



# When English Meets Cantonese

## A Diachronic study on phonological and prosodic aspect of Hong Kong English



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### Sociolinguistic History of HKE

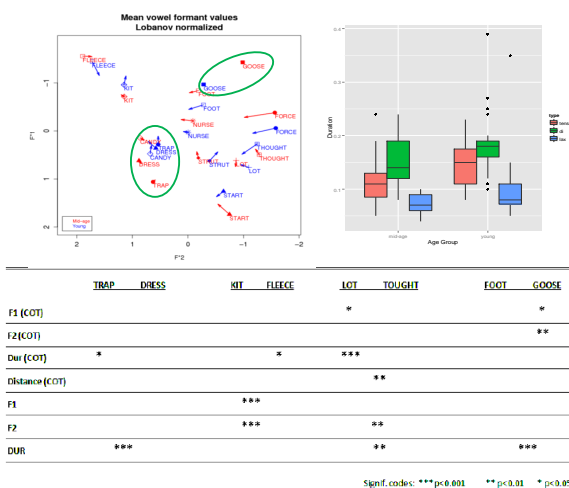
- The very first commercial activities with western countries started in the mid 1670s, during which **Pidgin English** was used.
- From 1840s to 1997, the Handover, Hong Kong had been **colonized by Britain** for more than 100 years.
- After the **Treaty of 1898**, there started **elite bilingualism**. While with the spreading of English education. Till **1984**, over 90% of the schools were using English as the Method of Instruction (EMI), this phenomenon is called **mass bilingualism**.
- After the **Handover**, even though English is remained as co-official language, the proportion of EMI in schools reduced to 25%. The new language policy "**Biliterate and Trilingual**" is applied to the education system.
- Based the drastic change in the sociolinguistic aspect of HKE, this paper aims to **describe the phonological and prosodic feature of HKE and their possible change in the past century**.

### Data and Analysis

Eight online interviews were selected to conduct the further analysis, grouped by Year of Birth. The first five minutes in each recordings were extracted.

Speaker	Gender	YOB	Occupation	Education	Recording	Duration (min)
1	M	1975	Interpreter	PhD	Conference interpretation	50
2	M	1973	Interpreter	PhD	Conference interpretation	55
3	M	1980	Students	Freshman	practice interpretation	42
4	F	1983	Students	Freshman	practice interpretation	48
5	M	1961	Singer	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Malaysia interview	18
6	M	1954	Actor	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	CNN interview	60
7	M	1962	Actor	12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Simi Garewel NHK interview	35
8	M	1961	Singer	12 <sup>th</sup> Grade (EMI)	CNN interview	22

### Monophthongs



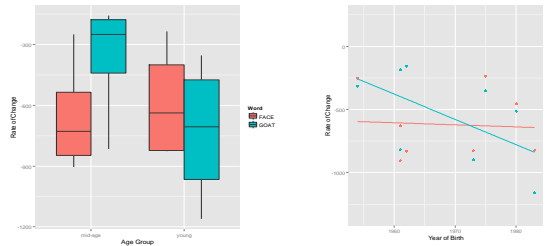
### Diphthongs

Only FACE and GOAT diphthongs were studied in this research. Methodology used in Deterding et. al. (2008) was applied, to be specific, Rate of Change of F1 was measured. The formula is as follows.

$$ROC = \frac{\text{offglide } F1 - \text{onglide } F1}{\text{duration}}$$

Rate of Change (Hz per sec) for Hong Kong English, Singapore English and British English

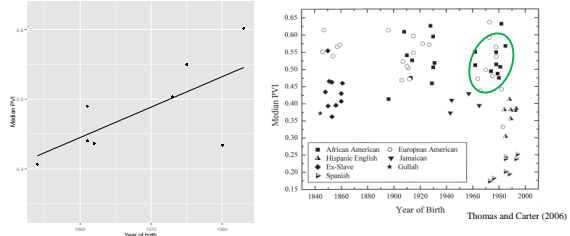
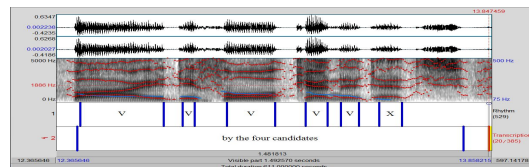
	Hong Kong (mid-age young)	Hong Kong (from Deterding 2008)	Singapore (from Deterding 2003)	RP (from Deterding 2000)
FACE	-653 -585	-1121	-388	-1378
GOAT	-368 -732	-909	-266	-1301



### Prosodic Rhythm

nPVI was applied to describe the prosodic rhythm feature of HKE. Same methodology as used in Thomas and Carter (2006) was utilized. The formula is as follows.

$$nPVI = 100 \times \left[ \frac{\sum_{k=1}^{m-1} |d_k - d_{k+1}|}{(d_k + d_{k+1})/2} \right] / (m - 1)$$



### Conclusion and Discussion

- HKE speakers make durational differences between tense and lax vowels.
- A reduced distance was found between LOT/THOUGHT.
- The KIT/FLEECE vowels are not merged at all.
- GOOSE fronting also appeared among the young speakers. The GOAT vowel is in the process of becoming more diphthongal over time.
- The PVI value shows that HKE is slightly less stress-timed than native English speakers but have become more stress-timed.

Based on the change of language use in Hong Kong, sociolinguists should keep a close eye on it's phonological and prosodic features.

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### Selected References

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