Remember: **In addition to RP and GA**, you must choose and study **ONE OTHER English accent**. **You can select one from the options presented here; if not, move on to other units** 🤚

Unit 4: English Accents in the South Hemisphere

This unit focuses on two major standard accents from the Southern Hemisphere: *Australian English* and *South African English*.

It describes their key pronunciation features, including both **segmental** and **suprasegmental** (prosodic) aspects that distinguish them from RP. The document also provides a brief overview of certain **phonotactic** or **lexical distribution** patterns.

It is important to note that the segmental descriptions include both **systemic** (phonological) and **phonetic** information. However, only systemic features should be reflected in phonemic transcriptions unless explicitly indicated. 🤚

Finally, the document includes an introductory section on the **historical and social contexts** in which these accents developed. This section is optional and intended for those who wish to explore the topic further.

1. AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH

1.1. Historical and Social Context (non-compulsory, for reading only 🤚)

English language took root in Australia and New Zealand in the early nineteenth century. These varieties are classified as Southern Hemisphere Englishes due to the many traits they share.

Captain James Cook claimed Australia for the British Crown in 1770; however, the establishment of the first penal colony at Botany Bay (present-day Sydney) did not take place until 1788. Since then, English has been the dominant language spoken by native-born Australians, with the exception of Aboriginal populations.

As a result of British colonisation, **Australian English bears a closer resemblance to British English accents than to those of the United States**. Most immigrants (approximately 90%) came from the British Isles, with a particularly large proportion originating from London. Consequently, Australian English reflects many of the linguistic developments characteristic of southern England during the nineteenth century, although distinct local varieties have since emerged. While the English spoken by the colonisers was largely unaffected by Indigenous languages, some lexical borrowing did occur, mainly in relation to cultural practices and Australia's unique flora and fauna.

Australian English displays a notable degree of homogeneity across its vast geographical area. A**ccent variation is mainly determined by social and stylistic factors rather than by regional differences**. According to Bernard (1969) and Wells (1982), this can be attributed to several factors: early white settlers arrived through a limited number of seaports and maintained close connections through them; moreover, whether convicts or free settlers, they fostered a sense of social unity in opposition to RP-speaking British officials and administrators, thereby distancing themselves from the rigid social hierarchies of British society.

Aussie is as an informal term referring to a native or inhabitant of Australia. As an adjective, it is used to describe Australian people, institutions, and place names.

1.2. Pronunciation in Australian English

Australian English stands as the primary and most widely spoken variety throughout the country, although it coexists with other dialects among native-born Australians.

From a **phonological** perspective, Australian English is one of the most regionally **uniform** varieties of English worldwide and shows a close relationship with Received Pronunciation (RP). **Phonetically**, however, it displays considerable **social variation**, forming a continuum of accents that range from strongly local varieties to accents approaching RP.

This continuum traditionally includes **broad**, **general**, and **mild (or cultivated)** accents. Broad accents, spoken by approximately 30% of the population, are characterised by what is commonly referred to as the *Australian twang*. At the opposite

end of the continuum, mild accents—used mainly by older speakers from upper socio-economic backgrounds (around 10%)—show a closer resemblance to RP. Between these two extremes lies the **general accent**, adopted by the majority of Australians and representing the mainstream variety.

In our transcription exercises, General Australian English will be used as the reference accent.

Choosing a phonemic notation that adequately represents all Australian accents has proven challenging and remains a matter of scholarly debate. The **Mitchell–Delbridge (MD) system**, developed between the 1940s and 1960s and largely based on southeastern British English, was for many years the standard framework for transcribing Australian English vowels. However, it does not fully capture contemporary Australian pronunciation. More recently, the **Harrington, Cox and Evans (HCE) system** (1970) has become increasingly influential, as it provides a more accurate account of modern Australian English vowel realisations. Nevertheless, the MD system remains firmly established in key reference works such as the *Macquarie Dictionary* and in much of the subsequent literature.

For a detailed comparison of the phonemic transcription systems used for Australian English vowels, see [Vowel Symbols for Australian English Phonemes](#).

