

HONG KONG ENGLISH: PHONOLOGICAL FEATURES

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Abstract: The aim of the paper is to present phonological features of Hong Kong English, which is a variety of New English. I examine features of the sound system (the vowel and consonantal systems), characteristics of stress, rhythm, intonation, and phonological processes of the English spoken by Hongkongers. The way in which the accent and characteristics of the Hong Kong variety of English differs from standard, RP English is pointed out. Influences of Chinese and Cantonese on the phonological features of Hong Kong English are noticeable.

Keywords: Hong Kong English, phonological processes, vowels, consonants, Cantonese influence

1. Introduction: Varieties of New English. Hong Kong English

English is the most wide spread language on earth, as it is spoken on all continents, either as mother tongue or first language or as a second language (often an official language in the respective countries) by hundreds of millions of people.

A language having such a wide geographical spread cannot be expected to be the same in places tens of thousands of kilometres apart. The so-called RP transcended social and geographical limits and came to be recognized by many as the correct variant of the language, the norm as regards pronunciation.

Those varieties of English which are spoken outside of Britain and America are variously referred to as 'overseas,' 'extraterritorial' or 'post-colonial' varieties. A recent practice is to use the term 'Englishes' (a plural created by linguists) which covers a multitude of forms. The label English World-Wide (the name of an academic journal dedicated to this field of study) is used to refer to English in its global context.

There are more than fifty independent states in the world where it functions as official language. Out of those, in a number of states, it is also used for everyday conversations. Many countries use English as a lingua franca (a general means of communication) since there are many different and mutually unintelligible languages.

Hong Kong English refers to the accent and characteristics of English spoken by Hongkongers. Contrary to Indians or Australians, Hong Kong people tend to think that English with local influence is inferior, mistaken, irregular.

English was first established as an official language when Hong Kong was annexed by Britain in 1842.

English is one of the official languages in Hong Kong, but most local ethnic Chinese, making up more than 95% of population, speak it as a second language, taught through school education. Cantonese is overwhelmingly the tongue spoken in everyday life.

After the transfer of the sovereignty of Hong Kong in 1997, although English remains an official language, only a handful of primary schools and secondary schools are allowed to use English as the medium of instruction under new government policy. However, English is widely used in universities, business and courts.

English and Chinese are the constitutionally defined official languages under the Basic Law of Hong Kong. Since British's arrival in 1843, English became the sole official language of Hong Kong until 1974. The majority of the population in Hong Kong consists of descendants of migrants from mainland China. The majority of the population in Hong Kong speaks Cantonese, a Chinese spoken variant originating from Guangdong province. It is the main variety used in education, broadcasting, government administration, legislature and judiciary as well as in daily social communication.

Influences of Chinese and Cantonese will thus be noticeable on the phonological features of Hong Kong English.

1.1 The Sound System

The accent of English spoken in Hong Kong follows mainly British, with rather strong influence from Cantonese on the pronunciations of a few consonants and vowels.

Neutralisation of vowels which contrast in Standard Southern British English or General American, non-release of final stops, simplification of consonant clusters, devoicing of coda consonants represent most often found features of Hong Kong English (henceforth HKE).

Some speakers of HKE just make up the pronunciation randomly of some words and it is somewhat hard to understand what they are saying.

There can be confusion between homographs (words with the same spelling but different meanings). For example, if one does not know how to pronounce the verb *resume* (meaning ‘carry on’), it may be said *re-su-mei* in line with the noun *resume* (meaning ‘career history’).

In Cantonese, there is no structure of diphthong followed by a consonant. As a result, /eɪn/ becomes [ɪŋ], /əʊn/ becomes [ʊŋ], and /aʊn/ becomes [aŋ].

1.1.1 The Vowel System

HKE has a much simpler vowel system as compared to British RP. This is mostly due to the lack of tense/lax or long/short contrasts between vowels, resulting in identical-sounding vowels in pairs of words like:

- (1) a. *beat / bit*
 b. *bat / bet*
 c. *food / foot*
 d. *caught / cot*

One can notice the merging of /æ/ and /ɛ/ to /ɛ/, e.g. *bad* and *bed*, *mass* and *mess*.

