

A CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS OF ONGOING CHANGE IN THE ADJECTIVE AMPLIFIER SYSTEMS OF HONG KONG, INDIAN, AND PHILIPPINE ENGLISH

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R CODE UPON REQUEST



Phenomenon: Adjective Amplification

Predicative

- (1) I think he 's **really** nice (ICE-PHI:S1A-083#222:1:C)
- (2) It 's **so** bad (ICE-PHI:S1A-013#204:1:A)

Attributive

- (3) It is a **very** good training (ICE-HK:S1A-022#433:1:A)
- (4) But it's **completely** different (ICE-IND:S1A-073#48:1:A)

Intensification

Related to the semantic category of *degree* (degree adverbs) and ranges from low (downtoning) to high (amplifiers)

(Quirk et al. 1985: 589–590)

- Amplifiers
 - Boosters, e.g. *very*
 - Maximizers, e.g. *completely*
- Downtoners
 - Approximators, e.g. *almost*
 - Compromisers, e.g. *more or less*
 - Diminishers, e.g. *partly*
 - Minimizers, e.g. *hardly*

Motivation

Amplification

- major area of gramm. change (cf. Brinton and Arnovick 2006: 441)
- crucial for “social and emotional expression of speakers”
(Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 258)
- linguistic subsystem which allows precise circumscription
of a variable context (Labov 1972, 1966: 49)
- ideal case for testing mechanisms underlying language
change!

Previous Research

Amplification

- substantial amount of corpus-based research on intensification (e.g. Aijmer 2011, 2018; Fuchs 2016, 2017; Núñez Pertejo and Palacios 2014; Palacios and Núñez Pertejo 2012)
→ but mostly either focused on individual intensifiers or without regard to the intensified adjectives
- recently amplifier-adjective bigrams have come more into focus (e.g. Schweinberger 2017; Wagner 2017a,b)
- associated with teenage talk and young(ish) (female) speakers
(Bauer and Bauer 2002; D'Arcy 2015; Macaulay 2006; Tagliamonte 2006, 2008)

Focus

- Amplifying *really* replaces *very* (lexical replacement)

(see D'Arcy (2015) for NZE; see Ito and Tagliamonte (2003) and Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010) for North East British English, Tagliamonte (2008) and Tagliamonte and Denis (2014) for Toronto English; see Tagliamonte and Denis (2014) for South Eastern Ontario English)

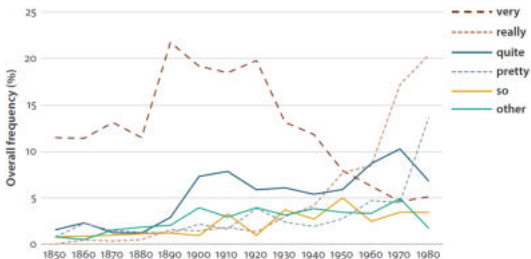


Figure 1: Amplifier variants in NZE across real-time (from D'Arcy (2015: 468))

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

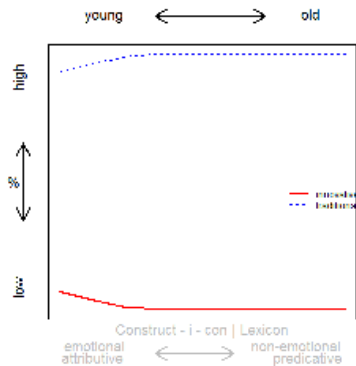
Variationist Sociolinguistics

Language is not homogeneous: variation is ubiquitous (see e.g. Labov (1994) Labov (2001) Labov (2011) Tagliamonte (2011))

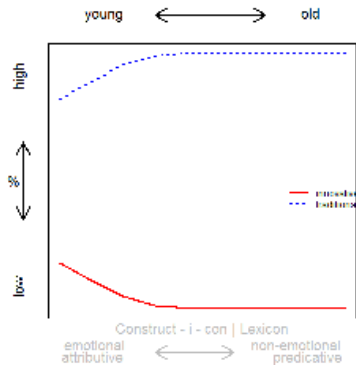
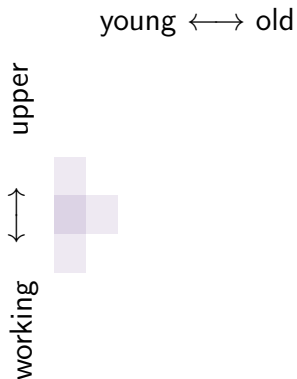
- ▶ Social factors : language use
- ▶ Linguistic variation not random
- ▶ Systematic correlation between certain social factors (age, gender, class, ethnicity, etc.) and language use

