

Hong Kong English

Unit 1-3: **PHONOLOGY (2): CONSONANTS**

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Lack of Voiced vs. Voiceless contrast in HKE consonants

[s] vs. [z]

seal [sil] *zeal* [sil] 

race [reis] *raze* [reis] 

racing [reisiŋ] *razing* [reisiŋ] 

[ʃ] vs. [ʒ]

pressure [preʃə] *pleasure* [pleʃə] 

[f] vs. [v]


leafing [lifɪŋ] *leaving* [lifɪŋ] 


Pronunciation of Dental fricatives in HK English:

[θ] → [f] *thin* [fin] 

[ð] → [d] *this* [dis] 

Word-final obstruent devoicing:

judge [dʒʌtʃ] 





judges [dʒʌdʒəs] 

‘SPLITTING’ OF THE PHONEME /v/

/v/ → [f] *even* *leaving*  *rover* 
 [w] *advice* *event*  *revoke* 

? Initial hypothesis: ‘/v/ is realised as [w] in stressed syllables, and [f] in unstressed’

Counter-evidence:

advertise [ˈædwɜːtaɪs] 
advertisement [ædˈwɜːtɪsmənt] 
province [ˈprɒvɪns] 
provincial [prɒvˈɪnsəl] 

Conclusion:

There is no phoneme /v/ in HK English.

Words which are phonologically represented in other varieties as /v/ are represented in HKE as either /f/ or /w/. E.g. words like *even*, *leaving*, *rover*, etc. are represented as /ifən/, /lifɪŋ/, /roufə/, etc., and words like *advice*, *event*, *revoke*, *advertise*, *province*, etc. are represented as /ɛdwais/, /iwent/, /riwouk/, /ɛdwətais/, /prouwins/, etc.

[l] ~ [n] ALTERNATION


(Data from 15 HK university undergraduates)

[l] pronounced as [n]

[n] pronounced as [l]

line	37%	night	33%
lame	27%	no	23%
longing	17%	naked	20%
lead	17%	number	20%
loose	17%	need	13%
loud	17%	not	10%
lower	17%	net	10%
lot	13%	now	10%
lake	13%	noose	7%
leafing	10%	nine	7%
long	10%	name	3%
low	10%		
leaf	7%		
let	7%		
leaving	7%		
light	7%		
leave	3%		
lumber	3%		

Alternations between [l] and [n] in two pronunciations of the same word by the same speaker

Speaker 8: *let*,  *leaf, longing, lot, lake, lead, leafing, leaving, loose, not, light, night*

Speaker 14: *lot, light, long, loose*,  *naked, need*

Speaker 1: *loose, loud, number*

Speaker 3: *line, longing*

Speaker 7: *number*

Conclusion:

In HKE, [l] and [n] are apparently in **free variation** in the onset of a syllable.

Cf. HK Mandarin:

鳥 ('bird') – 2 pronunciations: [niao],  [liao] 


ELISION OF [w] GLIDE

quote [kɔt] 

quarter [kɔtə] 

quota [kɔtə]  (cf. *coat* [kɔt]) 

quarrel [kɔrəl]  (cf. *coral* [kɔrəl]) 

queen [k^win] 

quite [k^wɪt] 

GENERALISATION:

[w] --> 0 / [+stop] ___ [V +round]

Consonant System of HKE

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

Number of words in English depending on certain consonant contrasts

- [r/l] (e.g. *rice/lice*): 589;**
- [r/w] (*reed/weed*): 213;**
- [v/f] (*van/fan*): 130;**
- [θ/t] (*thin/tin*): 117;**
- [ð/d] (*then/den*): 58;**
- [w/v] (*wet/vet*): 52;**
- [ð/θ] (*either/ether*): 8;**
- [ʒ/ʃ] (*confusion/Confucian*): 5.**

Minimal Pairs - Consonants

	b	t	d	k	g	f	v	θ	ð	s	z	ʃ	ʒ	h	m	n	ŋ	l	r	j	w	tʃ	dʒ	null	vowel
p	612	882	524	1009	401	570	227	129	66	613	222	216	3	377	620	561	84	683	374	87	433	296	197	916	139
b		431	400	458	350	411	129	63	34	342	79	186	2	228	385	270	37	346	289	64	196	225	179		
t			682	731	319	405	232	117	57	1258	379	247	8	231	453	517	109	575	318	46	216	238	248		
d				466	250	332	285	126	58	481	2660	242	7	185	414	484	1619	507	440	39	142	206	208		
k					341	464	176	112	42	472	214	213	4	272	413	460	87	470	229	50	193	211	155		
g						196	79	52	18	201	54	145	1	125	239	240	61	207	155	26	109	97	108		
f							130	50	35	371	73	137	2	185	312	236	22	272	218	49	178	156	171		
v								25	30	204	148	49	2	66	187	222	83	233	112	7	52	63	93		
θ									8	91	59	41	2	36	60	67	10	65	37	10	42	42	36		
ð										28	34	18	2	15	63	53	7	45	18	3	19	22	16		
s											232	220	9	217	361	384	51	467	299	42	169	182	184		
z												65	11	24	159	317	1135	253	50	8	17	102	94		
ʃ													5	129	179	148	83	180	155	34	105	115	103		
ʒ														none	9	6	none	6	none	none	1	3	1		
h															226	139	none	216	225	70	191	95	101		
m																359	59	513	259	52	150	172	175		
n																	78	681	239	35	142	151	147		
ŋ																		58	2	none	none	21	76		
l																			589	68	204	182	202		
r																				58	213	120	151		
j																					48	28	45		
w																						61	93		
tʃ																							92		
	b	t	d	k	g	f	v	θ	ð	s	z	ʃ	ʒ	h	m	n	ŋ	l	r	j	w	tʃ	dʒ	null	vowel

Recommended Reading

- ❖ Hung, T.T.N. (2002). 'Towards a Phonology of Hong Kong English'. In K. Bolton (ed), *Hong Kong English: Autonomy and Creativity*, pp.119-140. Hong Kong University Press.