



# **DELVING INTO THE ‘MELTING POT’: A CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN VERNACULAR ENGLISH, NEW YORK ENGLISH, AND CHINESE PIDGIN ENGLISH IN EARLY AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH**

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**T**his paper examines the concept of the so-called linguistic “melting pot” in Australia as it is presented in Charles Adam Corbyn’s set of judicial reports *Sydney Revels (The Eighteen-Fifties)* of Bacchus, Cupid and Momus; *Being Choice and Humorous Selections from Scenes at the Sydney Police Office and Other Public Places, during the Last Three Years (1854)*. It has been taken as a basis for the study of Early Australian English by scholars like Taylor (2001), Kiesling (2006) and Burrige (2010). They have analysed some of the varieties that Corbyn represented, including Irish English, Cockney, and Scottish English, and they have tried to analyse the speech of those people whose place of origin is not indicated by Corbyn. They all concluded that he was aware of this extensive linguistic variation during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, these previous studies did not examine the rest of the varieties that Corbyn included in his reports: African American Vernacular English, New York English, and Chinese Pidgin English. This gap is worth noting considering that the gold

rush era, beginning in the 1850s, saw the arrival of large numbers of Chinese and American miners and companies (Burridge 2020, 176). Given that it was still a period where Australian English was not fully standardized, this paper aims at finding possible evidence for Chinese Pidgin, AAVE, or New York English influence in the Early Australian English period considering Corbyn's work. To do so, a corpus-based analysis of the reports containing linguistic material from these varieties was carried out. The analysis was performed considering the phonological, grammatical, and lexical features appearing in the reports, with the aim of shedding light on these varieties and their influence on the formation of an emerging variety of Australian English. Results were contrasted and compared with the Oxford English Dictionary and various linguistic handbooks and glossaries containing information about the different dialects. Finally, it was concluded that, although humour is employed to caricature speakers, Corbyn's strategies for representing dialect in writing were notably objective. However, further research on the field will be necessary to achieve solid conclusions, regarding scarcity of data.

**Keywords:** Early Australian English; AAVE; New York English; Chinese Pidgin English; Linguistic Analysis

## 1. Introduction

When dealing with multicultural societies, cultures have traditionally been defined as salad bowls or melting pots. In short, when a society is described as a salad bowl, it means that different groups of people are integrated in a single space while keeping their identities; on the other hand, melting-pot societies are described as combination of parts into a single identity. (Advani and Reich 2015, Berray 2019, 142-145).

Studies on Australia during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries have compared its linguistic landscape and the formation of Australian English to a melting pot (Burridge 2010, Taylor 2001). In comparison with other Englishes, the study of Early Australian English is worth noting due to its peculiar origins: from 1788

onwards, with the arrival of the first fleet of convicts, more than 20,000 prisoners, prison officers, and their families from all over the British Isles settled on the new continent. After a subsequent fleet of around 150,000 prisoners transported from overcrowded jails, and the influx of free settlers until the 1840s, a situation of dialect mixing grew exponentially, bringing together speakers principally from London and the southeast of England, Ireland and Scotland. Together with the fact that aboriginal languages were spoken in Australia before colonisation, this melting pot became even more evident especially after the latter influence of contact languages “beginning in the 1850s ... due to the gold rush era, that (...) saw the influx of large numbers of Chinese miners,” as well as the exponential impact of American English (Burrige 2010, 297; Burrige 2020, 176; Burrige and Kortmann 2004, 570; Crystal 2004, 41; Korhonen 2020, 194; Jenkins 2003, 7; Taylor 2001, 317-318). Therefore, Australian English can be defined as the result of the blending of the varieties that were spoken in this contact zone throughout the years.