HKE has diphthongs which are similar to RP, but they undergo reduction to simple vowels when followed by a stop consonant (as in *cake*, *joke*, *coin*, *town*, etc.)

The neutralisation of long/ short contrasts is shown below:

- (2) a. [i:] / [ɪ] *heat-hit; ship-sheep*
 b. [e] / [æ] *bet-bat*
 c. [u:] / [ʊ] *hoot, hood; pull-pool*
 d. [ɒ] / [ɔ:] *cot-caught; pot-port*
 e. [ɑ:] *heart*
 f. [ʌ] *hut*
 g. [ɜ:] *hurt*

One may also notice the substitution of [ou] for /əʊ/: *boat* [bout]. Examples for the substitution of a vowel with a fuller quality, [ɛ] or [ɑ], for /ə/ are shown below:

- (3) a. *familiar* [fɛmiliə]
 b. *grammar* [græmə]

1.1.2 The Consonantal System

The number of consonant phonemes in HKE is smaller than in standard English.

There is a lack of voiced vs. voiceless contrasts in fricatives (these contrasts do not exist in Chinese), which results in the non-existence of the voiced fricatives [v], [z], [ð] in HKE.

The voiced interdental fricative /ð/ is realized as [d] (*them* [dɛm]), while its voiceless counterpart /θ/ is phonetically realized as [f], e.g. *thick* [fik]. Many speakers pronounce *three* as *free*. Many Chinese speakers cannot pronounce [v] because it does not occur in Cantonese, Mandarin, and many other dialects. In the case of other Chinese dialects, such as Wu, there is an equivalent of [v], hence speakers of those dialects have little difficulty pronouncing this sound. Word-initial /v/ is realized as [w], e.g. *Vector* and *Aston Villa*. In other cases /v/ becomes [w] or [f] mostly with a consensus yet no obvious pattern e.g. [f] in *favour*, the second [v] in *Volvo* and either [f] or [w] in *develop* depending on the speaker.

Word-initial /r/ is pronounced as [w], e.g. *read* is pronounced [wid]. In other positions /r/ is realized as [w] or [l] (e.g. *error* as *e-wa*, *flied lice* and *frame*, respectively). The liquids /r/ and /l/ in positions other than the word-initial one are also often confused, e.g. *breakfast* becomes *blegfuss* for some speakers *bleach* and *breach* both sound like *beach*.

HKE may show the following substitutions: the substitution of [s] for /ʃ/ (English [ɪŋglɪs]), of [n] for /l/ (long [nɔŋ]), of [p^h] for /p/. The influence of Cantonese can account for the substitutions of [ts] for /tʃ/ and of [dz] for /dʒ/ in HKE.

The glottal stop [ʔ] is substituted for /t/ and /d/ in word-final position:

- (4) a. *not* [nɔʔ]
b. *good* [guʔ]

Consonants in Cantonese are all voiceless except nasals and approximants, as a result, /d/, /z/, /dʒ/ is read like /t/ (unaspirated), /s/, /tʃ/ (unaspirated), for example.

Like British English, HKE is non-rhotic variety, which means that /r/ is not pronounced except before a vowel.

1.2 Stress, Rhythm, Intonation

With respect to rhythm and sentence stress, HKE is syllable-timed.

Multi-syllable words are often differently stressed, e.g. *Edu'cation* may be pronounced as 'Ed 'cation since Chinese is tonal and largely monosyllabic.

One may notice stressed 'I' sounds (i.e. pronouncing *impossible* (ehm-pos-ii-bul) as ii-m-pos-ii-bol and *impulsive* (im-pul-si-ff) as iim-pul-sii-ff), and omission of entire syllables in longer words (*Difference* become *diff-ens*, *temperature* becomes *tem-pi-chur*).

Words beginning with unstressed syllables *con* are generally pronounced as its stressed form [kawn] with a lower pitch, e.g. *connection*, *consent*, *condition*. Words beginning with stressed syllable *com-*, e.g. *competition*, *common* and *compromise*, are pronounced as [ka:m].

