

Velar Nasals in Toronto English

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I. INTRODUCTION

- (ING)
 - Variable realization as alveolar: *-in'*
 - Occurs in all varieties of English (Houston 1985; Labov 1989)
 - Phonological constraints: preceding and following context
 - Morphological constraints: grammatical status
 - Historical convergence of participle *-inde* and verbal noun *-inge* (Labov 1989)
- (NK)
 - Variable insertion of a stop: [ŋk], [ŋg]
 - U.K. varieties of English (Wells 1982)
 - L2 English (Drummond 2012; Schlee et al. 2011)
 - Stereotype of Italian-Canadians
 - Historical reflex of /ng/ coalescence (Dobson 1968)?
 - /ng/ → [ŋg] → [ŋ]
 - Heritage language (HL) transfer?

II. FACTOR GROUPS

- Preceding phonological context
 - coronal, labial, velar, vowel
- Following phonological context
 - consonant, vowel, pause
- Grammatical status
 - verbal *-ing*, nominal *-ing*, monomorphemic *-ng*
- Sex/gender
 - male, female
- Ethnic background
 - British/Irish, Chinese, Italian, Portuguese

III. (ING): [ɪn] vs. [ɪŋ]

Table 1: Contribution of social factor groups to the occurrence of alveolar *-in'* in Toronto English.

	Total N:	3282	Input:	.218
Ethnic Group			Sex	
Italian	.59		Male	.60
Portuguese	.58		Female	.40
British/Irish	.49		<i>Range:</i>	<i>20</i>
Chinese	.10			
<i>Range:</i>		<i>49</i>		

Table 2: Contribution of linguistic factor groups to the occurrence of alveolar *-in'* in Toronto English.

	ITALIAN	PORTUGUESE	BRITISH/ IRISH	CHINESE
Total N:	1651	773	475	383
Input:	.307	.221	.211	.030
Preceding Phonological Context				
Velar	.71	.69	.65	 [.64]
Vowel	.54	.55	.56	 [.65]
Coronal	.35	.27	.44	[.37]
Labial	.46	.54	.40	0%
<i>Range:</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>25</i>	
Following Phonological Context				
Consonant	.58	.64	 [.50]	 [.66]
Vowel	.51	.55	 [.53]	[.28]
Pause	.24	.08	[.39]	[.39]
<i>Range:</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>56</i>		
Grammatical Status				
Verbal	.56	.54	.61	 [.57]
Nominal	.33	.41	.40	[.34]
<i>Range:</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>21</i>	

IV. (NG): [ŋ g]/[ŋ k] vs. [ŋ]

- Restricted to Italians (6%) and Portuguese (5%)
- Sex and ethnic group not selected as significant

Table 3: Contribution of linguistic factor groups to the occurrence of [ŋg]/[ŋk] in Toronto English.

	ITALIAN	PORTUGUESE
Total N:	1223	579
Input:	.051	.041
Preceding Phonological Context		
Velar	.47	[.42]
Vowel	.60	[.44]
Coronal	.39	[.56]
Labial	.67	0%
Range:	28	
Following Phonological Context		
Consonant	.44	[.52]
Vowel	.43	[.45]
Pause	.72	[.56]
Range:	29	
Grammatical Status		
Verbal	[.42]	.34
Nominal	[.52]	.67
Monomorphemic	[.57]	.56
Range:		33

V. DISCUSSION

- (ING) and (NK)
 - Different variable contexts
 - Different sociolinguistic conditioning
 - ∴ Different phonological variables
 - Patterning together of Italians and Portuguese
 - Similar timeline of settlement (post-WW2)
 - Historical reflex of /ng/ coalescence?
 - Not found in British/Irish ethnic group
 - Wider variable context than in UK varieties

- Heritage language transfer/reinforcement?
 - /ŋ/ marginally phonemic in English
 - /ŋ/ phonemic in Chinese (Cantonese)
 - /ŋ/ allophonic (derived via assimilation) in Italian (Calabrian, Sicilian) and Portuguese (Azorean)

VI. CONCLUSIONS

- [m] and [ŋg]/[ŋk] may be seen as different strategies for avoiding/licensing [ŋ]
- [ŋg]/[ŋk] occurs at very low rates
 - Perception of frequent usage (cf. Canadian *eh*)
 - Low threshold for categorical perception
- Patterns may ultimately stem from (reinforcement of) HL transfer
 - But ‘ethnolectal’ features are not beyond the realm of English phonology
 - cf. Labov’s (2008) ‘mysteries of the substrate’:
No one-to-one correspondence between HL and majority language features.

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