1.2.1. *Vowels & vocalic sequences*

Australian English and RP show **no major PHONOLOGICAL** differences in their VOCALIC systems, with the exception of the RP diphthong /ʊə/, which is **rare and virtually obsolete** in contemporary Australian English.

The vowel system of Mild (or Cultivated) Australian English closely resembles that of RP, whereas Broad Australian English shows affinities with Cockney, the traditional working-class accent of London.

PHONETICALLY, however, Australian English differs substantially from RP. The most salient differences include:

- The **raising of short front vowels** in comparison with their RP counterparts (/æ/, /e/ and /ɪ/),

- The **fronting** of RP **/uː/, /ɑː/ and /ɜː/**,

- The so-called *Diphthong Shift*, which primary affects the closing diphthongs and can be explained as follows:
  - the marked **widening and retraction** (often involving rounding) of the first element of /æɪ/ results in a shifted realisation /ɑe/, clearly distinguishing words such as *late* and *light*. The greater articulatory distance between the onset and offset of these diphthongs contributes to their perceptual prominence in Australian English;

  - the **retraction and rounding** of /ɑe/ in turn affects the starting point of /oɪ/, which is realised in a more open and retracted position than in RP, roughly between close-mid and open-mid;

  - the **lowering of the starting point** of /əʉ/ leads to a more fronted— and in some cases closer—realisation of /æɔ/.

Table 1 lists the symbols used for **Australian English phonemes** for transcription practice, alongside their **RP equivalents**. It also provides key **PHONETIC information** to highlight the differences and similarities between these accents:

AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH <mark>*HCE*</mark>	*AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH MD* (just for reading)	*RP*	*KEY PHONETIC INFORMATION*
/iː/	/i/	/iː/	**Same symbol:** No relevant phonetic differences between Australian English (AE) and RP English. In broader AE accents, the vowel tends to exhibit a diphthongal quality.
/ɪ/	/ɪ/	/ɪ/	**Same symbol but closer and higher:** The AE vowel is articulated with a higher tongue position than in RP.

/e/	/ɛ/	/e/	**Same symbol but closer and higher:** The AE vowel is slightly closer than its RP counterpart.
/æ/	/æ/	/æ/	**Same symbol but closer and higher:** The AE vowel is slightly closer than its RP counterpart.
/ɐ/	/ʌ/	/ʌ/	**More open and fronted:** The AE vowel is between [æ] and [ɒ], positioned more towards the front.
/ɐː/	/a/	/ɑː/	**More advanced:** The AE vowel is articulated with noticeable tongue fronting compared to RP.
/ɔ/	/ɒ/	/ɒ/	**Closer and higher:** The AE vowel has a tighter articulation than its RP counterpart.
/oː/	/ɔ/	/ɔː/	**Closer and higher:** The AE vowel is the only truly back long vowel and shows higher quality than RP.
/ʊ/	/ʊ/	/ʊ/	**Same symbol but more rounded:** AE features greater lip rounding than RP.
/ʉː/	/u/	/uː/	**More advanced:** The AE vowel is articulated with noticeable tongue fronting; and it may be slightly diphthongised in broader accents.
/ɜː/	/ɜ/	/ɜː/	**Same symbol but closer and more advanced:** AE varieties show a vowel closer to the palate than RP, with noticeable tongue fronting.
/ə/	/ə/	/ə/	**Same symbol but open in final position:** In word-final positions, the AE vowel may be realised as [ɐ].
/ɑe/	/aɪ/	/aɪ/	**Slower with retracted first element:** AE tends to lengthen the first element, moving it further back, possibly rounding ([ɒˑɪ]) or even monophthongising it ([ɒˑ]). Refer to *Diphthong Shift* above.

