Vowels in Cantonese and English of Heritage Cantonese speakers in Toronto

**Introduction**

The HLVC Project investigates heritage languages spoken in Toronto. Its goal is to produce a corpus for research on language change and provide a framework for examining heritage languages in the GTA.

The ROP 299/LIN 495 Project in 2013-14 investigates Cantonese and English vowel variation across two generations and factors influencing pronunciation.

**Cantonese**

biggest non-English mother tongue in Toronto (3.1% of population, 2011 Census)

**Data**

Sociolinguistic interviews conducted and recorded by community members.

- in Cantonese from the Heritage Language Database (Nagy 2011)
- in English from the Contact in the City corpus (Hoffman & Walker 2010)

**HLVC Participants**

1st generation: born in Hong Kong, moved to GTA after age 18
2nd generation: born in GTA (or came before age 6), parents are 1st generation

**Methods**

1. **Transcription & time-alignment with ELAN**

   http://fave.ling.upenn.edu

2. **Forced Alignment & Vowel Extraction (FAVE)**

   An online suite for automatic vowel extraction

   http://www.lat-mpi.eu/tools/elan

3. **Plotnik to visualize vowel space**

   http://www.ling.upenn.edu/~wlabov/Plotnik.html

**Results**

Thousands of vowel measurements per speaker available!

**Preliminary Findings**

More Cantonese influence on the Gen 1 speaker’s English than on the Gen 2:

- /i/ in closed syllable is further back in Gen 1, as it would be in that context in Cantonese.
- /u/ shows a similar pattern: in Gen 1 the vowel is less fronted, as in Cantonese.
- For /æ/: the Gen 2 speaker may be participating in the Canadian Vowel Shift more.

**Future plans**

- We will soon have vowel measurements for Heritage Cantonese speech, and more English.
- We will compare ~247,000 vowel measurements from ~30 speakers.
- This will allow us to compare vowel spaces in both languages and between generations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homeland Cantonese</th>
<th>Heritage Gen. 1</th>
<th>Heritage Gen. 2</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1st generation</td>
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<td>2nd generation</td>
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**References**


Minyi Zhu, Naomi Cui, Vina Law, Naomi Nagy

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