In fact, written records have been crucial in the account of the definition of Australia as a ‘melting pot’ during the period of colonisation and the following decades. More precisely, Charles Adam Corbyn’s renown set of court reports *Sydney Revels of Bacchus, Cupid, and Momus; Being Choice and Humorous Selections from Scenes at the Police Office and Other Public Places, during the Last Three Years* (1856) can be seen as an illustration of the postcolonial Australian linguistic landscape, as it takes account of the voices of ordinary people in urban Sydney during the 1850s (qtd. in Burrige 2010, 301). In these judicial reports, Corbyn (1816-?) describes the person that has been accused of a crime; after that, he narrates the unfolding events at the courtroom; and finally, he explains the sentence that has been imposed on every individual. Sometimes, he reproduces the conversations that are held at the police station, depicting the speech of the various people that are being judged using strategies for the written representations of dialect, such as respellings and non-standard grammar and lexis, attempting to reveal their place of origin. The fact that Corbyn himself states that the reports were written from a humorous and even satirical point of view contributes to the representation of

dialectal speech, as the exaggeration of linguistic features reinforces greater visual identification of dialectal traits.

This paper, therefore, aims to examine the respellings and non-standard grammar and lexis that appear in the reports so as to explore the written transcription of the varieties that coexisted during the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Australia. For this purpose, this paper will firstly explore the formation of Australian English considering the Australian linguistic landscape. After that, I will provide a linguistic analysis of Corbyn's report taking into account previous research on the work.

## 2. Australia as a 'Melting Pot': The Australian English Linguistic Landscape during the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries and The Formation of Australian English

In broad terms, the origins of the standard variety of Australian English can be traced from the blending of different varieties of English: London English, Southeastern English, Irish English, Scottish English, and to a lesser extent, aboriginal languages and contact languages.

The formation of postcolonial varieties of English like the Australian has been understood as a process of koineisation. Crystal explains that the term 'koine' should be applied to "cases where a vernacular has come to be used throughout an area in which several languages or dialects are spoken" (1980, 262). Koineisation, which develops from the melting-pot theory, has been discussed from different points of view. For instance, Trudgill believes that Southwestern varieties of English, like the Australian, undergo a new-dialect formation process consisting of three stages: in Stage I, the speech of the first settlers shows "rudimentary levelling and interdialect development," where "minority [linguistic] features are eliminated through accommodation" (2004, 83-99). Stage II presents a first generation of native-born settlers, "characterised by inter- and intra-speaker variability" (2004, 100-112). Finally, Stage III displays a second generation of native-born speakers, whose

speech is defined as “an identifiable stable new dialect” (Burridge 2010, 297) that emerged from “mixing, levelling, unmarking and reallocation focusing” of Stage II (2004, 113-127). Similarly, Schneider proposed a fivefold process in the formation of Australian English that differs from the former in its social, cultural, and political approach: Phase 1 (1788-1830s) relates the colony foundation with dialect mixture and koineisation, followed by Phase 2 (1830s-1901), in which English-speaking settlers gradually recognise themselves as British. Phase 3 (1901-1942), referred to as the “nativisation” process, witnesses the emergence of local patterns in the settlers’ speech. Phase 4 (1942-1980s) recognises an “endonormative stabilisation,” which sees the emergence of an “Australian self-confidence” and the codification of rules, although they still “largely conform to the norms of a common core of standard English.” Finally, Phase 5 (1980s-) identifies the birth of a new dialect from differentiation with other varieties of English (2003, 118-127).

Moreover, as Beal explains, social stratification between convicts and free settlers eventually led to present-day variation in Australian English, distinguishing three different main sociolects: Broad Australian, General Australian and Cultivated Australian (2004, 215-217). Australian English sociolects can be defined as “a spectrum of pronunciations” and they constitute “the only descriptors of the range of variation in pronunciation,” as there is no remarkable regional variation in the continent (Horvath 2004, 625). Their main differences are described by Alexander G. Mitchell as follows:

On the prestige scale, Cultivated is the highest and is estimated to be spoken by only about 10% of Australians. Broad, spoken by about a third of the people, has the most marked AusE characteristics and has the least prestige. General falls in between these two varieties, is spoken by a majority of the people, and may well be increasing in strength as speakers move away from the more stigmatized Broad variety (qtd. in Horvath 2004, 625).