Linguistic differentiation ↔ social stratification

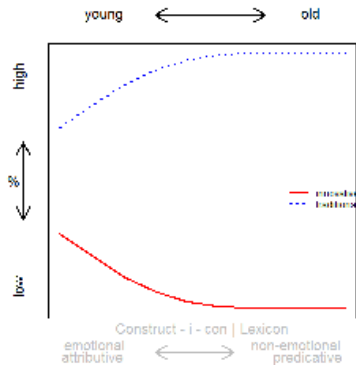
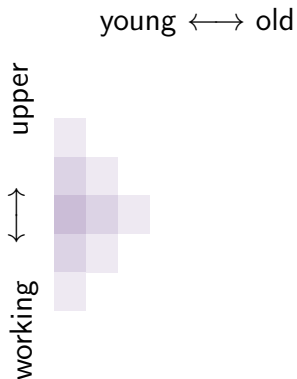
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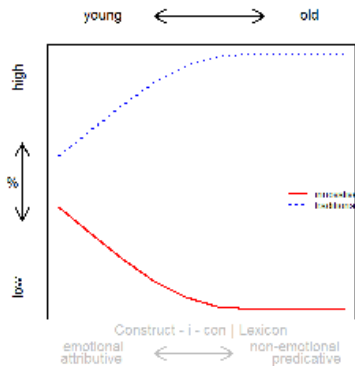
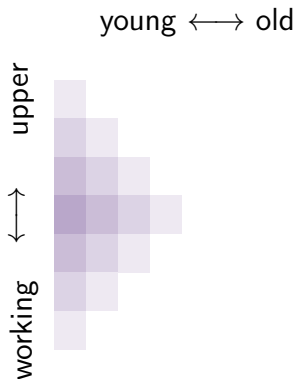
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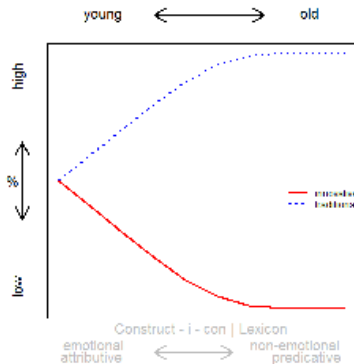
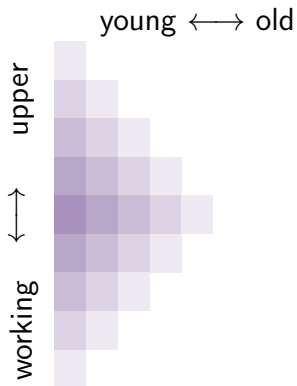
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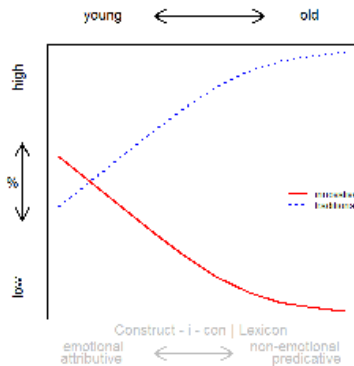
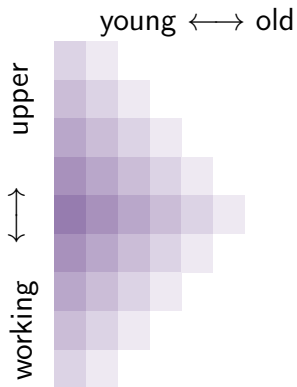
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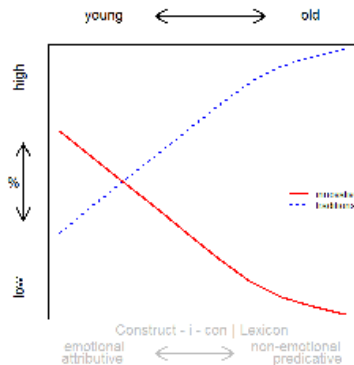
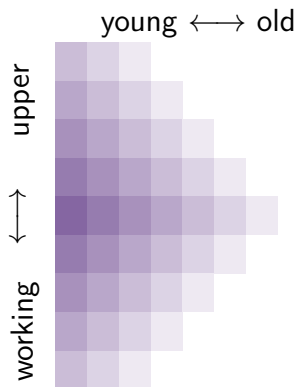
