

## **A different kind of “G-dropping”: Variation in syllable-final [-ŋ/-n] in Toronto Heritage Cantonese**

In Cantonese, the term 懶音 *laan5 jam1* “lazy pronunciation” refers to the “non-standard” pronunciation of words with casual speech (Chen 2018). One such example is the alternation between alveolar and velar nasal codas that can be realized as either [-ŋ/-n], which has previously been described as an incomplete or ongoing change in Hong Kong Cantonese (Bauer 1979, Bauer and Benedict 1997, Zee 1999, To et al. 2015, Chan 2017). Although this variation is thought to be conditioned by social factors, such as speaker age and gender (Chen 2018), some analyses have pointed to the role of phonological context as well.

This study builds upon previous work examining other “lazy pronunciation” (n-/l-) mergers in Toronto Heritage Cantonese (Nagy 2024). The current study examines the following research questions: (1) how are the alveolar /-n/ and velar /-ŋ/ nasal codas realized by heritage (Toronto) and homeland (Hong Kong) speakers of Cantonese? (2) Which linguistic or social factors influence variation? (3) To what extent can variation between homeland and heritage speakers of Cantonese be attributed to language contact with English?

If there are language contact effects from English, it is expected that linguistic factors influencing variation of [-ŋ/-n] in spontaneous speech may be different for heritage and homeland speakers of Cantonese. However, if heritage speakers have acquired the change, we expect to find a similar set of conditioning factors that influence variation in both heritage and homeland varieties of Cantonese.

Cantonese speech from 10 homeland and heritage speakers was examined using recordings of sociolinguistic interviews documented in the Heritage Language Documentation corpus (Nagy 2011). Tokens are extracted and coded for their historical pattern /-ŋ/ and /-n/ and surface realization of the variable [-ŋ/-n], among other linguistic factors (syllable nucleus, tone, and onset of the following syllable). Speaker age, year of birth, generation, and gender were included for analysis. Separate mixed-effects models for underlying /-ŋ/ and /-n/ tokens were used to assess the relevant factors which contribute to variation.

358 tokens (313 /-ŋ/, 71 /-n/) were included in the current analysis after excluding words that only surfaced as the standard pronunciation. Overall, alveolarization /-ŋ/ to [-n] was more likely than velarization /-n/ to [-ŋ] for both homeland and heritage speakers of Cantonese. Vowel and generation are significant factors influencing variation in syllable-final [-ŋ/-n] in Toronto Heritage Cantonese. Further analysis of the relevant linguistic factors and ranking of constraints is required to examine generational change within the heritage speakers of Cantonese.

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