On the whole, Australian English can be defined as a postcolonial variety of English that emerged from a complex process based on the mixture, levelling and koineisation of all the dialects that were spoken during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup>-century Australia. Its

further development due to social stratification allowed its establishment as a standard variety of English.

### 3. The Melting Pot in Charles Adams Corbyn's *Sydney Revels of Bacchus, Cupid, and Momus* (1856) and Contact Languages during the Early Australian Period

Several studies have considered Corbyn's work as a basis for the study of early Australian English, as it illustrates the postcolonial linguistic landscape in Sydney during the 1850s. Scholars such as Taylor (2001), Kiesling (2006) and Burrige (2010) have analysed the many varieties that Corbyn portrays in his reports: Irish English, Cockney, Scottish English, and they have even tried to ascertain the origin of those speakers whose geographical background is not indicated by Corbyn.

They all confirmed that Corbyn was aware of this variation, given that he used several strategies for the written representation of dialect that hinted at linguistic markers of the aforementioned varieties.<sup>1</sup> In addition, Burrige claims that, despite being “non-standard features for the time” the dialect markers present in those reports containing speakers of unknown background hint at “salient Irish features, [e.g.,] the raising of /ʌ/ to /ɪ/ in <diskivered> for <discovered>, <infortinite> for <unfortunate> or a front vowel raising of /e/ to /ɪ/ (especially preceding nasals) as in <gintilmin> for <gentleman>” (2010, 313-314).

However, none of these studies did not examine the rest of the varieties that Corbyn included in the reports: African American Vernacular English, New York English, and Chinese Pidgin English. The reports were written during the gold rush era, which began in the 1850s and, as Burrige explains, it “triggered a massive

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<sup>1</sup> See Burrige (2010, 304-319), Kiesling (2006, 246-429) and Taylor (2001, 319-320) for a more detailed account of the linguistic analysis of Irish English, Cockney and Scottish English dialect markers.

increase in migration and injected more diversity into the population. Those seeking their fortune flocked from England, Ireland, Scotland, and North America, but [this era] saw the influx of large numbers of Chinese miners, introducing a significant Asian presence for the first time” (2020, 176). It was also during this gold rush era when “Australia had its first real contact with American English,” provided by a “two-way migration across the Pacific, [which] led to some linguistic, mainly lexical, additions to AusE” (Korhonen 2020, 194).

Considering these facts, this paper delves into the linguistic landscape of Corbyn’s reports, written in a period where Australian English was not fully standardized, marked by the gold rush era, with the aim of identifying and analysing the distinctive linguistic traits associated with AAVE, New York English, and Chinese Pidgin English, uncovering evidence of their influence and contributing to the understanding of linguistic diversity in the Early Australian English period. To do so, this paper will firstly explore the varieties under discussion so as to subsequently carry out a corpus-based analysis of the reports containing linguistic material from the varieties, while shedding light on them.

### 3.1. Shedding Light on Other Voices in Australian English

As stated above, most of the studies on Early Australian English concentrate on the influence of Cockney and Southeastern English, Irish English, and Scottish English in the formation of an emerging standard variety of Australian English. However, during the gold rush era, according to data from *National Museum Australia*, “[b]etween 1851 and 1861, the population across the colonies more than doubled: from just under 438,000 to slightly over 1.1 million.” In fact, this gold rush “started a series of rushes that transformed the Australian colonies, [leading] to the emergence of a new national identity.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/gold-rushes> for a more detailed account of the 1850s Australian gold rush era.