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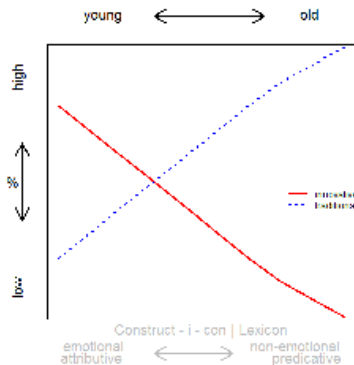
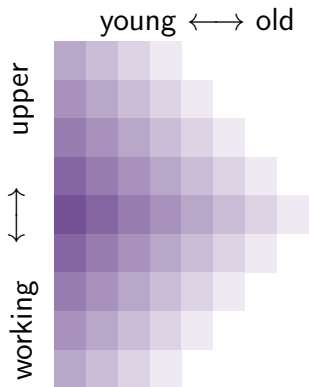
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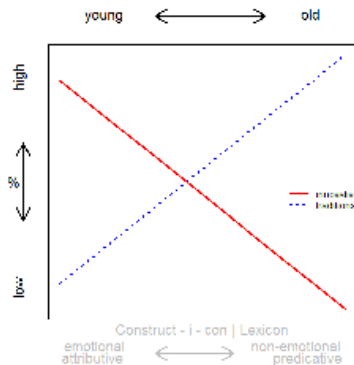
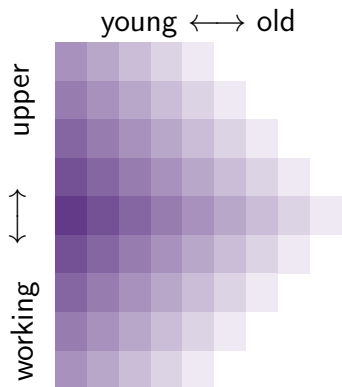
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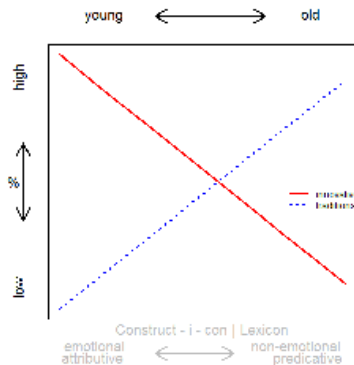
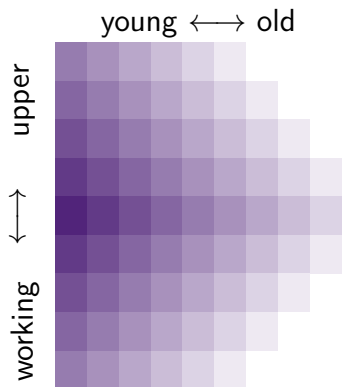
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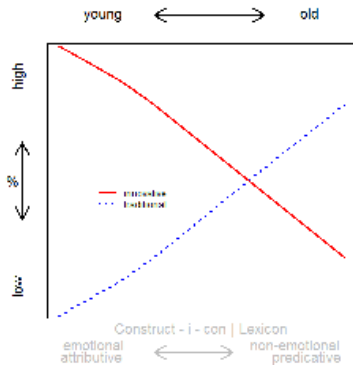
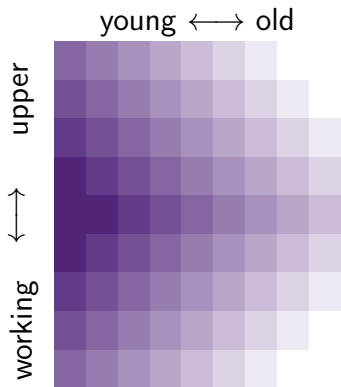
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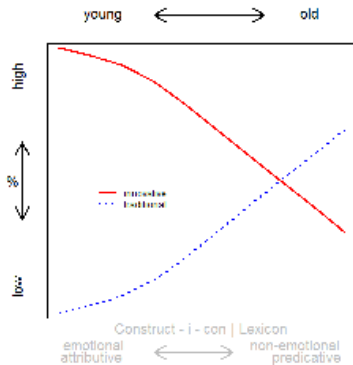
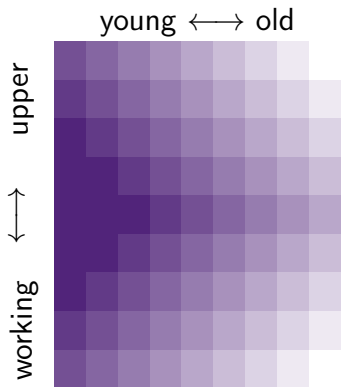