/æɪ/	/eɪ/	/eɪ/	**Opener first element:** General and broad AE accents may start with ([a̠ɪ] or even [ʌɪ]). Refer to *Diphthong Shift* above.
/oɪ/	/ɔɪ/	/ɔɪ/	**Closer first element:** The AE diphthong begins with a higher tongue position. Refer to *Diphthong Shift* above.
/æɔ/	/aʊ/	/aʊ/	**Fronted, and sometimes closer:** Broad and general accents begin with tongue fronting. It may be monophthongised as [æ̈]. Refer to *Diphthong Shift* above.
/əʉ/	/oʊ/	/əʊ/	**Opener first element:** General and broad AE accents feature an open and long first element. Refer to *Diphthong Shift* above.
/ɪə/	/ɪə/	/ɪə/	**Same symbol:** No relevant phonetic differences between AE and RP English**.** Broad AE accents may use a long vowel [i̠ː], particularly before /r/ (monophthongising).
/eː/	/ɛə/	/eə/	**Opener starting point.** Broad AE varieties may pronounce this diphthong with [e̞ː], particularly before /r/.
/ʊə/	/ʊə/	/ʊə/	**Great interpersonal variability:** Some speakers use /ʊə/ only in specific words, others in different words, while some rarely use it at all, usually replacing it with a disyllabic sequence /ʉə/ or a long vowel /oː/.

Table 1. Australian English versus RP: vowels

It is noteworthy that in Australian English, **speakers tend to retain all three elements of TRIPHTHONGS** (closing diphthongs plus schwa), without smoothing or omitting the second vowel, as in words like *fire* /fɑeə/ and *power* /pæɔə/.

1.2.2. *Consonants*

Australian English exhibits **no** major **PHONOLOGICAL** differences in its consonant system.

The **glottal stop [ʔ] (*T-glottalling*)** is relatively **uncommon**. It may occasionally occur both within words and across word boundaries as a possible realisation of syllable-final /t/, particularly before a sonorant consonant or syllabic /n̩/. Examples include *fit them* ([fɪʔ ðəm]), *batman* ([ˈbæʔmən]), and *button* ([bɐʔn̩]).

Glottal reinforcement is also largely absent in Australian English. Unlike in some other accents, a glottal stop is <u>not</u> typically inserted before the oral closure of voiceless plosives, except among a minority of speakers in syllable-final, non-prevocalic contexts.

Three notable **PHONETIC** features of Australian English are outlined below:

a) **T-tapping** in Australian English resembles the pattern found in General American (GA), where intervocalic /t/ may be realised as a voiced alveolar tap [ɾ]. Some scholars, such as Trudgill, transcribe this sound as [d̯]. This process typically occurs when /t/ appears between vowels (and the second vowel is weak), or before syllabic consonants such as /m̩/ and /l̩/. Examples include *bu**tt**er, ge**t** out, bo**tt**om*, and *bo**tt**le butter, get out, bottom,* and *bottle*. However, T-tapping in Australian English is less frequent and less consistent than in GA.

b) **/ɹ/ realisation:** The articulation of /ɹ/ in Australian English often tends towards a **more retroflex approximant** [ɻ] than in RP, with the tongue curled slightly

backwards towards the palate. However, /r/ may also be realised as an alveolar approximant [ɹ].

c) **/l/ variation and vocalisation:**

- *Allophonic variation:* Australian English shows both clear and dark allophones of /l/, as in like *Lyle* ([laɪɫ]). However, some linguists, including Trudgill and J.C. Wells, argue that /l/ generally has a relatively dark quality in most positions.

- *Vocalisation***:** For some speakers, /l/ may be vocalised in pre-consonantal, syllable-final, or syllabic contexts, acquiring a vowel-like quality (often [ʊ] or [o]) rather than a fully consonantal one. This can be heard in words such as *milk, hurl*, and *noddle.*

1.2.3. *Prosody*

Based on JC Wells (1983), the prosodic features of Australian English can be outlined as follows:

INTONATION: A growing use of **checking high-rise tones in declarative clauses** has been observed in Australian English, where a fall tone would conventionally be expected (see *Audio illustrations from Australian Voices*). Further discussion can be found in the following studies:

Interpreting rising intonation in Australian English

Patterns of rising and falling in Australian English

TEMPO: There is a tendency **for diphthongs to be produced more slowly, with a lengthened first element**, particularly when they are articulated with a wider movement than in RP. Additionally, some speakers with broad accents tend to speak noticeably more slowly than speakers with other accent types. Although these features are not always strongly marked, they contribute to the rhythmic impression that distinguishes Australian English from RP.