This is especially relevant given that, despite the United Kingdom remaining “the principal source country for Australian immigrants, the country saw the establishment for the first time of a small but highly visible Chinese community on the gold fields (estimated at 24,000 in Victoria in 1861)” (Willoughby and Manss 2020, 4). Considering that this accounted for a significant proportion, one might expect that some linguistic features of the Chinese Pidgin English language could have had an influence in the Early Australian English period. Pidgin languages, according to Crystal, “refer to a language with a markedly reduced grammatical structure, lexicon and stylistic range, compared with other languages. [They are] the native language of no one [and they tend to] flourish in areas of economic development.” (1980, 234). Chinese Pidgin English has been defined as a “medium of intercourse between Chinese and foreigners (chiefly native speakers of (...) British and American [English])” (Hall 1944, 95). Little research has been done on Chinese Pidgin English in Australia. However, Siegel studied the language of Jong Ah Siug—a Chinese gold miner in Southeastern Australia who wrote a notebook—and he found out that the representation of their speech included some features typical of Chinese Pidgin English, like the use of “‘me’ rather than ‘my’ as the first-person pronoun” (2009, 313). Given these premises, this paper aims at finding evidence for Chinese Pidgin English features in the Early Australian English period taking Corbyn’s work as a basis for the study.

As previously mentioned, it was also during this gold rush era when American English started to have contact with Australian English. No research has been found on the linguistic influence of the two American varieties under discussion in this paper, AAVE and New York English, during this time in Australia, but American English was actually present, as “returning Australian miners and merchants brought American vocabulary to Australia, [and] the [American] entertainment business, such as circuses, minstrel shows and live theatre started to flourish.” On the other side of the coin, it was also the time “when the fear of Americanisation was first observed in Australia” (qtd. in Korhonen 2020, 194), given that



there was a struggle between “the allegiance to British English and the quest for linguistic identity” (Leitner 2007, 192).

However, taking into account that the Chinese population was a minority in the Australian population at the time of the gold rush era, together with the fact that “few topics generate[d] more heat ... than the ‘Americanisation of Australian English’” (qtd. in Leitner 2007, 192), it is not unusual to expect that these varieties had little or no influence on the formation of a standard form of the Australian English dialect. On the other hand, as Korhonen explains, American influence in Australian English becomes more significant after the Second World War, given that “film, television, radio, advertising and sport have provided a constant channel for Americanisms to enter the Australian context,” to which she adds that this ongoing contact with American English “and the wave-like exposure to American influence has meant that Australians’ opinions on this influence have also varied during the years” (2020, 196), and therefore, the linguistic influence nowadays is higher than during the standardisation period.

In view of these facts, and considering that Australian English was still emerging, and that American influence became gradually more evident, this paper will also analyse the linguistic features of AAVE and New York English appearing in the reports so as to shed light on the role of contact languages during the Early Australian English period.

### 3.2. A Linguistic Analysis

Corbyn himself defines his reports as a compilation of “the most entertaining and most humorous” situations at a police station in Sydney during the 1850s (Corbyn iv). These judicial reports are of short length, and they present the same structure: firstly, Corbyn describes the person that has been accused of a crime; after that, he narrates the unfolding events in the courtroom; and finally, he explains the sentence that has been imposed on every individual. As he sometimes reproduces the conversations that are held at the police station as they happen, he tries to reflect their speech using strategies for the written representation of non-standard speech in an exaggerated and sometimes even caricaturized form. This holds

particular significance in the linguistic analysis, as the incorporation of humour may be perceived as creating a potentially misleading or subjective representation. However, it is crucial to recognise that it is precisely these deviations from the standard that enable us to connect the written forms with the linguistic traits of the speaker. In order to have an objective and critical view of Corbyn's representations in the linguistic analysis, the features of each variety will be taken into account and contrasted with the dialectal speech strategies used by the writer.

Therefore, this section will provide a linguistic analysis of those strategies that aim at representing AAVE, New York English, and Chinese Pidgin English as depicted by Corbyn. More precisely, it will scrutinise those strategies related to phonology, grammar, and vocabulary, such as semi-phonetic spellings, non-standard grammatical and syntactical constructions, and non-standard lexis. This analysis will be conducted through a corpus-based analysis of the text, with the help of the Corpus Linguistics tool *AntConc*.