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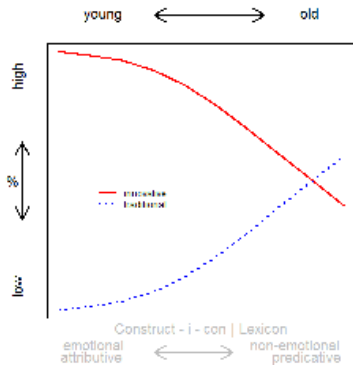
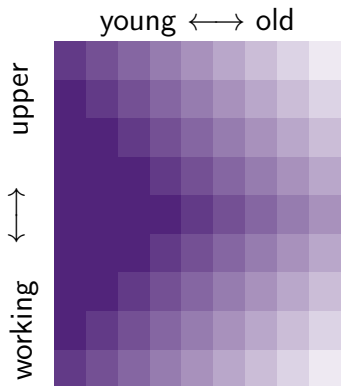
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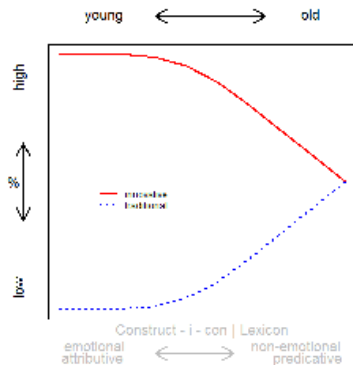
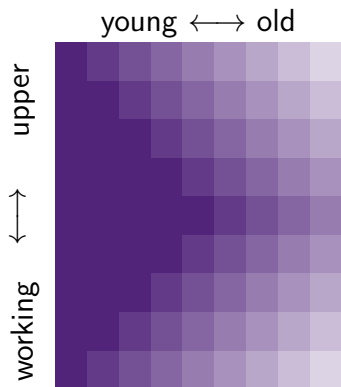
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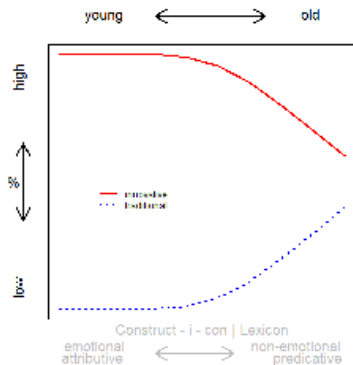
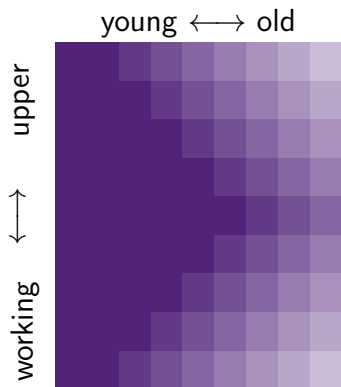
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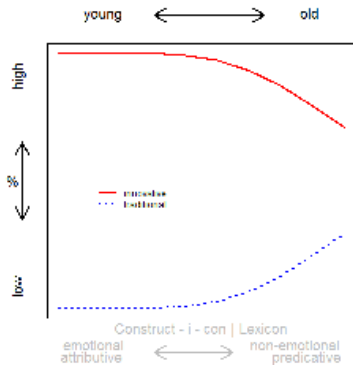
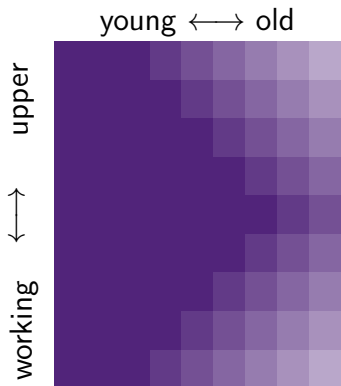
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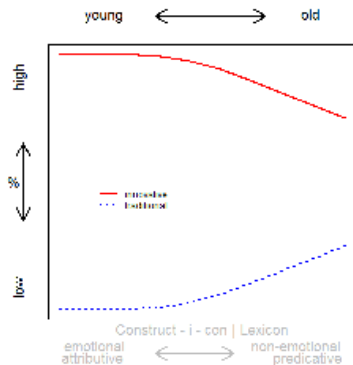
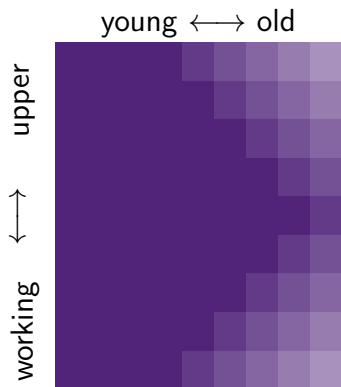
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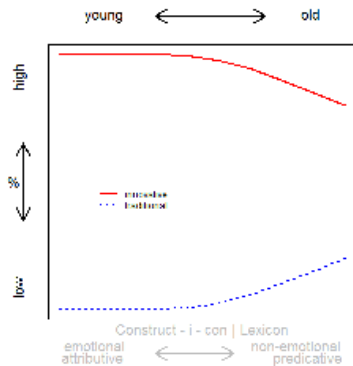
