə/ for *you have to* (1996:603).

Table 2 The difference in vowel realisation between RP and Broad AusE

Lexical Sets	RP	Broad Aus E
BATH	ɑː	aː
NURSE	ɜː	ɜː
FLEECE	iː	əːɪ
PALM	ɑː	aː
FACE	eɪ	ʌːɪ, aːɪ
GOAT	əʊ	ʌːʊ, aːʉ
GOOSE	uː	əːʉ
PRICE	aɪ	ɒːɪ
MOUTH	aʊ	ɛːo
NEAR	ɪə	ɪə, iːə, iː
SQUARE	ɛə	eə
START	ɑː	aː
CURE	ʊə	ʊə, ɔː, uːə, uː

1.3.2 General

According to Mitchell General Australian became the majority accent between 1870 and 1890 (Yallop, 2003:137). It developed in an environment where immigration, which includes both convicts and free settlers, increased. Towards the end of this period many children, who also contributed to the growth of the population at this time, were born. At this time Mitchell assumes that General and Broad co-existed, where General was seen as new, urban and prestigious and Broad as older and conservative. Mitchell suggests that General AusE developed mostly as urban speech but was, unlike Broad, balanced between the sexes and he also says that there was a greater demand on language competence in the towns compared to the rural areas. There were no sharp borders either concerning regional or social varieties, and Mitchell suggests that this might explain why the features within these two varieties are easily exchanged by a speaker. A speaker might have mainly Broad features but diphthongs with General features (Yallop 2003:137).

An additional cause that contributed to the development of General AusE was the development of, as Yallop (2003:138) puts it, "[…] a Melbourne version of English suburban respectability." Australia had English-style private schools, often with an English head master, and the education was carried out along English lines. This was part of an idea to "civilize" the population. Mitchell and Delbridge (cited inYallop 2003:138) assume that it was not until the first half of the twentieth century that educated Australians felt the need to adapt their speech to RP. The cause was that RP became the obligatory accent of English boarding schools, archbishops, Guard officers and BBC newsreaders.

Table 3 The difference in vowel realisation between RP and General Aus E

Lexical Sets	RP	General Aus E
BATH	ɑː	aː
NURSE	ɜː	ɜː
FLEECE	iː	+i
PALM	ɑː	aː
FACE	eɪ	ʌɪ
GOAT	əʊ	ʌʉ
GOOSE	uː	ʊʉ
PRICE	aɪ	ɒɪ
MOUTH	aʊ	æo
NEAR	ɪə	ɪə, iːə, iː
SQUARE	ɛə	eə
START	ɑː	aː
CURE	ʊə	ʊə, ɔː, uːə, uː

1.3.3 Cultivated

Cultivated AusE is the variety that is closest to RP regarding pronunciation, as is evident from the examples in *Table 4* below. Leitner (2004:103) says that True, Gunn and others suggest that this variety of AusE was related to education; not an imported model but a result from a shift in pronunciation, which was influenced by RP. Together with the more structured education system many clubs were founded around the 1830s, which made it easier for the

middle classes to establish social networks for sharing common interests. From around the 1840s a social hierarchy had secured a foothold in the Australian society (2004). The Cultivated variety developed in the cities and in southeast Australia and became more common among women than men (2004).

Since the diphthong /ʊə/ only exists in the Cultivated accent, Wells (1996:600) says that this is an example of the fact that there exists systematic variability in AusE. Typical for the Cultivated accent is also the pronunciation of, for example, *drawer* where Cultivated AusE uses [ɔə], [drɔə] while in RP it is realised as [drɔː].

Concerning the suffixes mentioned on page 9, in Cultivated AusE some speakers do have /ɪ/ in *–age* and *–ive*, as for example in *massive* /ˈmæsɪv/. Otherwise, the usual AusE pronunciation of this word, and similar words, is /ˈmæsəv/ (Wells 1996:602).