NASALITY: Australian speech, especially in <u>broad</u> accents, is often described as having a **degree of nasality**. Vowels adjacent to nasal consonants (as in *d<u>own</u>* and *n<u>ow</u>*) tend to retain more nasality than in RP. This quality contributes to what is often described as the characteristic Australian *twang*.

1.2.4. *Phonotactic/lexical distribution features*

The main phonotactic and lexical distribution features shared by most varieties of Australian English varieties can be outlined as follows:

- **Rhoticity:** Australian English is predominantly **non-rhotic**, meaning that /r/ is typically absent in pre-consonantal and word-final positions. As a result, **R-liaison** occurs commonly in connected speech.

- **Word-final /iː/**: In Australian English, **/iː/ (phonetically [iˑ])** occurs in **word-final unstressed** syllables in words spelled with final '-y', '-ee', '-ie', or '-ey' after one or more consonants, as in *bab<u>y</u>, committ<u>ee</u>, Ann<u>ie</u>* , and *eas<u>y</u>*. This pattern also applies in compounds, inflected forms, and stems ending in consonants, such as *bell<u>y</u>button, happ<u>ie</u>r, eas<u>ie</u>st, news<u>i</u>ness, stud<u>ie</u>d, Lesl<u>ey</u>'s, cook<u>ie</u>s* (Source: JC Wells).

- **Weak Vowels**:
  - **Merger:** In Australian English, the dominant vowel in **unstressed syllables is /ə/**, as in *ph<u>o</u>togr<u>a</u>ph<u>e</u>r, sal<u>a</u>d, carr<u>o</u>t, call<u>ou</u>s,* and *box<u>e</u>rs*.

    The **merger of *schwa* (/ə/) with unstressed /ɪ/ is nearly complete**, meaning that no consistent distinction is maintained between these two vowels **in unstressed syllables of content words**; /ə/ overwhelmingly replaces /ɪ/.
  - **Suffixes**: Words with suffixes such as *-ate, -age, -ess, -est, -et, -ed, -it, -id, - ist, -less, -let, -ness* (e.g., *cabb<u>a</u>ge, rabb<u>i</u>t, want<u>e</u>d*) as well as *–es* (e.g., *bus<u>e</u>s, mix<u>e</u>s, Ros<u>a</u>'s*), typically contain **schwa**.
  - **Weak forms**: Weak forms of pronouns such as ***it*, *his*** or ***him***, and sometimes the verb ***is***, may contain *schwa* in some speakers (e.g., ***it***

/ət/, ***his*** /həs/ or ***him*** /həm/, ***is*** /əz/). However, as this feature is not consistent across all speakers or varieties, our transcriptions will not reflect this weak form of *is*. ✋

- o **Exceptions**:
    - ▪ **/ɪ/ tends to be favoured before <u>velars</u>,** particularly in suffixes such as *-ing* and *-ic*, (e.g., *follow<u>i</u>ng* or *pan<u>i</u>c*). Similarly, **words ending in <u>unstressed</u> *-ish* and *-ism***, such as *Engl<u>i</u>sh* and *commun<u>i</u>sm*, may contain /ɪ/ rather than /ə/. ✋
    - ▪ The **prefixes** *be-*, *de-*, *e-*, *pre-*, and *re-* show variation between /i/ and /ə/ (not RP /ɪ/). Both pronunciations are acceptable; however, in our transcription exercises, *schwa* will be used when the prefix is unstressed. ✋

- o **Weak *you***: According to Wells, the weak form of the **pronoun *you*** as /jə/ (or occasionally /j/ before a vowel) is common in <u>broad</u> Australian English but less frequent in General Australian English. Therefore, we will not use this weak pronunciation in transcription practice. ✋

