

Ethnolects at the Intersection of Phonological Variables: Velar Nasals in Toronto English

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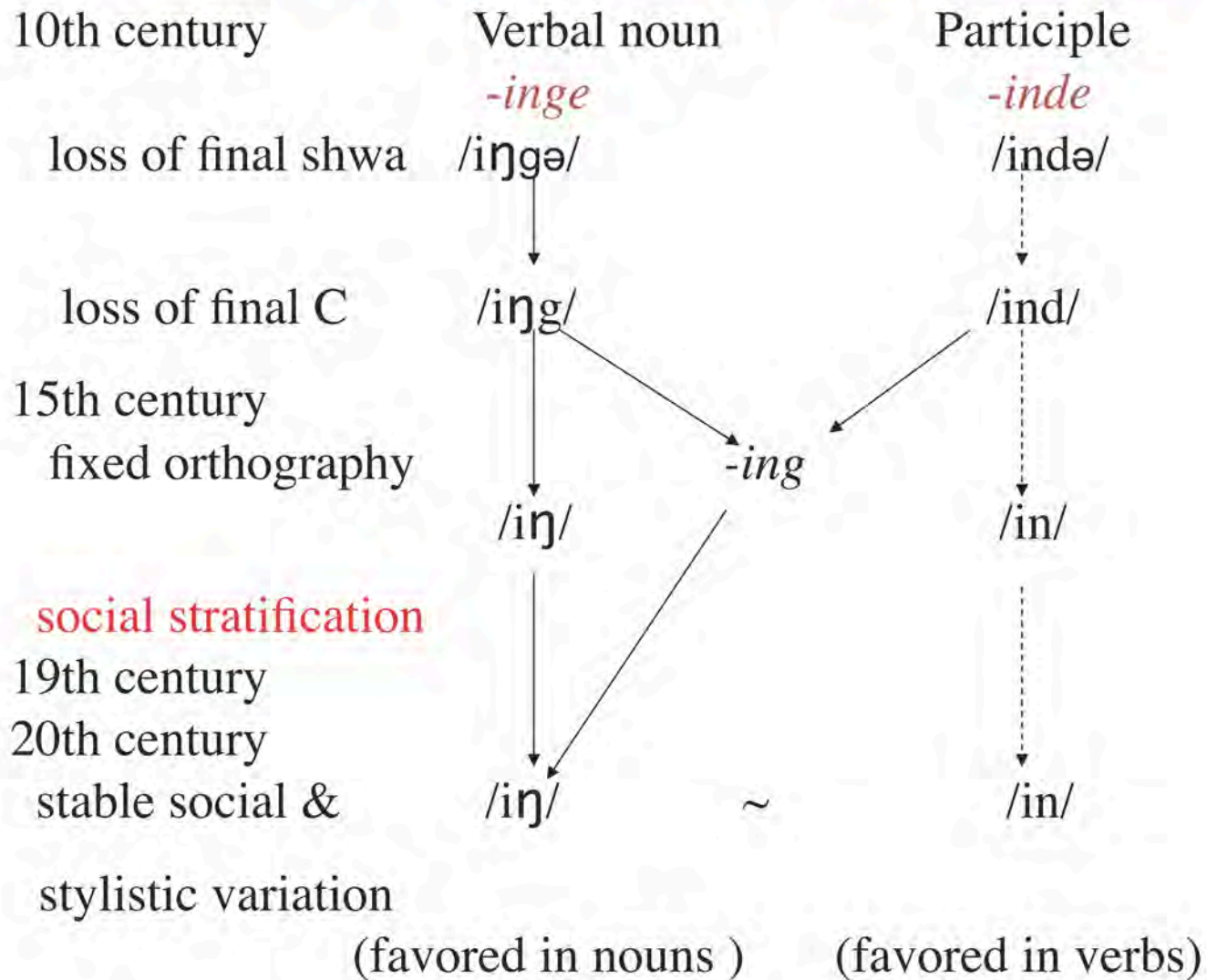
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Variable 1: (ING)



- *-in'*: Variable realization of *-ing* as alveolar [ɪn]
- Occurs in all varieties of English (Houston 1985; Labov 1989)
 - Phonological constraints:
 - preceding and following context
 - Morphological constraints:
 - grammatical status
 - participle > verbal noun

Historical development of (ing), 10th-20th C.





