

The Sound Change of [ts, ts^h, s] to [tʃ, tʃ^h, ʃ] in Hong Kong Cantonese

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Abstract

The present research is an attempt to study the popularity of the affricative and fricative initial change of [ts, ts^h, s] to [tʃ, tʃ^h, ʃ] respectively in Hong Kong Cantonese when these sounds precede rounded finals.

In this study, the sound change in question is defined as post-alveolarization. By applying Bailey's variation rule which suggests the more a variable is produced, the earlier and faster it develops (Bailey 1973:82); several assumptions can be made. Namely, the developments of [ts^h] to [tʃ^h] and [ts] to [tʃ] precede that of [s] to [ʃ], males generally become post-alveolarized a little earlier and faster than females; and, [ts, ts^h, s] that precede rounded finals [y, yn, yt] tend to post-alveolarize the earliest and fastest.

With respect to the causes of the sound change in question, the present study suggests that it could mainly be a language contact-induced change with [tʃ, tʃ^h, ʃ] in

the English phonology being introduced into Hong Kong Cantonese. The fact that Hong Kong informants produce many more new variants than their Guangdong counterparts is believed to substantiate the assumption.

It is hoped that the present study would shed light on how language contact can exert influence on sound change on the one hand, and how a set of variants could possibly develop and spread in a speech community on the other.