1.3 Phonological Processes

The so-called l-vocalization is common: word-final /l/ is often pronounced [w], e.g. *bell* [bew], *milk* [miwk]. This [w] is sometimes strengthened and becomes like [o/.

In HKE there are differences or omission in ending sounds, as word-final consonants are always voiceless and unreleased (glottalized) in Cantonese with the exception of /m/, /n/ and /ŋ/.

One may notice the merging of the contrast of voiceless/ voiced consonants with aspirated/ unaspirated if there is any contrast exists in Cantonese. The stop [p] becomes [p^h] and [b] becomes [p]; [t] becomes [t^h] and [d] becomes [t]; [k] becomes [k^h] and [g] becomes [k].

There is merging of voiceless/ voiced consonants into voiceless if no contrast in aspirated/ unaspirated in Cantonese. Both [f] and [v] become [f]; both [z] and [s] become [s];

both [tʃ] and [dʒ] become [tʃ]; both [ʃ] and [ʒ] become [ʃ]; both [θ] and [ð] become [θ] (difficulty in pronouncing [θ] too).

The process of devoicing acts upon obstruents in word-final position: *big* [bik], *bag* [bæk].

Consonants in word-final position are subject to deletion:

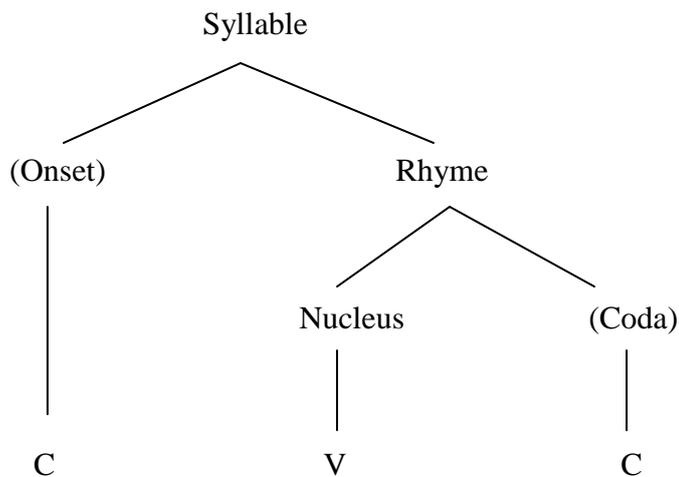
- (5) a. *divide* [diwa]
b. *school* [sku]

There is simplification of clusters in coda position, under the influence of Chinese:

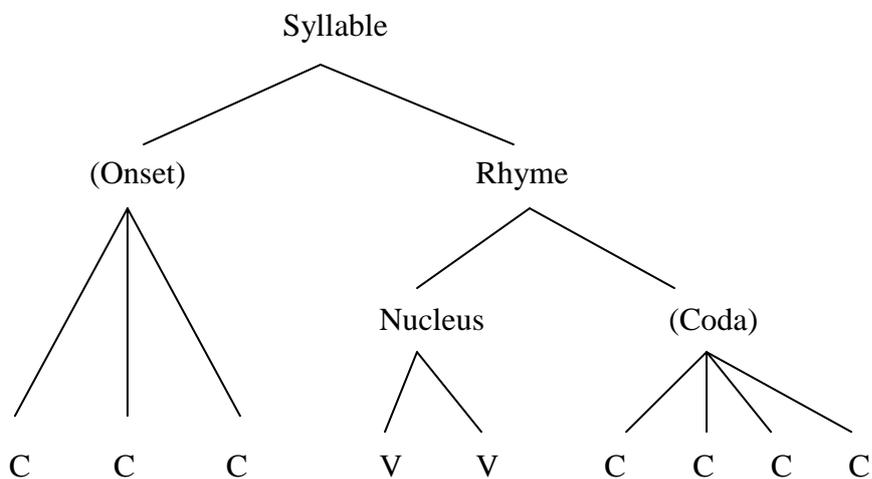
- (6) a. *expects* [iskpɛks]
b. *collect* [kɔɾɛk]
c. *soft* [sɔf]

Not allowing consonant clusters is certainly due to the transfer of the syllable structure from Cantonese (Chiu 2008). The English and Cantonese syllable structures are shown in (7):

- (7) a. Cantonese syllable structure



- b. English syllable structure



Cantonese syllable structure is much simpler than the one of English. However, for HKE, consonant cluster simplification is more prominent in the coda than in the onset. Beckman (1998) explains this in terms of positional prominence in a syllable – the onset is in a privileged position while the coda is in a non-privileged position.