Source: Labov (2003) (with thanks to Dennis Preston)

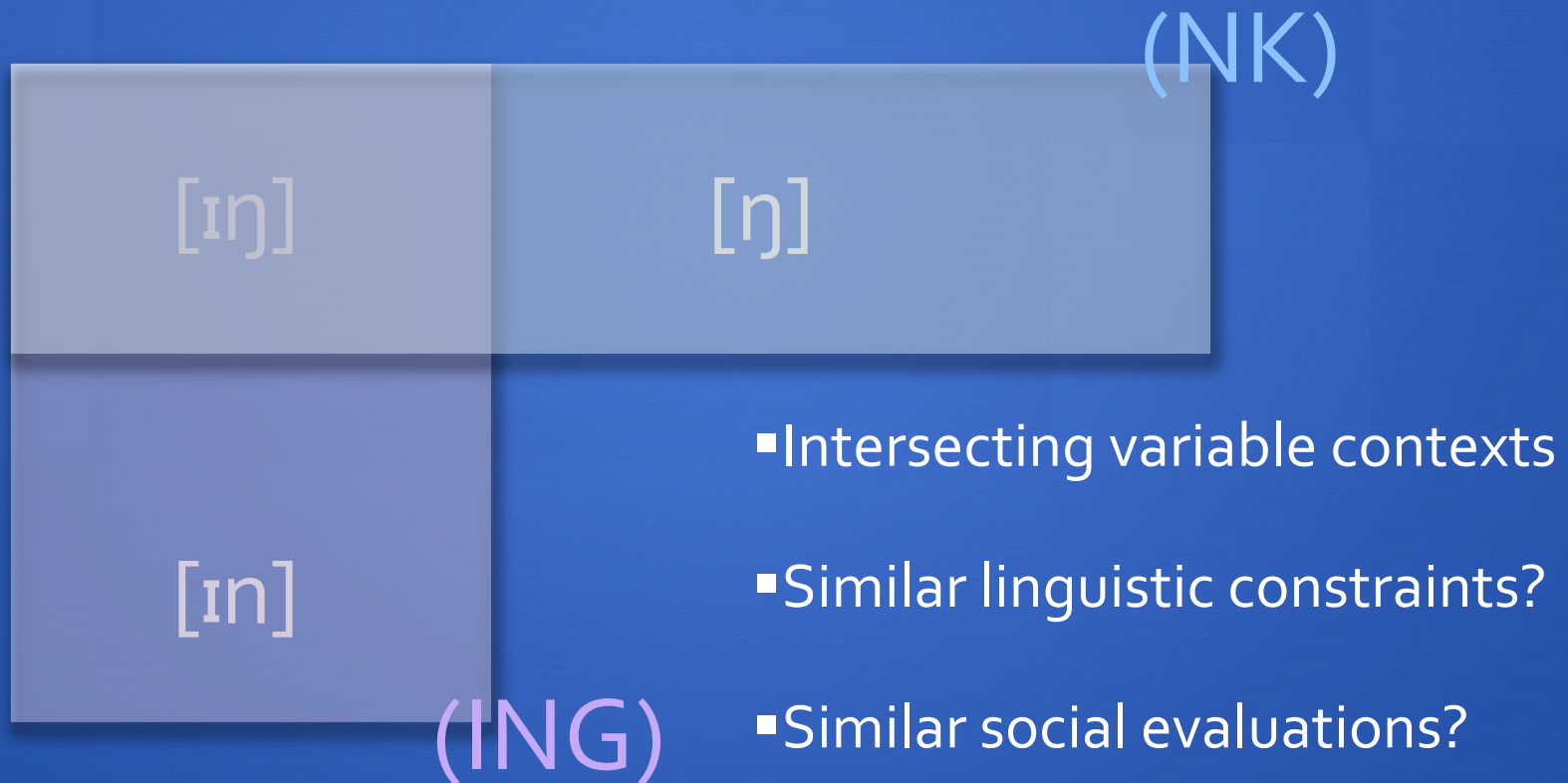
Variable 2: (NG)