- • **/ɐː/ and /æ/ occurrence**: The vowel /ɐː/ is generally considered more prestigious than /æ/. Words that have **/ɑː/ before voiceless fricatives /θ, f, s/ in RP** (e.g., *l<u>au</u>gh, p<u>a</u>th, h<u>a</u>lf, p<u>a</u>ss*) typically **contain /ɐː/ in Australian English**. **/ɐː/ also occurs** in words such as *c<u>a</u>lm, c<u>a</u>r, sp<u>a</u> or f<u>a</u>ther*. However, **before nasal + consonant clusters** (e.g., *d<u>a</u>nce, pl<u>a</u>nt, c<u>a</u>n't, s<u>a</u>mple*), **RP /ɑː/ often corresponds to /æ/ in AE**. This distribution varies regionally, with some areas (especially in the east) favouring /æ/, while others prefer /ɐː/.

- **Yod-dropping**: In Australian English, yod-dropping occurs in contexts similar to RP. It typically takes place in stressed syllables after /l/ and /s/, resulting in pronunciations such as *ludic* /ˈluːdɪk/ and *suit* /suːt/. It may also occur after /z/ and /θ/ (e.g., *Zeus* / zuːs/, *enthusiasm* /ɪnˈθuːziˌæzəm/, although in these cases the yod is more often retained.

- **Yod-coalescence:** This feature is characteristic of Australian English, particularly in **stressed syllables**. When /j/ follows alveolar stops or fricatives (/t, d, s, z/), the sequences often merge into /tʃ, dʒ, ʃ, ʒ/, respectively. For example, *tune* → /tʃuːn/, *duke* → / dʒuːk/, *suit* → / ʃuːt/, and *presume* → / prəˈʒuːm/. This process is more common among younger speakers than older or more conservative ones.

- **/lj/-reduction**: In Australian English, the sequence /lj/, as in *million* (/ˈmɪljən/) may undergo **assimilation** to /jj/ (/ˈmɪjjən/) or be further reduced to **/j/** (/ˈmɪjən/).

- **Initial H-dropping**: H-dropping in <u>content</u> words is **variable** and socially marked, occurring mainly in <u>broad</u> and <u>some General Australian speech</u>. In such cases, no distinction is made between pairs like *hill* and *ill* or *high* and *eye*.

Be sure to consider all these phonotactic and lexical distribution features when transcribing Australian English. ✋ The features described in Trudgill and Hannah (section 2.2.1.4, p. 24 in the 5th ed.; p. 26 in the 6th ed.) are for optional further reading and are not compulsory.

2. South African English

2.1. Historical and Social Context (non-compulsory, for reading only✋)

The Dutch established settlements at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652. British interest in the region increased during the Napoleonic Wars, and the first English-speaking community in southern Africa emerged after the British occupation of the Cape in 1806. This community expanded significantly in 1820 with the arrival of 5,000 British settlers in the Eastern Cape. By 1822, English had been established as an official language of administration, although its pronunciation was influenced by contact with Afrikaans.

Later settlements in Natal, founded during the 1850s and 1860s, were less affected by Afrikaans influence. The discovery of diamonds and gold in the 1870s brought a large influx of European immigrants to the Witwatersrand region, leading to the development of an English-speaking urban society in Johannesburg that combined features from both the Cape and Natal varieties. By the end of the nineteenth century, English had become the main language of communication among much of the European population in southern Africa.

During the twentieth century, RP (Received Pronunciation) gradually lost its position as the sole prestige norm, as locally rooted varieties of English gained social acceptance. These ranged from accents closely aligned with RP to forms strongly shaped by Afrikaans influence and local contact patterns.

In 1993, South Africa's Constitution recognised eleven official languages, including English, formalising the country's multilingual character. Today, English functions primarily as a lingua franca across diverse linguistic and ethnic communities.

2.2. Pronunciation in South African English

Unlike Australian English, South African English does not have a single, uniform accent. Instead, it comprises a range of native English accents that show **greater social and regional diversity than Australian or New Zealand English**.