1.3.1 Extra Final Consonants

Many of the examples of inserted /s/ involve pluralized noncount nouns or other problems with plurals. Some of the instances of extra /t/ can be analysed as fake past tense suffixes. These can all be regarded as grammatical errors. However, there are a number of instances that are harder to explain.

- (8)
- a. *in order to make them participate more actively in their work/s/*
 - b. *the aim of the dissertation is to find out the impact/s/ of...*
 - c. *otherwise, no subordinate will listen/t/ to you*
 - d. *the respondents in the subcontractor will re... will receive/t/*
 - e. *cycling, hiking, um sailing/t/, and some kayaking*
 - f. *I think you may be doubtful/t/ about the reason*
 - g. *in order to achieve this/t/, enough intelligence is needed*
 - h. *this is/t/ time...*
 - i. *because/t/ there are unavoidable changes*
 - j. *so the train is quite new/t/*
 - k. *and so/t/ um ... when you travel by train*
 - l. *but for today/s/, I think I can only show you ...*

Examples (8a) through (8k) involve an extra /t/. In example (8e), the extra consonant comes after /ʔ/, in (8f) it follows /l/, in examples (8g, h) it follows an alveolar fricative (/s/, /z/), and, in examples (8j) and (8k) it comes after a vowel. Example (8l) consists of an extra /s/.

For the instances of an extra /t/ after final /n/, the following articulatory explanation might be provided: the tip of the tongue stays in place after the velum is raised at the end of the nasal, thus there could be a build-up of air behind the tongue, and then this air might be released as a plosive when the tongue tip subsequently moves away from the roof of the mouth. An articulatory explanation for the occurrence of /t/ after a final /s/ is much more difficult to find: it is hard to understand why the tongue would move to a position firmly against the alveolar ridge at the end of the fricative before moving away again for the release of the plosive. Moreover, it is not easy to provide an articulatory explanation for the occurrence of /t/ after a vowel, as in examples (8j) and (8k). Another explanation for the extra /t/ is that it is an *-ed* suffix, introduced for reasons of hypercorrection, such as after *yes* and *twice*. The occurrences of an extra /s/ can also be regarded as fake *-s* suffixes, even though this is unexpected after *and* and *out*.

1.3.2 Obstruent voicing and devoicing in the English of Cantonese speakers from Hong Kong

Eckman (1981) finds terminal devoicing in the L2 English production of Cantonese speakers: e.g. pɪ[g]i *piggy* vs. pɪ[k] *pig*, bɒ[b]i *Bobby* vs. bɒ[p] *Bob*, smu[v]ər *smoother* vs. smu[f] *smooth*, and lu[z]ər *loser* vs. lu[s] *lose*. Edge (1981) finds that devoicing is not limited just to the terminal position; prevocalic onset obstruents may undergo devoicing as well.

(9)

Suffixes that begin with	Suffixes	Examples	Gloss
a. voiced obstruent	-z -d	li:d[z] dɪskraɪb[d]	'leads' 'described'
b. voiceless obstruent	-s -t ..tɪv ..ʃən ..fəl	bɑɪk[s] kʌf[t] dɪskrɪp[tɪv] əbsɜ:p[ʃən] tʃæntʃ[fəl]	'bikes' 'cuffed' 'descriptive' 'absorption' 'changeful'
c. sonorant	..ləs ..mənt ..nəs	rɪgəd[ləs] əmeɪz[mənt] kləʊz[nəs]	'regardless' 'amazement' 'closeness'
d. vowel	..ɪŋ ..ə ..ɪti ..eɪʃən ..i:	li:d[ɪŋ] li:d[ə] səlɪd[ɪti] səʊʃəʊlaɪz[eɪʃən] refju:ʒ[i:]	'leading' 'leader' 'solidity' 'socialization' 'refugee'