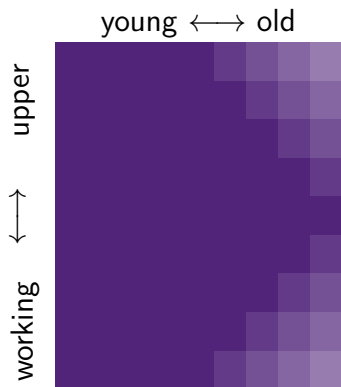
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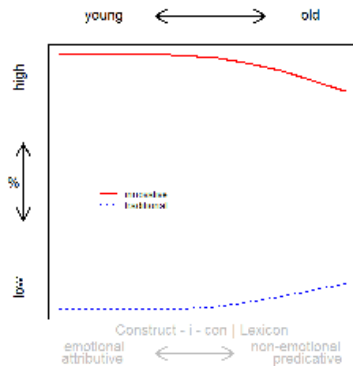
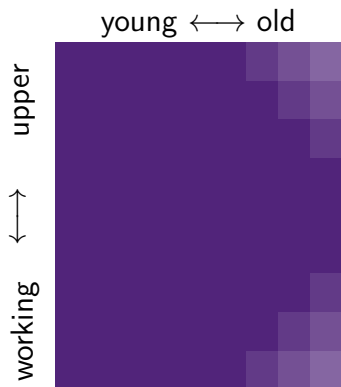
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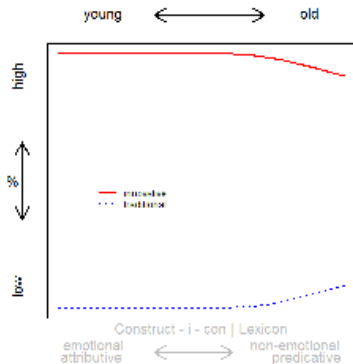
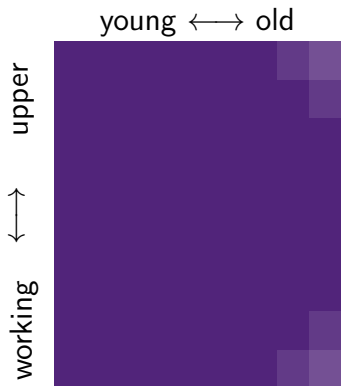
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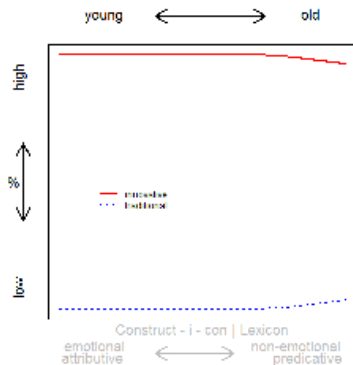
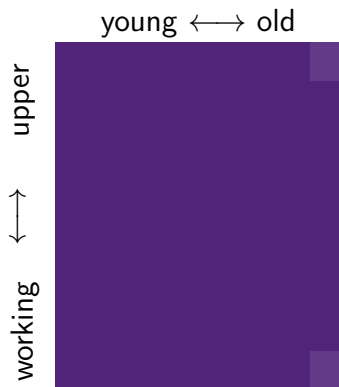
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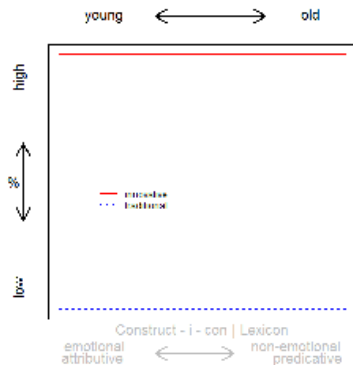
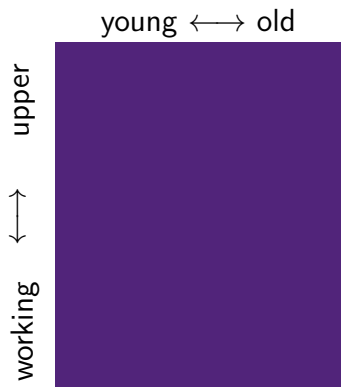
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Diffusion of Innovations