The total corpus consists of 53,075 words, with 8,204 types and 53,402 tokens. However, not all the reports contain conversations, so they do not reflect the speech of the people in the courtroom, and therefore they are not useful for the purpose of the analysis. Consequently, those reports reflecting conversations in direct style were grouped and arranged according to the geographical origin of the speakers that appear in each report. Thus, the original corpus was reorganised into six subcorpora, as can be seen in the table below:

Speakers' background	N texts	N words	Types	Tokens
Scottish	1	389	216	391
AAVE/New York English (NY)	1	600	316	632
Chinese Pidgin English	2	518	313	528
London	3	1,253	608	1,270
Irish	12	4,476	1,475	4,549
Unknown	23	14,029	3,341	13,970
Total	41	21,018	4,203	21,084

**Table 1.** Information about the Subcorpora

Given these premises, this analysis will deal with the AAVE and New York English and the Chinese Pidgin English reports, with the aim of firstly, accounting for those phonological, grammatical, and lexical traits that do not correspond with the Standard English form; and secondly, corroborating the usage of these variant features in the aforementioned varieties by means of a comprehensive search in the *Oxford Dialect Dictionary* (OED) and linguistic handbooks and glossaries. As can be seen in Table 1, there is only one report containing linguistic material from the AAVE and New York English varieties, which appear together. This text contains 600 words, with 316 types and 632 tokens. As for Chinese Pidgin English, there are two reports containing linguistic material, with 518 words, 313 types and 528 tokens.

### 3.2.1. Phonological Analysis

The use of semi-phonetic spellings is a weighty strategy for the written representation of dialects since they evoke the possible dialectal pronunciation. In this section, dialectal spellings have been arranged according to the geographical background of the speakers and their pronunciation in Standard English, classifying the different sounds into long vowels, short vowels, diphthongs, and consonants.

#### 3.2.1.1. AAVE/NY English Background Speakers

This report contains two speakers from North America. One of them is a witness from New York, and the other one is a black person, described with very derogative terms:<sup>3</sup>

Donald M-Kenzie, an ogre-like Negro of the dirtiest black colour imaginable, was charged before Mr. C. H. Chambers, with stealing two sovereigns and one shilling, the property of Philip Macedon Mealby, Esq. Mr. P. M. Mealby is a Nigger of a superior grade to the prisoner. His complexion resembled a bronzed tea-urn which had gone a long time without cleansing. He was dressed in a faded bottle-green surtout which had once been very fashionable, but had been modernized by the formation of patent ventilators at the elbows. Mr. P. Macedon Mealby's was permitted to reast upon his head

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<sup>3</sup> Appendix 1 contains the AAVE/NY English Speakers text.

like the shorn fleece of a little black lamb on the floor of a wool-shed, while his moustachios of similar colour and texture transcend the power of description (Corbyn 1856, 39).

Regarding AAVE, the most outstanding feature is the glottalisation of /θ/ and /ð/ both in initial and final position, as in <dat>, <dere>, <dey>, <wid>, <de> and <tinking>. This means that the possible realisation of these phonemes would be [t] and [d], respectively (Edwards 2004, 388).

RP	Spellings	Standard spellings	Tokens	Examples
	<dat>	<that>	2	“The gemman in <u>dat</u> box <u>dere</u> , <u>wid</u> him head and shoulder ‘tuck above <u>de</u> board” (39).
	<de>	<the>	4	
/ð/	<dere>	<there>	1	“[D]ey pull off <u>dat</u> black man’s coat” (39).
	<dey>	<they>	1	
	<wid>	<with>	1	
/θ/	<tinking>	<thinking>	1	“[T]inking de ‘pearance of de coloured gemman in de box suspicions” (39).

**Table 2.** AAVE Consonants

As for the NY English speaker, there are no significant features that reveal his place of origin. However, his speech is characterised by being rather colloquial and vulgar, as can be seen in the dropping of the initial weak vowel /ə/, as in <Merican>. Regarding consonants, there is metathesis of <sk> and <ks> in <ax> and <axing>. Interestingly, despite being a very widespread dialectal feature, /s/+ stop, as in <ask> or <grasp> is one of the most outstanding features of AAVE and Southern white vernacular dialect (Edwards 2004, 389).