Clusters consisting of voiced obstruents are not attested due to two processes. A large percentage of consonant clusters involving two or more consonant such as [ndz] are simplified, resulting in surface forms such as *hæns* 'hands' (Peng and Setter, 2000). Moreover, because of terminal devoicing, the voiced obstruents in word-final position such as [ndz] are often replaced by voiceless obstruents, producing forms such as *hænts* 'hands.' Thus, there is no form in which a voiced obstruent appears adjacent to another voiced obstruent. In contrast with L1 English, whose past and third person singular and plural suffixes have three allomorphs - [t]/[d]/[ɪd] and [s]/[z]/[ɪz] resulting from progressive assimilation, the L2 English has only two variants - [t]/[ɪt] and [s]/[ɪs] – and shows no evidence of progressive voice assimilation.

The segments that undergo devoicing in the onset often appear in the neighbourhood of voiceless segments. An example is *stjʊpɪ[t]ɪtɪ* *stupidity*, in which the stem-final [d] is devoiced in prevocalic onset. The voiceless consonants [p, t] surrounding [d] may have influenced its pronunciation. Most of the devoiced onset obstruents appear in the neighbourhood of voiceless segments. However, not every prevocalic onset obstruent is devoiced, e.g. *əpsə[b]ɪŋ* *absorbing*. The voicing quality of a non-adjacent consonant may affect the voicing production, though the impact is not clear.

(10) Before voiceless segments

a. the devoiced variant

æpsɔ:[p]s	<i>absorbs</i>	æpsɔ:[b]ɪŋ	<i>absorbing</i>
əpsə[p]ɪf	<i>adsorptive</i>	əpsə[b]ɪŋ	<i>absorbing</i>
li:[t]s	<i>leads</i>	li:[d]ɪŋ	<i>leading</i>
hen[t]fʊs	<i>handful</i>	hen[d]ɪŋ	<i>handing</i>
keɪ[f]s	<i>caves</i>	keɪ[v]ɪŋ	<i>caving</i>
weɪ[f]s	<i>waves</i>	weɪ[v]ɪŋ	<i>waving</i>
tʃeɪn[tʃ]fʊs	<i>changeful</i>	tʃeɪn[dʒ]ɪŋ	<i>changing</i>
rɪven[tʃ]fʊs	<i>revengeful</i>	rɪven[dʒ]ɪŋ	<i>revenging</i>

b. the stem-final obstruents that retain some degree of voicing

maɪn[d]fʊv	<i>mindful</i>	maɪn[d]ɪŋ	<i>mind</i>
rɪgə[d]fʊv	<i>regardful</i>	regə[d]ɪŋ	<i>regarding</i>

(11) Devoicing in word-final position

a. devoiced obstruents

æ[t]	<i>add</i>	ə[d]ɪfən	<i>addition</i>
sʊlɪ[t]	<i>solid</i>	sʊlɪ[d]ɪtɪ	<i>solidity</i>
smʊ[f]	<i>smooth</i>	smʊ[v]ə	<i>smoother</i>
weɪ[f]	<i>wave</i>	weɪ[v]ɪŋ	<i>wave</i>
səʊsələɪ[s]	<i>socialize</i>	səʊsələɪ[z]eɪfən	<i>socialization</i>
əmeɪ[s]	<i>amaze</i>	əmeɪ[z]ɪŋ	<i>amazing</i>
eŋgeɪ[tʃ]	<i>engage</i>	eŋgeɪ[dʒ]ɪŋ	<i>engaging</i>
menə[tʃ]	<i>manage</i>	menə[dʒ]ɪŋ	<i>managing</i>

b. segments that retain some degree of voicing

dɪskraɪ[b]	<i>describe</i>	dɪskraɪ[b]ɪŋ	<i>describing</i>
sʌpskraɪ[b]	<i>subscribe</i>	sʌpskraɪ[b]ɪŋ	<i>subscribing</i>
li:[d]	<i>lead</i>	li:[d]ɪŋ	<i>leads</i>
laʊ[d]	<i>loud</i>	laʊ[d]ə	<i>louder</i>
refju:[dʒ]	<i>refuge</i>	refju:[dʒ]i	<i>refugee</i>
tʃeɪn[dʒ]	<i>change</i>	tʃeɪn[dʒ]ɪŋ	<i>changing</i>

Voiced obstruents are only partially voiced in word-final position. Full voicing of word-final obstruents is rare, though attested.