Table 4 The difference in vowel realisation between RP and Cultivated AusE

Lexical Sets	RP	Cultivated Aus E
BATH	ɑː	aː
NURSE	ɜː	ɜ̣ː
FLEECE	iː	ïi
PALM	ɑː	aː
FACE	eɪ	ɛɪ
GOAT	əʊ	öʊ
GOOSE	uː	ʊu
PRICE	aɪ	aɪ
MOUTH	aʊ	aʊ
NEAR	ɪə	ɪə
SQUARE	ɛə	eə
START	ɑː	aː
CURE	ʊə	ʊə, ɔː, uːə, uː

2. Aim and Hypothesis

The aim of this essay is to look at Aus E from a historical point of view and to describe characteristics of Aus E concerning specific realisation of Aus E sounds in the acted portrayal of some different varieties, Broad, General and Cultivated. It is hypothesised that the social position of the characters portrayed will be related to the variety spoken by the actor.
The study will be placed in the context of earlier studies.

3. Method

Samples of speech from an Australian TV-series were recorded. Four characters from the series, from different levels in society, were chosen for the speech analysis. Character A is a farm hand, about 55, and he is also a former prisoner, sentenced for accidentally having killed a man. Character B is the boss of A and also chairman of the Farmers' council, about 60 years of age and a wealthy man. Character C is a lawyer, about 60 years old, living and working in Melbourne. Character D is a woman in her thirties, also living in Melbourne, where she runs a restaurant together with a friend, and enjoys the jet set life in Melbourne.

About the same amount of speech from each character was chosen for the analysis, around one minute per character. Parts of the data were transcribed with regard to their relevance for the study, concerning the vowel differences between the varieties of Aus E and RP. A dictionary was used to confirm the differences in pronunciation between Aus E and RP.

All analysed material was compared to the background research found in secondary sources, i.e. the literature.

4. Results and Discussion

The speech referred to in the discussion of the results for each character can be found in
Appendices on page 32-36, together with a phonetic transcription of the sounds relevant for
this study.

4.1 Character A

As mentioned in the Method (p.21), this is the farm hand or, station-hand in AusE, and former
prisoner. In the list of class divisions (p.6) he belongs to group 6 or 7, thus very far down the
social scale where there are many regional differences in pronunciation.

   The study showed that this character has many Broad features. The main Broad feature is
the pronunciation of the diphthong in PRICE, shown from the collected speech in words like *I*
[ɒɪ], *time [tɒɪm]*, *Lionel's [lɒːɪnəls] Vinyl [vɒːɪnl]*, *night [nɒːɪt]*, *say [saːɪ]* etc. The tapping
significant for this variety can be found in *little [lɪɾl]*, *written [rɪɾn]*, and *getting [geɾɪŋ]*, in
the latter together with the pronunciation of word final *-ing* as /ɪn/ instead of the standard and
prestigious /ɪŋ/. This feature is also found in his pronunciation of *gambling [ˈgæmblɪn]*,
egging [ˈegɪn], but not in *living [ˈlɪvɪŋ]*, which might indicate an inconsistency in the usage
of this feature or that the actor is not originally a Broad speaker. He also has very distinctive
/jə/ for unstressed you, and also the raising tendency similar to the example with the
pronunciation of *ten* described in the background, which in AusE is realised as /tɪn/. An
example from the collected speech is the pronunciation of *get* as /gɪt/. During the data
collection it was found that this feature also could be found in the pronunciation of *better* as
/bɪɾə/, which can be assumed to cause problems with misunderstandings among speakers of
other English accents. In the words *down [dɛːon]*, *found [fɛːond]* and *out [ɛːot]*, this
character shows a similar pronunciation of the vowel sound in MOUTH (or *how*), which gives

an example of the AusE nasal "twang". Though he is mainly non-rhotic, he has rhoticity in the pronunciation of *years* and *murderer*. He also shows an example of word final /əd/ in *wanted*, where the RP pronunciation would have been /ɪd/.

4.2 Character B

This is a portrayal of a wealthy farmer around 60 years old, also chairman of the Farmers' council in his home village. He belongs to group 4 or 5 on the social scale described on page 6; an intermediate position in society, where an intermediate variety of the language can be expected, which in this case is General AusE containing some Broad features.

The portrayal of this character is quite difficult since the actor has a slurred manner of speaking, which makes him sound quite Broad, but when analysing the words separately mainly Cultivated features are found. The Broadness in the sound of his speech is maybe due to the Australian intonation and rhythm, which clearly distinguishes him from a British RP speaker. The results form this character concerning the sounds in FACE, which is shown in the collected speech in *maybe [meɪbɪ]*, *station [ˈseɪʃən]*, *takes [teɪks]*, *say [seɪ]* and are more RP-like than Cultivated. The difference between Cultivated and RP in this case is /ɛɪ/ and /eɪ/ respectively, where the Cultivated variety has a more back-centred pronunciation of this sound. Maybe this is a personal feature, or the actors attempt to sound more educated to gain respectability among the people in the village where the portrayed character lives.