South African English is typically classified into three main accents: *Cultivated (or*

Mild), *General*, and *Broad*. The Cultivated accent, which resembles RP, is associated with the upper social classes. Broad South African English is linked to working-class speakers and to Afrikaans-influenced varieties of English. **General South African English, associated with the middle class, is the variety described in this course.**

It is important to note that there is **no full scholarly consensus** on a definitive set of pronunciation features for South African English. Therefore, **this section focuses only on features that are consistently described across major studies**.

1.2.1. *Vowels & vocalic sequences*

The vowel **PHONEMIC inventory** of **Cultivated (or Mild)** South African English **largely corresponds to RP**, especially in the milder accents.

Aside from a general tendency towards the **monophthongisation of certain diphthongs**, South African English differs from RP **PHONETICALLY**, most notably in the realisation of the phoneme /ɪ/, which shows **characteristic allophonic variation**:

- **A close front realisation [ɪ]** occurs mainly in stressed syllables, particularly:
    - Before and after velar consonants /ŋ/, /k/ and /g/, as in *tick* [tɪk], *big* [bɪg], and *ring* [rɪŋ],
    - Before /ʃ/, and, for some speakers, also before /ʒ/ /tʃ/ and /ʤ/, as in *dish* [dɪʃ],
    - After /h/, as in *hit* [hɪt],
    - For some speakers, in word-initial position, as in *inn* [ɪn], or in words like *it* [ət] or *is* [əz].

- A more **centralised realisation**, often closer to [ə] (or a near-close central vowel), occurs in many other contexts, in both stressed and unstressed syllables (e.g. *limb* /lɪm/ → [ləm], *dinner* /ˈdɪnə/ → [ˈdənə], *bit* /bɪt/ → [bət]).

Despite these allophonic differences, phonemic transcriptions continue to represent this vowel as /ɪ/. 🖐

Table 2 lists the symbols used for **South African English phonemes** for transcription practice, alongside their **RP equivalents**. It also provides key **PHONETIC information** to highlight the differences and similarities between these accents:

South African English	RP	KEY PHONETIC INFORMATION
/iː/	/iː/	**Same phonemic symbol:** In SAE, this vowel **does not show the diphthongisation** often found in other Southern Hemisphere varieties.
/ɪ/	/ɪ/	**Same phonemic symbol:** In SAE, it exhibits **different phonetic realisations** in complementary distribution, as explained earlier.
/e/	/e/	**Same phonemic symbol:** In SAE, this vowel is **slightly closer** than in RP. No other relevant phonetic differences.
/æ/	/æ/	**Same phonemic symbol:** In SAE, this vowel is slightly raised, making it **closer and higher** than in RP.
/ʌ/	/ʌ/	**Same phonemic symbol:** In SAE, this vowel ranges from a **low to a mid-centralised** quality.
/ɑː/	/ɑː/	**Same phonemic symbol:** Its **low and fully back** quality in SAE contrasts with the more fronted realisations found in other Southern Hemisphere varieties.
/ɒ/	/ɒ/	**Same phonemic symbol:** In general SAE, this vowel may also be realised with a **slightly closer** ([ɔ]-like) quality.
/ɔː/	/ɔː/	**Same phonemic symbol:** In general SAE, this vowel may be pronounced **slightly closer**, resembling a [oː]-type quality.