(12) Devoicing before sonorant consonants

a. rɪgə:[d]ləs	<i>regardless</i>	rɪgə:[d]ɪŋ	<i>regarding</i>
laʊ[d]nəs	<i>loudness</i>	laʊ[d]ə	<i>louder</i>
mu:[v]mənt	<i>movement</i>	mu:[v]ɪŋ	<i>moving</i>
weɪ[v]ləs	<i>waveless</i>	weɪ[v]ɪŋ	<i>waving</i>
əmeɪ[z]mənt	<i>amazement</i>	əmeɪ[z]ɪŋ	<i>amazement</i>
kləʊ[z]nəs	<i>closeness</i>	kləʊ[z]ɪŋ	<i>closing</i>
eŋgeɪ[dʒ]mənt	<i>engagement</i>	eŋgeɪ[dʒ]ɪŋ	<i>engaging</i>
menə[dʒ]mənt	<i>management</i>	menə[dʒ]ɪŋ	<i>managing</i>
b. de[t]nəs	<i>deadness</i>	de[d]ə	<i>deader</i>
brɪ[tʃ]ləs	<i>bridgeless</i>	brɪ[dʒ]ɪŋ	<i>bridging</i>

The voiceless and word-final positions tend to induce devoicing, while the pre-sonorant position (including prevocalic) favours voicing.

Pre-sonorant obstruents such as [z] in forms like *əmeɪzment* belong to the coda in the L2 English of Cantonese speakers. Clusters such as [zm] are not possible onset clusters in L2 English. Syllabifying both [z] and [m] as the onset introduces medial onset clusters such as [zm] that are not attested in word-initial position. A second piece of evidence comes from the

elision of alveolar plosives in Peng and Setter (2000), which shows that medial obstruent-sonorant sequences are hetero-syllabic. In (13a) and (13b), the alveolar stops [t] and [d] undergo deletion under suffixation. In contrast, the same plosives fail to delete in (13c).

(13)

Alveolar plosive deletion

a.	[bəʊt]	<i>boat</i>	[bəʊs]	<i>boats</i>
	[ri:d]	<i>read</i>	[ri:s]	<i>reads</i>
b.	[əpɔɪnt]	<i>appoint</i>	[əpɔɪnmənt]	<i>appointment</i>
	[hend]	<i>hand</i>	[hænfʊl]	<i>handful</i>
c.	[əlɒt]	<i>allot</i>	[əlɒtmənt]	<i>allotment</i>
	[frɑ:t]	<i>fight</i>	[fraɪtfʊl]	<i>fightful</i>

The patterns of L2 English voicing and devoicing are consistent with the known facts about voicing and devoicing. What distinguishes the L2 patterns from the L1 sound patterns is the degree of variability, shown in the appearance of both voiced and voiceless variants in each of the four environments.

There are clear preferences for voicing and devoicing in the L2 English of Cantonese speakers despite the usual variability associated with L2 speech. The pre-voiceless and terminal positions result in the higher rates of devoicing than the pre-sonorant and prevocalic positions.

1.4 Languages in contact: HKE phonology and the influence of Cantonese

The typical HKE speaker operates with a smaller set of vowel and consonant phonemes than in old varieties of English (such as British and American English), both in production and perception. In particular, the HKE vowel system is very similar to that of Cantonese, both in terms of the number of vowel contrasts, and the phonetic quality of the vowels. Like Cantonese, the consonant system of HKE lacks in the voiced/ voiceless distinction, so that the contrasts between pairs of consonants which are distinguished in old varieties of English by voicing are either neutralised or phonetically realised by other means.

There are a number of phonological rules in HKE which are found in few other varieties of English, including: [l]/ [n] alternation (as in *let* [let] ~ [net], [ai]/ [ʌɪ] alternation as in *tries* ~ *twice*), monophthongization of diphthongs in certain phonological contexts (as in *rain* and *phone*), and the phonetic realisations of /v/.