The PRICE diphthong is the same for both RP and Cultivated Aus E, and the study shows clear Cultivated pronunciation in word like *I [aɪ]*, *my [maɪ]*, *might [maɪt]*, *right [raɪt]*, etc.

The only occasion when this character showed a difference from RP pronunciation was with the BATH word *starting [ˈstaːrɪŋ]* where an RP speaker would have used /ɑː/. The result showed raising tendencies in *get* but not in *ten,* respectively this gave the pronunciation [gɪt] and [ten] for these two words.

4.3 Character C

This character is described in the Method (p.21) as a lawyer around 60, living and working in Melbourne. On the social scale described on page 6, he belongs to group 1. A person in a "high" position expected to speak the prestige variety of the language, which is Cultivated.

The results of the study have shown that this character has mainly Cultivated features, which are very close to RP. The BATH vowel in, for example, *cards [kɑːds]*, *fart [fɑːt]*, *far [fɑː]* have the RP pronunciation, and the diphthong in PRICE also shows a distinct RP pronunciation in words like: *I [aɪ]*, *my [maɪ]*, *client [klaɪnt]*, *motorbike ['məʊtəbaɪk]*, *like [laɪk]*, etc. In the character's pronunciation of the BATH vowel in the word *charges [tʃaːdʒəs]*, the RP pronunciation /ɑː/ was expected, but the result showed a more general Aus E pronunciation with /aː/. If this portrayal is well thought through concerning pronunciation, this might indicate that he portrays the formal usage of /aː/ as a Melbourne speaker of Aus E. The diphthong in FACE is more RP than Cultivated, shown in words like: *great [feɪs]*, *place [pleɪs]*, *makes [meɪks]*, *case [keɪs]*, etc. spoken by this character. The Cultivated FACE diphthong is expected to be pronounced a bit more at the back of the mouth than the RP FACE diphthong. Since there is such a delicate difference between RP and Cultivated in the pronunciation of this sound it might be the author of this essay who has made a mistake when listening, or that the actor simply is more RP than Cultivated in his pronunciation. It could also be a mistake in his acting. An additional Cultivated feature is the word final *–ing* pronunciation in for example *dropping [drɔpɪŋ]*, *mixing [mɪksɪŋ]*, *bucking [bʌkɪŋ]*, where the Broad variety would have *droppin' [drɔpɪn]*, etc. The results has shown that this character has voiced taps [ɾ] in his pronunciation of, for example *inventor [ɪn'venɾa]*, *matter [mæɾa]*, *pretty [prɪɾɪ]*, etc., which most likely is an American influence in this case, since Am E influences become more and more popular in Australia. This tapping

is otherwise a common feature of Broad, male speakers. The broadness in his speech might also be a case of accommodation, to adjust his speech to appear friendlier, since this character meets his son for the first time, who is a Broad speaker. He also seems to have some kind of hyper corrected RP pronunciation of /ɜː/ in words like *were(n't), heard* similar to the Cultivated diphthong in GOAT, which is something like [ɡöʊt]. Maybe this is due to the extreme fronting tendency in Aus E, or an exaggerated attempt to sound educated when acting, if the actor is otherwise a General speaker, or simply a personal feature.

When listening to the portrayal of this Cultivated accent it can easily be distinguished from RP regarding intonation, rhythm etc., which clearly show that this is not a British RP speaker. The main similarities lie within the vowel pronunciation in individual words but with a nasal "twang", put together to fluent speech it can be distinguished from RP. The nasal "twang" might be just a personal feature, or a feature of Aus E voice quality or due to the fronting tendency and less marked than the Broad "twang" shown in the results of Character A.

In the pronunciation of the MOUTH diphthong this character shows clear RP pronunciation in words like *cowboy [ˈkaʊbɔɪ], how [haʊ]*. It could also be expected that the vowel sound in *not* would be influenced by AmE /nɑːt/, since there is a resistance toward sounding too RP, but the RP pronunciation /nɒt/ was found in this case.