/ʊ/	/ʊ/	**Same phonemic symbol:** In SAE, this vowel is **closer**, **higher**, and more **centralised** ([u]-like) with **little lip rounding** compared to other varieties.
/uː/	/uː/	**Same phonemic symbol:** In SAE, this vowel is generally **central** rather than back, exhibiting a [uː]-type quality, making it **fronter** than in RP.
/ɜː/	/ɜː/	**Same phonemic symbol:** In SAE, this vowel is typically **closer** and **fronter** than in RP, often with **some lip rounding** ([øˑ]-like).
/ə/	/ə/	**Same phonemic symbol:** No significant phonetic differences between SAE and RP.
/aɪ/	/aɪ/	**Same phonemic symbol:** In general SAE, this diphthong may **weaken its second element**, sometimes producing a **near-monophthong**.
/eɪ/	/eɪ/	**Same phonemic symbol:** In SAE, this diphthong tends to be **narrower with a central starting point** and may also approximate a **near-monophthong**.
/ɔɪ/	/ɔɪ/	**Same phonemic symbol:** The onset in SAE can be as **low** as [ɒ]-like, and the second element may be **lower** and **centralised** ([e]-like).
/aʊ/	/aʊ/ (or /ɑʊ/)	The same phonemic symbol but in general SAE varieties it may also show a weakening of the second element, following the tendency to monophthongise diphthongs. **Same phonemic symbol:** In SAE, the **second element** is **often weakened**, aligning with the tendency to **monophthongise** diphthongs.
/əʊ/	/əʊ/	**Same phonemic symbol:** In SAE, this diphthong is often **fronted**, **unrounded**, and may **weaken its second element**, resulting in a **near-monophthong**.
/ɪə/	/ɪə/	**Same phonemic symbol:** This diphthong **varies greatly** in SAE, with some speakers pronouncing it as a long monophthong ([eː] or [ɛː]), merging with the following diphthong.

| /eː/ | /eə/ | **Same phonemic symbol:** In SAE, this diphthong **often becomes a long monophthong** ([eː] or [ɛː]), sometimes merging with the previous diphthong. |
| /ʊə/ | /ʊə/ | **Same phonemic symbol:** In SAE, this diphthong is frequently realised as a **long monophthong** ([oː]). |

Table 2. South African English versus RP: vowels

In South African English, there is a noticeable **raising of front short vowels**, as well as a tendency for **DIPHTHONGS** to become **narrower** or to undergo **monophthongisation**.

Information regarding the behaviour of closing diphthongs followed by *schwa* (traditionally described as **TRIPHTHONGS**) in South African English is relatively limited. As a non-rhotic accent with generally compressed vocalic transitions, a degree of **smoothing**— where the second element is elided, and the first element is lengthened — **is likely to occur**, although this process has not been as extensively documented as in RP. 🖐

2.2.2. *Consonants*

There is **minimal PHONOLOGICAL divergence** between RP and South African English in the **consonant** system, except for the **presence of a velar fricative /x/, which is observed in borrowed words from Afrikaans or German**, such as *go**gg**a* ('insect') and *Ba**ch***.

Additionally, **T-glottalling is largely absent:** /t/ is <u>not</u> replaced by [ʔ] in final position. For instance, *lot* is always pronounced /lɒt/, not /lɒʔ/*.

The main **PHONETIC** of South African English consonants include:

  a) **Lack of aspiration in /p, t, k/**: In stressed word-initial positions, these plosives

are generally unaspirated [p⁼, t⁼, k⁼], as in *p*in, *t*in, *k*in. This feature is particularly noticeable in General and Broad varieties.

b) **T-tapping (with voicing)**: Intervocalic /t/ may be realised as a voiced tap [ɾ] (sometimes represented as [d̥]), as in *be**tt**er* (in the context ˈV_V). T-tapping in South African English is **less frequent, less standardised, and less consistent** than in General American.

c) **/r/ realisation:** /r/ is **commonly articulated as a post-alveolar approximant** or, <u>occasionally</u>, as a **retroflex** [ɻ] in pre-vocalic positions. <u>Intervocalically</u> (ˈV_V) or after velar plosives or /θr/, it may be realised as an **alveolar tap** [ɾ], as in *so**rr**y*, *g**r**eat* or *th**r**ead*. Among Afrikaans speakers, a **trilled** [r] is also frequently observed.

d) **/l/ variation:** /l/ shows **clear and dark allophony** for most speakers, becoming velarised in final position or when followed by another consonant, as in RP. This consonant can l**ower and retract** certain preceding vocalic sounds, notably /e/, /ə/, and /əʊ/.

e) **Other features:**
- **Audible release of plosives in clusters**, as in *do**c**tor*, contrasts with RP, where the first plosive's release in usually inaudible due to overlapping articulation.
- In <u>broader varieties</u>, /h/ may be **voiced** [ɦ] before **stressed syllables**, as in *a**h**ead* or ***h**and*.

