**The effect of language-internal and -external factors during different stages of change**

This study investigates the effects of language-internal and language-external factors during ongoing change and evaluates if the importance of these factors differs across stages of change. To address this issue, the present study focuses on ongoing change in the adjective amplifier systems of Hong Kong, Indian, and Philippine English based on data from the International Corpus of English. As adjective amplification has been found to be a site of “fevered invention and competition that would be hard to come by elsewhere” (Bolinger 1972: 18), this domain lends itself to fine-grained analyses of change.

While there exists a substantial amount of research on research on the factors that impact language change (Labov 1994, 2001, 2010) and changes in adjective amplification (e.g. D’Arcy 2015, Tagliamonte 2008, Tagliamonte & Denis 2014), issues relating to when which factors are more or less impactful during changes in this domain remain unresolved. A key factor for why such issues were difficult to address is methodological: whereas most analyses of ongoing change use regression modelling to evaluate the impact of different factors during language change, tree-based models (see Tagliamonte & Baayen 2012) they are more appropriate to detect differences in the impact of factors across stages of change. Therefore, the present study uses Conditional Inference Trees to determine which factors are dominating during which phase of change.

One of the most consistent findings in previous research on changes in adjective amplification in informal spoken discourse has been the replacement of very by really (D’Arcy 2015, Tagliamonte 2008). The present study investigates if this trend holds true for Hong Kong, Indian, and Philippine English and if the underlying factors that drive this change vary across different stages of change in these Asian English varieties.

The present analysis shows that *very* is being replaced by *really* in Philippine English which is similar to the findings from research on change in adjective amplification in inner circle varieties. As such, the change that can be observed in Philippine English represents a vigorous to mid-range stage of change while the change is only in its incipient stage in Indian English. In Hong Kong English, the amplifier system represents a pre-change situation where the amplifier system is remarkably stable. The statistical analysis reveals that during stasis and incipient stages of change, amplifier sue is determined by language internal factors while extra-linguistic factors, in particular social factor, drive change once the change is accelerating and has become more vigorous.

In review of the converging results from previous research and the present study of Asian varieties of English, the paper adds credence to the hypothesis that linguistic change represents an “opportunistic process that reinforces social distinctions by associating them with particular linguistic variants” (Labov 2002). Applied to the present case this means that change is initially dominated by intra-linguistic factors and accelerates once the innovative variant is sufficiently associated with a social group that then serves as the extra-linguistic driving force during vigorous and mid-range change.

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