RP	Spellings	Standard spellings	Tokens	Examples
/ə/	<Merican>	<American>	1	“My name’s John Hilt; I’m <u>Merican</u> ” (39).
/sk/	<ax> <axing>	<ask> <asking>	1 1	“Who wants to <u>ax</u> me any questions?” (39) “[I]f you’ve got any more questions to be arter <sup>4</sup> <u>axing</u> me” (40).

**Table 3.** NY English Vowels and Consonants

### 3.2.1.2. Chinese Background Speakers

There are two reports containing speakers with a Chinese background. One of them reproduces the trial of “a supposed convert to Christianity” (Corbyn 1856, 104) and the other one explains the sentence imposed on John Chinaman, who, “in the vain hope of bettering his fortune by entering the service of an Australian Shepherd-King, was placed at the bar” (Corbyn 1856, 125).<sup>5</sup>

Regarding vowels, the most outstanding feature is the addition of a vowel after some verbs, as in <gottee>, <givee> and <comee> and after some nouns, as in <piecey>. The spelling suggests that probably this final sound would correspond to the happy vowel (RP /i/, whose quality falls between /i:/ and /ɪ/. According to Hall, the addition of a final vowel, “usually /i:/, sometimes /ə/, /ɑ/, /ɔ:/ or /u:/,” is a “morphophonemic alteration” in Chinese Pidgin English, and it may occur in “certain words (mostly verbs), ending in a consonant” (1944, 96).

<sup>4</sup> The form <arter> “after” appears in many reports, and it may hint at the presence of Southwestern English dialect (*EDD* s.v. *arter*), which may not be surprising as Corbyn was originally from Dorset.

<sup>5</sup> Appendix 2 contains the Chinese Pidgin English texts.

RP	Spellings	Standard spellings	Tokens	Examples
Ø	<gottee>	<got>	1	“Me <u>gottee</u> summut else to do” (105).
	<givee>	<give>	2	“You <u>givee</u> me five or six years, and soon as I <u>comee</u> out, I settle that Tartar superhumanary” (125).
	<comee>	<come>	1	
	<piecey>	<piece>	1	“[L]illy <u>piecey</u> roasty child” (105).

**Table 4.** Chinese Pidgin English Vowels

As for consonants, we find that there is a /w/-/v/ exchange in <von> and <werry>. Palatalisation of /s/ can be seen in <dish> ‘this’; on the other hand, there is lack of palatalisation in <sal>. As for the fricatives, <dish> also suggests a substitution of the initial /ð/ for [d], as well as the presence of [t] for Standard /θ/ in <troo> ‘through’ and <notink> ‘nothing’, where there may also be a voiceless /k/ in final position. However, there is no evidence that these linguistic features hint at the representation of Chinese Pidgin English, but non-standard speech in general terms.

RP	Spellings	Standard spellings	Tokens	Examples
/w/	<von>	<one>	1	“Me know <u>von</u> <u>werry</u> capital prayer” (105).
/v/	<werry>	<very>	1	
/θ/	<troo>	<through>	2	“[N]o, massa, notink but lilly piecey” (104).
	<notink>	<nothing>	1	“[A]nd troo deliv’rance make” (105).
/ð/	<dish>	<this>	1	“[A]’tween Sov’ laddie e Queen and <u>dish</u> prisoner at <u>de</u> bor” (105).
	<de>	<the>	1	
/s/	<dish>	<this>	1	“[A]’tween Sov’ laddie e Queen and <u>dish</u> prisoner at <u>de</u> bor” (105).
/ʃ/	<sal>	<shall>	1	“You <u>sal</u> troo and do ley try” (105).