- 'Stopping': variable insertion of a stop: [ɪŋk], [ɪŋg]
 -  "Right now, I am livi[ŋg] ..." (TO.7.39:25)
 -  "That was after we stopped talki[ŋk]" (TO.13.1:07:00)
- U.K. varieties of English (Wells 1982)
- L2 English (Drummond 2012; Schlee et al. 2011)

Variable 2: (NG)

- Stereotype of Italian-Canadians
 - Wider variable context: /ŋ#/
 -  "We had to ha[ŋg] our food" (TO.4.1:05:13)
 -  "'Cause they were you[ŋk]" (TO.63.22:45)
- Historical reflex of /ng/ coalescence (Dobson 1968)?
/ng/ → [ŋg] → [ŋ]
- L2 transfer?

Variable Contexts



“Contact in the City”

(Hoffman & Walker 2010)



Stratification of Informants by Ethnic Origin, Generation and Sex

Ethnic Origin:

	Italian		Chinese		Punjabi		Portuguese		Greek	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Gen.: 1 st	6	4	5	5	3	1	1	5	4	2
2 nd /3 rd	9	8	12	11	12	16	4	2	2	3
Total:	15	12	17	16	15	17	5	7	6	5
Ethnicity Total:	27		33		32		12		11	
Grand Total:	115									

Stratification of Informants by Ethnic Origin, Generation and Sex

Ethnic Origin:

Gen.:	Italian		Chinese		Punjabi		Portuguese		Greek	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
	1 st	6	4	5	5	3	1	1	5	4
2 nd /3 rd	9	8	12	11	12	16	4	2	2	3
Total: Ethnicity Total:	17		23				6			
Grand Total:	36									

Variable Processes

→ [n]

(ING)

[ŋ]

→ [ŋk]/[ŋg]

(NG)