1.4.1 Vowels

1.4.1.1 Monophthongs

Certain vowels which are distinct in most old varieties of English, such as the vowels in words like *heat* and *hit*, are indistinguishable in HKE.

(14) HKE vowels

Vowel	Examples
[i]	<i>heat, hit</i>
[ɛ]	<i>bet, bat</i>
[u]	<i>hoot, hood</i>
[ɔ]	<i>cot, caught</i>
[ɑ]	<i>heart</i>
[ʌ]	<i>hut</i>
[ɜ]	<i>hurt</i>

One important feature of the HKE vowel system is the lack of the tense / non-tense or long / short distinction, which accounts for the smaller number of vowel contrasts. Here the influence of the learners' mother tongue, Cantonese, is again obvious. Cantonese has a much simpler vowel system than any old variety of English, as shown below:

(15) Cantonese vowels

	Front	Central	Back
High	i, y	-	u
Mid	ɛ, ø	-	ɔ
Low	-	ʌ	ɑ

This is virtually identical to the HKE vowel system, except for the two front rounded vowels in Cantonese, [y] and [ø] which do not exist in HKE.

(16) HKE vowels

	Front	Central	Back
High	i	-	u
Mid	ɛ	ə	ɔ
Low	-	ʌ	ɑ

1.4.1.2 Diphthongs

The diphthongs of HKE are set out in the following table:

(17) HKE diphthongs

[eɪ] <i>hate</i>	[aʊ] <i>house</i>	[ɪə] <i>here</i>
[aɪ] <i>height</i>	[oʊ] <i>coat</i>	[ɛə] <i>hair</i>
[ɔɪ] <i>toyed</i>		[ʊə] <i>poor</i>

As suggested by Hung (2000), acoustic analyses of these diphthongs show the transitions in vowel quality which make them true diphthongs rather than true monophthongs. In this respect, HKE differs from many new varieties of English, such as Singaporean or Indian English, which have a simpler inventory of true diphthongs. This may be attributed to the fact that Cantonese has a rich diphthong system, including [eɪ] and [oʊ], which are not found in the mother tongues of most speakers of Singaporean, Indian or Malaysian English.

1.4.2 Consonants**1.4.2.1 Stops**

There are six distinctive stops and two distinctive affricates in HKE (like in old varieties of English): /p/ *pea*, /b/ *bee*, /t/ *tie*, /d/ *die*, /k/ *cold*, /g/ *gold*, /tʃ/ *cheap*, /dʒ/ *jeep*. Phonetically, the “voiced” stops and affricates in HKE are not really voiced but are voiceless and unaspirated, distinguished from the “voiceless” stops and affricates by the aspiration and greater delay in voice onset time of the latter. In this respect, they are comparable to, and influenced by, the four pairs of voiceless aspirated/ unaspirated stops and affricates in Cantonese.

1.4.2.2 Fricatives

The most significant feature of fricatives in HKE is that, for the majority of speakers, there is no evidence of a voiced/ voiceless contrast. All fricatives are voiceless, which means that instead of eight fricatives (/f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/), there are only four. This shows the influence of Cantonese, which has only voiceless but no voiced fricatives.

There is only one alveolar fricative, /s/, in HKE. There are no proofs of the voiced alveolar fricative [z] in any position – initial, medial or final – as shown in the examples below:

(18)

<i>seal</i>	[sil]	<i>zeal</i>	[sil]
<i>race</i>	[ɛɪs]	<i>raze</i>	[ɛɪs]
<i>racing</i>	[ɛɪsɪŋ]	<i>razing</i>	[ɛɪsɪŋ]

There are thus no grounds for an underlyingly voiced alveolar fricative /z/ in the phonemic system of HKE. It could be assumed that the underlying representations for words like *zeal*, *raze*, and *razing* in HKE are /sil/, /ɛɪs/ and /ɛɪsɪŋ/ respectively.