**Table 5.** Chinese Pidgin English Consonants

### 3.2.2. Grammatical Analysis

Together with semi-phonetic spellings, the use of non-standard grammatical features is another weighty strategy to suggest dialectal speech. Corbyn represents non-standard grammar in the conversations that are reproduced in the several reports. When he does not reproduce conversations in direct style, grammar is represented in Standard English forms.

Only two non-standard English features were found in the grammatical analysis: non-standard final *-s*, as in the AAVE/NY English report: “Where all the lawyers ‘goes,’ and according to all accounts it’s unbearable warm there,” and “Them nigger gents ‘is taking’ oaths all day” (Corbyn 1856, 40). Pronoun exchange was found in the three texts. As for the AAVE/NY English report, we find ‘him’-‘his’ exchange in “[D]at black man’s coat, him trousers, him shirt,” (Corbyn 1856, 39) and “Them nigger gents ‘is taking’ oaths all day,” (Corbyn 1856, 40) where ‘them’ appears instead of the demonstrative ‘those,’ which is widely used in AAVE, according to *The Electronic World Atlas of Varieties of English*.<sup>6</sup> Regarding the Chinese Pidgin English texts, we find several examples of ‘me’-‘I’ exchange, as in “Me know von werry capital prayer” (Corbyn 1856, 105), as was explained above.

### 3.2.3. Lexical Analysis

The use of non-standard lexis is another helpful strategy so as to determine geographical background. With the aid of *AntConc*, non-standard lexis has been counted and defined according to the *OED*.

Regarding the vocabulary used in the AAVE/NY English text, the only worth mentioning form is ‘gemman’ and its plural form ‘gemmen,’ as in “The gemman in dat box dere, wid him head and shoulder ‘tuck above de board” (Corbyn 1856, 39). According to the *OED*, it represents “a nonstandard pronunciation of

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<sup>6</sup> See <https://ewave-atlas.org/parameters/68#1/7/8> for a more detailed account of the use of ‘them’ instead of ‘those’ in AAVE.

‘gentleman’” (*OED* s.v. *gemman*, n.), and its use is not restricted to AAVE or American English.

As for the Chinese Pidgin English reports, there are remarkable forms such as ‘massa,’ as in “[N]o massa, notink but lilly piecey roasty child!” (Corbyn 1856, 105). According to the *OED*, it means “master” and it is chiefly used in “representations of African-American, Caribbean and Australian Aboriginal speech ... as a respectful form of address” (*OED* s.v. *massa*, n.). Very interestingly, the form ‘padres,’ as in “[A] supposed convert to Christianity, of whom the padres entertained great hopes” (Corbyn 104) appears in this text, meaning “a Roman Catholic Priest.” It is not unexpected that this form, probably “borrowed from Italian, Spanish or Portuguese,” (*OED* s.v. *padre*, n.) appears here since it tries to reflect a pidgin speaker.

#### 4. Conclusion

Despite the limitations of primary works, this paper has aimed to shed light on Chinese Pidgin English, AAVE, and New York English in Corbyn’s work, which has been a reference for the study of the Australian linguistic landscape in its early period, especially during the gold rush era. The paper has attempted to expand the understanding of the Early Australian English period and the varieties that coexisted during this time, as seen in Corbyn’s set of reports.

This paper has proved that, despite using humour as a means of caricaturing speakers, the strategies for the written representation of dialect used by Corbyn were acutely objective, as results have been compared and contrasted with data from linguistic glossaries and articles reflecting Chinese Pidgin English, AAVE and New York English features. Results were especially relevant in the phonological analysis, as it has proved that Corbyn was aware of the so-called morphophonemic alteration in the representation of Chinese speakers, and he included the most salient features of AAVE to depict the speakers that appear in the report.



This study, which is in line with previous research, has shed light on the linguistic landscape of Australia during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, especially during the gold rush era, as seen in Corbyn's renown set of reports. Although the data available for analysis is not large enough to extract any strong conclusions, further research would be necessary to compare with more Chinese Pidgin English, AAVE and New York English representations of speech.

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