Research Question

Q

Are Asian Englishes in-line with the trend among traditional L1 and other post-colonial varieties of English in that *very* is being replaced by *really*?

Hypotheses

H₁1

HKE, IndE, PhiE align with other varieties:
really is replacing *very*
as the default adjective amplifier

H₁2

Aligned with AmE/AusE → more advanced
Aligned with GBE → more lagging behind

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Corpus data: International Corpus of English (ICE)

- Hong Kong, Indian, and Philippine ICE components
- Shared design (allows meaningful comparisons between varieties of English)
- One million words (600,000 spoken and 400,000 written) from diverse spoken and written text types (cf. next slide) with each file containing app. 2,000 words.
- Accompanied by metadata and biodata of speaker (extremely interesting resource for variationist analyses)

Corpus data: International Corpus of English (ICE)

Mode	Conversation type	Register	Text type	Number of text files
SPOKEN (300)	Dialogues (180)	Private (100)	Face-to-face conversations	90
			Phonecalls	10
		Public (80)	Classroom Lessons	20
	Broadcast Discussions		20	
	Broadcast Interviews		10	
	Parliamentary Debates		10	
	Legal cross-examinations		10	
	Business Transactions		10	
	Monologues (120)	Unscripted (70)	Spontaneous commentaries	20
			Unscripted Speeches	30
			Demonstrations	10
		Scripted (50)	Legal Presentations	10
			Broadcast News	20
Broadcast Talks			20	
		Non-broadcast Talks	10	

Data Processing

- Spoken private dialogue section of each component
- Part-of-speech tagged (OpenNLP via R) the
- Retrieved adjectives (PoS-tag JJ)
- Determined whether adjective were preceded by an amplifier (member of a predefined set of amplifiers)
- Sentiment Analysis of adjective types (Jockers 2017)

Data Processing

- Determined if the same amplifier type had occurred within a span of three adjective slots previously (→ Priming)
- Token freq. of adjective type by age group (Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005)
- Removed...
 - negated adjectives
 - comparative and superlative forms
 - adjectives that were not amplified by at least two different amplifier types
 - adjectives that were preceded by downtoners
 - strange forms (e.g. *much*, *many*)

Data Processing

- Syntactic context (attributive *the nice man* VS predicative *The man is nice.*)
- Gradability: likelihood of the occurrence in comparative contexts against occurrence in non-comparative contexts
- Semantic classification of adjective (simplified version of Dixon (1977), cf. also D'Arcy (2015); Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005); Tagliamonte (2006, 2008))
- Manual cross-evaluation of automated classification
- Metadata and speaker information

Variable Coding

Dependent Variable(s)				
Variant	categorical	occurrence of pre-adjectival <i>really, so, very, other</i>		
Independent Variable(s)				
Age	ordinal	min. young middle-aged old	extra	linguistic
Gender	nominal	Female Male		
(Education)	nominal	College NoCollege		
Priming	nominal	prime noprime	intra	linguistic
Emotionality	categorical	negative nonemotional positive		
Function	nominal	attributive predicative		
SemanticCat.	categorical	semantic category of adj.		
Gradability	numeric	Gradability score based on BNC		
Adjective	categorical	different other		
Frequency	numeric	Frequency of adj. by age group		