4.4 Character D

Character D is a portrayal of a female restaurant owner, around 30 years old, living and working in Melbourne. In the list of class divisions on page 6, she belongs to group 3 (or 4) This character is in a similar position in society as Character B (the wealthy farmer); there is a gender difference and regional difference, which might influence the speech.

The expected speech from this character would be an intermediate variety, which in AusE is General, which also contains Broad features in pronunciation. The results of the study give a different picture of this character portrayed by showing mainly Cultivated features. Regarding pronunciation of individual words, she seems entirely RP, but has the Australian intonation, etc. described in the results of Character B (the wealthy farmer) and C (the lawyer). In some examples from the collected speech from this character a clear RP pronunciation is found in MOUTH words such as *now [naʊ], cow [kaʊ], cowboy [ˈkaʊbɔɪ]*, etc., and also in the diphthong in PRICE words such as *might [maɪt], times [taɪms], drive [draɪv]* and *right [raɪt]*, etc. The results do not show any features of the Broad pronunciation, which would indicate that she is a speaker with a General accent. In the background Leitner (2004) says that the Cultivated variety developed in the cities and became more common among women than men, and that might be the reason in question in this case. She has a slight raising tendency in *when* and *get* where she shows examples of the AusE feature with word internal /ɪ/ and /ə/ being in complementary distribution.

5. Conclusion

The language that was brought to Australia with the first settlers was a mixture of different dialects, with people from different origins mainly from the urban areas of Scotland, eastern Ireland and from cities like London, Middlesex and Lancashire.

Although RP and AusE share many features in the pronunciation of the vowel sounds, Aus E pronunciation is more fronted and more centred than RP pronunciation, which results in the Australian speakers of English looking like they are smiling while they speak.

The development of the three Aus E varieties Broad, General and Cultivated are based on the fact that the new settlers arrived in Australia at different periods of time while there was also an ongoing change in pronunciation in the areas on the British Isles where the settlers

came from. The oldest variety, which has most significant AusE features in vowel pronunciation, is the Broad variety. Together with education and other improvements in society, a wish among the educated people in Australia was to sound educated and they endeavoured to sound more like RP. The result of this was General and gradually the Cultivated variety. A result of how the way these three varieties developed is that there is almost no regional variation in AusE. The differences are to be found in different social layers in the Australian society.

The aim of this essay was to show that the history of the AusE accent is significant for the development of the three varieties Broad, General and Cultivated. It was hypothesised that an acted portrayal of AusE speakers would show that the three different accents were used within different social classes, where the Broad variety would be low-class and Cultivated the prestigious variety used by people with high socio-economic standards. The results showed a clear distinction in pronunciation between the portrayal of the low-class individual (Character A) and Character C, the lawyer belonging to group 1 on the social scale. Characters B and D who belong to almost the same intermediate group on the social scale, where the General accent was expected, both showed Cultivated features, even more than Character C. Since this research has been carried out on acted portrayals it might not give an authentic picture of these speech varieties.

Since actors belong to group 2 on the social scale they are not expected to have Broad features in their speech, therefore the Broad character in this study might give a warped picture of the person portrayed. To give a more honest description of the AusE accents, the ultimate thing would have been to have done some research on "real" AusE speakers or on the origin of the real people behind their portrayal, and also get in contact with the scriptwriter to get a description of the characters. Since the background research for this essay has shown that there is supposed to be more regional variation in low-class pronunciation it would have

been interesting to investigate the speech from two characters belonging to the same social class to be able to give a picture of the fact that this variation in speech might occur, and also among people in high socioeconomic positions to see if there is less variation within this group.

There seem to be a difficulty in finding people with pure distinctive features in each of the varieties of Aus E. This might be an effect of the speech community not being "linguistically uniform", i.e. without sharp boundary lines and some variation from speaker to speaker, as mentioned in Mitchell and Delbridge's description of the AusE varieties. Since the historical overview shows how the many different accents of English from the British Isles created a speech society in the Australian colonies that was a mixture of all these accents, and further resulted in three different varieties of AusE, it must be difficult for a speaker to entirely acquire the pronunciation belonging to one variety.