2.2.3. *Prosody*

There is limited literature on the suprasegmental features of South African English. The following observations are based on the available studies:

INTONATION: Few studies describe intonation patterns in this variety. Some reports note the presence of **uptalk rises in declaratives**, with the rise often delayed compared to question intonation. However, this feature is **not consistently present** across all native speakers.

TEMPO and PITCH: There is a tendency to **emphasise final unstressed syllables at the end of an intonation unit**, where the nuclear tone rises. These syllables receive slightly greater duration and pitch prominence, representing a subtle distinction from RP.

2.2.4. *Phonotactic/lexical distribution features*

Most varieties of South African English (SAE) share the following phonotactic and lexical distribution patterns:

a) **Rhoticity**: South African English is predominantly **non-rhotic**, meaning that /r/ is absent in pre-consonantal and word-final positions. Unlike many other English varieties, <u>intrusive and linking /r/ are generally absent</u> in SAE. Consequently, these features will not be included in the transcription exercises for this course.✋

b) **Word-Final Unstressed /i/:** In word-final unstressed positions, SAE uses **/i/ (phonetically higher, tenser and longer than /ɪ/, [iˑ])** in words ending in '-*y*', '-*ee*', '-*ie*' or '-*ey*' after one or more consonants, as in *bab**y**, committ**ee**, Ann**ie**,* and *eas**y***. This pattern also extends to compound words, inflected forms, and stems, such as *bell**y**button, happ**i**er, eas**i**est, news**i**ness, stud**i**ed, Lesl**ey**'s,* or *cook**ie**s*. Although realisation may vary across SAE varieties, this course adopts /i/ as the teaching norm.

c) **Weak Vowel Merger:**
   - As in Australian English, <u>/ɪ/ in unstressed</u> syllables of <u>content</u> words is frequently <u>replaced by a schwa-like vowel</u> ([ə], slightly closer than the

typical schwa), e.g. *ill̲usion*, *bus̲es, nak̲ed*, and *cabb̲age.*

- Before **velar** consonants (e.g., *buildi̲ng*), either /ə/ and /ɪ/ may occur in unstressed positions.

- In **prefixes**, usage is variable; for teaching purposes, we will use /ə/, except when it occurs before a velar consonant.

d) **Realisation of /ɑː/:** Words that have **/ɑː/ in RP before nasal-consonant clusters** (*da̲nce*, *pla̲nt, ca̲n't*) or voiceless fricatives (*la̲ugh*, *pa̲th*, *ha̲lf*) generally **preserve /ɑː/ in SAE**.

e) **Schwa-Retention** (mainly in <u>broad</u> accents)**:** SAE often **retains the schwa preceding /n/ or /l/,** as in *liste̲n* /ˈlɪsən/ and *middl̲e* /ˈmɪdəl/, whereas RP typically elides it in these contexts (/ˈlɪsn̩/ and /ˈmɪdl̩/).

f) **Yod-Dropping:** Yod-dropping in SAE broadly **follows patterns found in England**. It commonly occurs **after /s/ + /j/ in stressed syllables** (e.g. *s̲uit*, *as̲s̲ume*), while RP allows both pronunciations — with and without yod-dropping — in these environments.

g) **Yod-Coalescence:** Yod-coalescence in SAE **is similar to that of British** English. It occurs in both **stressed and unstressed** syllables, where /t/ and /d/ followed by /j/ are realised as /tʃ/ and /dʒ/, respectively, as in *d̲uke, t̲ube, for̲tune* or *gra̲d̲uate*.

h) **H-Dropping:** Initial H-dropping **is generally not a feature of SAE**, <u>except</u> in certain auxiliaries and unstressed pronouns, a pattern also found in several other English varieties.

***