

AusEng has a proliferation of what Görlach (1990) labelled heteronyms and Algeo (1989) termed international synonyms; these are two vastly different forms that index the same referent and are stylistically equal, such as *lift/elevator*. Heteronyms present AusEng speakers with a choice between a conservative/traditional form and an innovative one. While Bayard (1989) and Meyerhoff (1993) have explored usage in New Zealand English, similar research has not been undertaken in AusEng.

Taylor (2001) reports on the common complaints in the Australian media of the American 'invasion' on AusEng whereby innovative forms are labelled as Americanisms and are seen to be usurping 'Australian' words. This view is perpetuated despite the fact the many linguists argue that lexically, all varieties of English are developing in accordance to processes of globalisation, rather than from single influences (for example Meyerhoff & Niedzielski, 2003; Chambers, 1998). However, the discussion surrounding newer lexical items might make speakers more conscious of the variants they use, perhaps telling us something about how they wish to position themselves in relation to AusEng versus other varieties of English.

The current study reports on a small trial of a questionnaire (36 participants) investigating usage and perceived Australianness of heteronyms and the effect of age on responses. The study explored questions such as, which of the heteronyms AusEng speakers favour and if younger Australians in fact see the innovative forms as Australian (thus the conservative forms as British) while older speakers view the innovative forms as American, hence placing them with a different outlook to affect practice. The trial found that according to self reporting, younger people preferred more innovative forms but in general all participants favoured those variants they saw as more Australian.