Some suggestions for further investigations concerning AusE could be to look at social and/or regional variation in vocabulary usage, or gender differences in pronunciation within different social classes or in general. An investigation could also be done concerning accommodation between speakers of the different varieties as well as attitudes today to AusE within different social classes. Since Australia has become a multicultural country research could be done on the Asian influence on AusE or the ethnic-broad variety, which is influenced by Italian and Greek, and also how Aboriginal languages have influenced AusE.

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Appendices

Character A:

-Here you [jə] go. I [ɒɪ] wanted her to have something she could keep. It was given to me

when I was a pup. Besides [bɪˈsɒɪds], it takes [taɪks] me a really long time [tɒɪm] to eat my

dinner [dɪna].

-So, what are we gonna do about this young fellow [fæla], hey?

-So, how [hæo] long have you been gamblin'[gæmblɪn] then?

-Feel good being a winner [wɪna]?

-Why [wɒɪ] the hell not?

-What do you say [saːɪ] if I lend you [jə] the money?

-You reckon you pay [paɪ] me back in six months?

-I charge [tʃaːdʒ] interest and there's no going [geʊɪn] near [niː] that Dick Cummins again.

-Yea, yea, yea, and you're a bloody [ˈblɔdi] idiot [ˈɪdjət]!

-Don't bet [bɪt] what you can't [kɑːnt] afford to loose.

-Only if you've [jəv] got time [tɒːɪm], the place [plaːɪs]

is called Lionel's [lɒːɪnəls] Vinyl [vɒːɪnl], I've [ɒːɪv] drawn a little [liɾl] map for you [jə],

if you can't [kɑːnt] get [gɪt] the "Steppenwolf", I [ɒɪ] want the "Jethro Tulls" "This Was".

I've [ɒɪv] written [rɪɾn] it all down [dɛːon]. And remember [rɪˈmembə]; don't flash [flæʃ]

your cash [kæʃ]!

-I was twenty [twɪntɪ]-one when it happened.

- I thought you knew.

- When I was a young fellow [fæla] I used to drink…a lot [lɔt]. One night [nɒːɪt] I was

getting [geɾɪŋ] legless as usual, …and this bloke came [kaɪm] up to me and picked a fight

[fɒɪt] and…all the blokes was standing [stændin] around eggin' [egɪn] us on and I …laid [laːɪd] one final [fɒɪnl] punch on him [əm]…an uppercut to the jaw [dʒɔːr] and…he fell back and bumped his head [hed]…neck [nek]snapped just like [lɒɪk] that. He died [dɒɪd] instantly. I was found [fæond] guilty of involved in manslaughter [ˈmenslɔːra]. Spent [spɪnt] the next three and a half [haːf] years [jers] in jail [dʒaɪl]. There's not a day [daɪ] goes by I…don't regret what happened, you know. And…that's why I normally don't drink. When you asked me the last [laːst] questions about living [lɪvɪŋ] with a murderer [mɜːdrər] I thought you found [feʊnd] out [aot] and…I…I…didn't think you wanted [wɒntəd] to know me anymore [ɪnɪmɔː].

Character B:

-Maybe [meɪbɪ] you [jə] ought to get [gɪt] a new station [steɪʃən] hand.

-You still owe me for overnight [ˈəʊvənaɪt] expansion.

-It's amazing [ˈəmeɪsɪŋ] what sheep can eat in one night [naɪt].

-You can pack your bags.

-Look if I [aɪ] can't [kɑːnt] trust my [maɪ] staff, I might [maɪt] as well throw [θrəʊ] it in. Go; get [gɪt] off my [maɪ] property!

-Claire, notice anything [ˈenɪθɪŋ] different?

-And finally [ˈfaɪnəlɪ] we should thank Bob's girlfriend [ˈgɜːlfrend] for the refreshments.

-You're a bit late [leɪt], but grab a seat.

-Bob's the secretary. You should have contacted him [hɪm] a week ago.

-All right [raɪt], we'll see if we can squeeze you in.

-Japp, there you [jə]go, item seventeen.

-We're all busy people here Tess [tes].

-You're asking [ɑːskɪŋ] us to lobby government, it takes [teɪks] money, we need expert ['ekspɜːt] consultancy to make [meɪk] out reports, analyse ['ænəlaɪs] the cost efficiency.

-The chairman [tʃeəmen] can't [kɑːnt] go breaking the rules Claire.