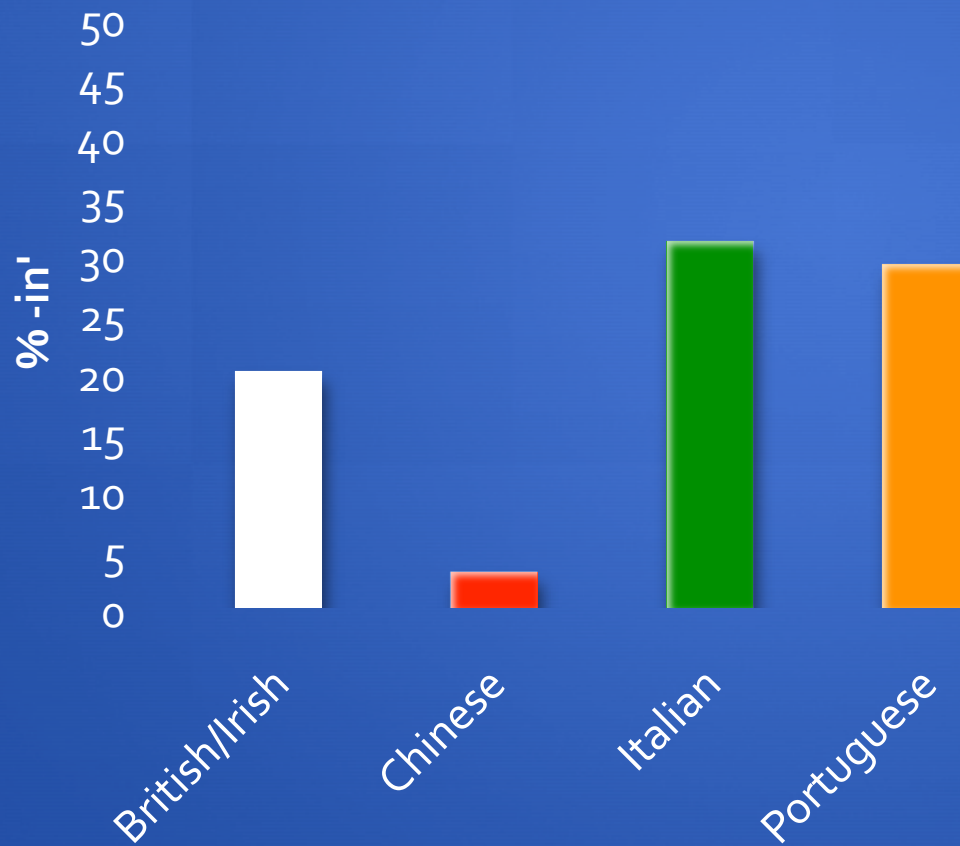
Linguistic Factor Groups

- Preceding phonological context
 - coronal, labial, velar, vowel
- Following phonological context
 - consonant, vowel, pause
- Grammatical status
 - verbal (*We were dancing all night.*)
 - nominal (*Dancing is fun.*)
 - monomorphemic (*When they were young.*)

Social Factor Groups

- Sex/gender
 - male, female
- Ethnic background
 - British/Irish, Chinese, Italian, Portuguese

