



Liaisons 'down under': *r*-sandhi evolution in southern-hemisphere Englishes – initial reports

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The purpose of this project is to take a closer look at vowel-hiatus avoidance in three southern-hemisphere varieties of English, namely Australian English (henceforth AusE), New Zealand English (henceforth NZE) and South African English (henceforth SAfE), which bear more similarities than differences with respect to each other (cf. Trudgill – Hannah 2008; Wells 1982).

The focus here is on *r*-liaison, i.e. *linking* and *intrusive* /r/, as even though the process is said to occur only after non-high vowels in non-rhotic „Englishes”, it seems the three discussed varieties employ *r*-sandhi after clearly high realisations of the NEAR vowel, which additionally is often, or for some speakers always, monophthongised, hence /i/ (cf. Bauer – Warren 2008; Bowerman 2008; Gimson 2008; Horvath 2008). As a result, it would be interesting to verify the extent to which monophthongisation of NEAR combined with *r*-liaison occurs, as well as to check whether the change has already been phonologised, so that speakers of southern-hemisphere Englishes no longer refer to the more prestigious „schwa” element of what was originally a diphthong, or whether it is only on certain occasions that /r/ serves as a hiatus-breaking tool after /i/, while more formal styles encourage diphthongisation and/or turning to other means of dealing with vocalic boundaries.

The conclusion is that a change is fairly discernible, however the phonemic analysis of NEAR and ways of joining it with other vowel phonemes differs in the speech of research subjects. The presentation includes discussing the above „problem”, giving possible explanations on the matter, as well as providing brief historical backgrounds on AusE, NZE and SAfE along with the main pronunciation features of these dialects, supported by re-cordings.

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