-Let [let] me say [seɪ] it's the first [fɜːst] time [taɪm] in ten [ten] years we've had to invoke this clause, but Dave [deɪv] would like [laɪk] an urgent ['ɜːdʒənt]discussion of febrile vaccine reaction…

-Starting [stɑːtɪŋ] to wonder that myself [maɪself].

-Ok, let's stop the meeting [miːrɪŋ].

-All right [raɪt], why [waɪ] don't we put the ladies'[leɪdɪs] case [keɪs] to the vote?

-All those in favour, say [seɪ] I [aɪ].

Character C:

-My [maɪ]assistant has appointment cards[kɑːds] on the desk. Please feel free to help yourself.

-Yes I [aɪ]know who you [juː] are Alex. Your mother told me you [juː] might [maɪt]be dropping [drɔpɪŋ] by [baɪ].

-You been here before?

- Great [greɪt] place [pleɪs].

-It's a very interesting case [keɪs]. My client ['klaɪənt] is an eccentric inventor [ɪnˈvenɾa].

He's up on charges [tʃaːdʒəs] for mixing manure with alcohol to power [pɑːr] his motorbike ['məʊtəbaɪk]

I [aɪ] said to the Judge: Your Worship [ˈwɜːʃɪp], this is not [nɒt] a matter [ˈmæɾə] for the

courts [kɔːts]. Simply a matter of the absinth makes [meɪks] the fart [fɑːt] go Honda. Case

[keɪs] dismissed! It's a joke [dʒəʊk]!

-Is that what you [jə] heard [hɜːd]!

-Yea, there's skid marks [mɑːks] in front of the dog.

-I've [aɪv] heard them [hɜːdem] all. So now [naʊ] I know [nəʊ] what you think about

lawyers [ˈlɔːjəs], huh? Maybe [meɪbɪ] we got to have a drink, huh?

-Simone! Glad you're on! Thank you.

-So, Elisabeth says you're on the land?

-As far [fɑːr] as your brother's concerned [kənˈsɜːnd] I [pliːd] plead not [nɒt] guilty.

-I expect being a lawyer is a bit like [laɪk] being a cowboy [ˈkaʊbɔɪ], all those bucking

[ˈbʌkɪŋ] broncos. It takes [teɪks]guts!

I know what genes you got from me, and they weren't [wönt] the ones for guts. It took guts

to come here though!

-Alex, look, I got no excuses. I was married and your mother and I…

-Your parents seem to have done a pretty [prɪɾɪ] good job on you without [wɪðeʊt] my

[maɪ] input.

-I don't know how [haʊ] to say [seɪ] this, but I'm not [nɒt] so…I'm not so sure [ʃɔː] I know

what you want from me.

Character D:

- You [juː] should tell her the truth.

- Come on, George's only going [ɡəʊiŋ] to be at the door for only about another twenty

[twˈentɪ] minutes.

- Not [nɔt] to mention avoiding the truth.

- Hum, probably never [ˈnævə] even get [ɡɪt] me to "Tassie".

- I [aɪ]thought you said only on weekends.

- Hello, what are you [ju] doing [duɪŋ] here?

- Went out [aʊt] with the wrong brother, did she?

- You look so different; you need a shower [ʃaʊə]!

- Look we did it [ɪt]! A lease on our [aʊr] own café. Only thing now [naʊ] is you.

- We brought some fresh [freʃ] seafood. Thought you might [maɪt] want a bit of a change [tʃæɪntʃ].

- I [aɪ] meant the cow [kaʊ].

- The latte [lætɪ] crawls, I miss our caffeine OD.

- That was only Simon [saɪmn].

- That's true; sometimes [ˈsʌmtaɪms] we had to give up coffee.

- Well I think I might [maɪt] go and help the others with the washing [wɒʃɪŋ] up.

- Oh my god, a real life [laɪf] cowboy [ˈkaʊbɔɪ]!

- Oh, aren't you [juː] sweet [swəɪːt]!

- Look at the chest [tʃest] on him [ɪm]! And that chisel jaw [dʒɔː].

- He's your boyfriend!

- I want all the details, who [həʊ], where, when [wɪn], how [haʊ] many times [taɪms]…

- I want to see him [hɪm] on a horse! Can we get [ɡɪt] him a horse [hɔːs], Tess?

- Are you sure [ʃɔː]? I look at these blue eyes [aɪs] of his, and I think I could dive [daɪv] right [raɪt] in!