There is no evidence for an underlyingly voiced palato-alveolar fricative /ʒ/, as all instances of a palato-alveolar fricative are voiceless ([ʃ]):

- (19) a. *pressure* [pɹɛʃə]
 b. *pleasure* [plɛʃə]

For practically all HKE speakers there is no evidence of the voiced interdental fricative /ð/. Words with this phoneme in old varieties of English are realised in HKE as follows, with a [d] if it is in word-initial or intervocalic positions:

- (20) a. *this* [dis]
 b. *brother* [brʌdə]
 c. *clothe* [klouθ]

Words that contain the /v/ phoneme in other varieties of English have a /w/ or /f/ instead in HKE:

(21)

<i>vine</i>	[waɪn]	<i>leave</i>	[lif]
<i>advice</i>	[ɛd'waɪs]	<i>even</i>	['i:fən]
<i>event</i>	[i'wɛnt]	<i>leaving</i>	['li:fɪŋ]
<i>revoke</i>	[ri'wʊk]	<i>rover</i>	['ɹʊvə]

1.4.2.3 Other consonants

There are three nasal consonants, /m/, /n/ and /ŋ/, in HKE, and two approximants, /w/ and /j/, all of which also exist in Cantonese. The HKE consonant /l/ seems to be interchangeable with /n/ in the syllable onset position. In the syllable coda, the two consonants are contrastive, as in *pill* [pil] vs. *pin* [pin], and they have to be postulated as separate phonemes in HKE. But in the onset, they are often interchanged.

(22) [l] ~ [n] alternations

l → [n]*n* → [l]*line**night**lame**no**lead**naked**loose**number**loud**need**lot**not**lake**net**leafing**now**low**noose**let**nine**leafing**name**low**let**leaving**light**leave**lumber*

A summary of the HKE consonant system is shown below:

(23)

/p/	<i>pea</i>	/tʃ/	<i>cheap</i>	/f/	<i>fee, even</i>	/l/	<i>lice, pill</i>
/b/	<i>bee</i>	/dʒ/	<i>jeep</i>	/s/	<i>seal, zeal</i>	/n/	<i>nice, pin</i>
/t/	<i>tie</i>			/θ/	<i>thin, clothing</i>	/m/	<i>mice</i>
/d/	<i>die, this</i>			/ʃ/	<i>she, pleasure</i>	/ŋ/	<i>sing</i>
/k/	<i>cot</i>					/r/	<i>rice</i>
/g/	<i>got</i>					/w/	<i>wise, wan</i>
						/j/	<i>yes</i>
						/h/	<i>hit</i>

2. Conclusions

Why did the native forms of English which have developed outside Britain end up different from English in the original homeland? One factor has to do with linguistic change. All languages and dialects change through time: some changes have taken place since settlement in the English of particular overseas territories; also, some changes have taken place in Britain which have not taken place in all or any of the new territories. Another important factor is language contact: in the new territories, speakers of English came into contact with indigenous languages from which they acquired words. Finally, dialect contact was very important. The fact that English came into contact – as a consequence of the worldwide extent of the British colonial empire – with a wide variety of languages spoken by native populations in various parts of the world contributed to a great diversification of the varieties of English that are currently spoken all over the world.

Hong Kong is a bilingual city, its residents speaking English and Cantonese; under the Hong Kong Basic Law (Article 9) and the Official Languages Ordinance (Chapter 5) English and Chinese are defined as Hong Kong's official languages.

Since many of the characteristics in HKE are regarded as erroneous and improper use of English, the term 'HKE' is often used by the locals as a disparagement rather than to describe a linguistic identity. The majority of Hongkongers with English proficiency tend to follow British English, while others may follow American English or a mixture of the two.

According to Pang (2003), English has been localized to a large extent but it is not yet indigenized in Hong Kong. Localization means that "a language variety develops its own characteristics in such aspects as phonology, syntax, lexis and grammar", while indigenization means "the acceptance by the local community of the existence of a local variety of a language in wide use in day-to-day communication" (McArthur 2002, cited in Pang 2003). Although there are a lot of well-documented features of HKE, the locals prefer not to believe that they are speaking a local variety and even regard some features as errors. Such an attitude hinders the recognition of HKE as a localized variety on a par with other varieties of English in Asia such as Singapore or Philippine English.

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