Social conditioning of *-in'*



Sex

Male	.60
Female	.40

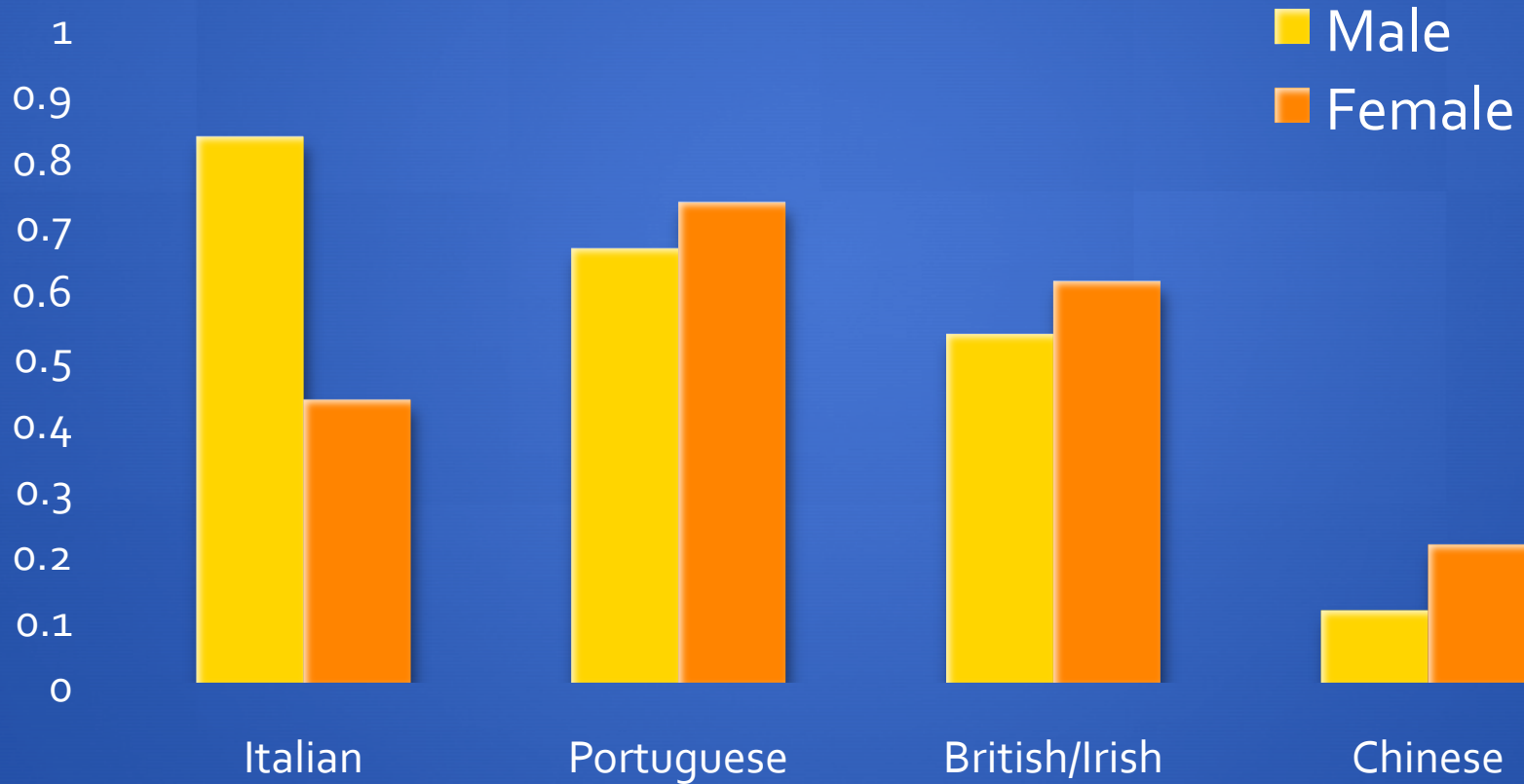
Range: 20

Ethnicity

Italian	.59
Portuguese	.58
British/Irish	.49
Chinese	.10

Range: 49

Conditioning of *-in'* by ethnic group and sex



Linguistic conditioning of *-in'* by ethnic group

	British/Irish	Chinese	Italian	Portuguese
Total N:	475	383	1651	773
Input:	.211	.030	.307	.221
Preceding Segment				
Velar	.65	[.64]	.71	.69
Vowel	.56	[.65]	.54	.55
Coronal	.44	[.37]	.35	.27
Labial	.40	0%	.46	.54
Range:	25		36	42

Linguistic conditioning of *-in'* by ethnic group

	British/Irish	Chinese	Italian	Portuguese
Total N:	475	383	1651	773
Input:	.211	.030	.307	.221
Following Segment				
Consonant	[.50]	[.66]	.58	.64
Vowel	[.53]	[.28]	.51	.55
Pause	[.39]	[.59]	.24	.08
Range:			34	56

Linguistic conditioning of *-in'* by ethnic group

	British/Irish	Chinese	Italian	Portuguese
Total N:	475	383	1651	773
Input:	.211	.030	.307	.221
Grammatical Status				
Verbal	.61	[.57]	.56	.54
Nominal	.40	[.34]	.33	.41
Range:	21		23	13

Rate of stopping by ethnic background

50
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0

No social factor groups selected as significant!

British/Irish

Chinese

Italian

Portuguese



Linguistic conditioning of stopping by ethnic group

	Italian	Portuguese
Total N:	1223	579
Input:	.051	.041
Preceding Segment		
Velar	.47	[.42]
Vowel	.60	[.44]
Coronal	.39	[.56]
Labial	.67	0%
Range:		.28

Linguistic conditioning of stopping by ethnic group

	Italian	Portuguese
Total N:	1223	579
Input:	.051	.041
Following Segment		
Consonant	.44	[.52]
Vowel	.43	[.45]
Pause	.72	[.56]
Range:		28

Linguistic conditioning of stopping by ethnic group

	Italian	Portuguese
Total N:	1223	579
Input:	.051	.041
Grammatical Status		
Verbal	[.42]	.34
Nominal	[.52]	.67
Monomorphemic	[.57]	.56
Range:		

Discussion

- (ING) and (NK)
 - Different variable contexts
 - Different linguistic conditioning
 - ∴ Different phonological variables
- Patterning together of Italians and Portuguese
 - Similar timeline of settlement (post-WW2)

Discussion

- Historical reflex of /ng/ coalescence?
 - Source? Not found in British/Irish ethnic group in Toronto
 - Wider variable context than in U.K. varieties – all final /ŋ/
- Heritage language transfer? Reinforcement?
 - /ŋ/:
 - marginally phonemic in English
 - phonemic in Cantonese
 - allophonic in Italian (Calabrian, Sicilian) and Portuguese (Azorean)

Conclusions

- different phonological strategies for dealing with velar nasal:
 - [ɪn] avoids [ŋ]
 - [ŋɡ] and [ŋk] license [ŋ]
- [ŋɡ]/[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 within the realm of English phonology
 - i.e. no non-native phonological features
 - cf. 'mysteries of the substrate' (Labov 2008)
 - there is no one-to-one correspondence between HL features and majority-language 'ethnolectal' features.

Thank you!

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