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Statistical analysis: options

Model	Dep. var.	Interactions	Nested data	Output	Overfitting
Tree-based models					
Conditional-Inference Tree (CIT)	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗
Random Forests (RF)	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
Regression models					
Multinomial mixed-effects (GLMMM)	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
Logistic mixed-effects (GLMBLM)	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓

→ CIT separate GLMBLMs for each variant (not shown today)

RESULTS

Results

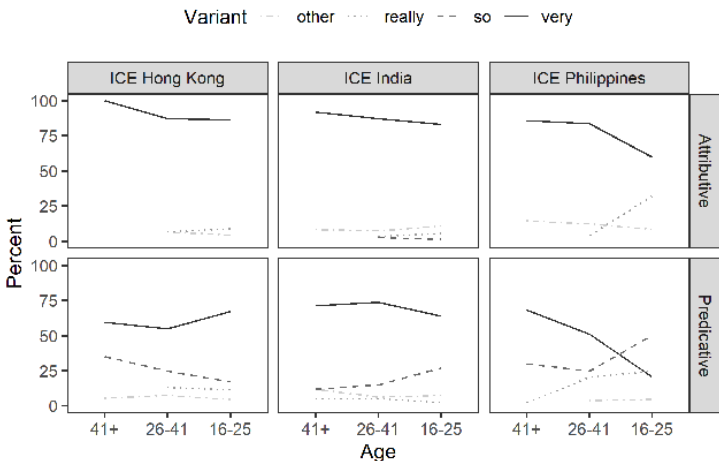


Figure 2: % variants across speaker age by function and corpus.

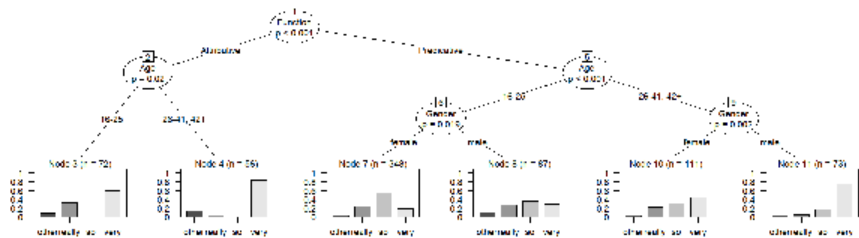


Figure 3: Results of the CIT analysis on ICE-PHI.

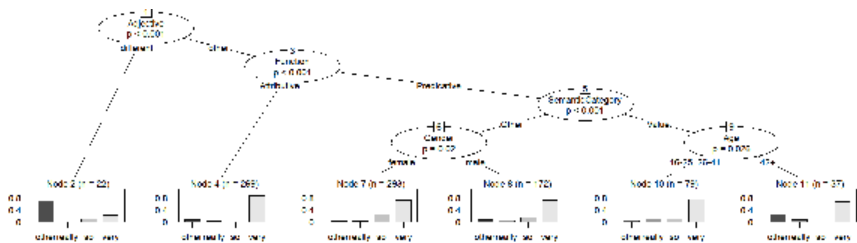


Figure 4: Results of the CIT analysis on ICE-IND and ICE-HK.

DISCUSSION & OUTLOOK

Summary

The analysis shows that ...

- the trajectory of change in the adj. amplifier system of PhiE is approximating the trajectories of other varieties (NZE, IrE, AusE, etc.) (see e.g. D'Arcy 2015)
 → only PhiE confirms H_11
- change in PhiE is substantially further advanced compared to HKE and IndE → confirmation of H_12
- during stasis and initial stages of change, intra-linguistic factors dominate
- once change is accelerating, extra-linguistic (social) factors become more important (see Labov 2002)

Discussion

- During initial stages of change, the type of the amplified adjective and its linguistic properties determine amplifier use
- Once an amplifier variant attains social meaning, it will (further) increase in use: linguistic change piggybacks on social stratification

“Sociolinguistic variation is parasitic upon such linguistic variation. It is an opportunistic process that reinforces social distinctions by associating them with particular linguistic variants. [...] The use of linguistic forms to increase distinctiveness of particular groups is a driving force for the acceleration of change”

(Labov 2002)

Outlook

Could this be a universal mechanism/pattern?

Test if the mechanisms. . .

- can be shown to have worked in analogous changes in English (e.g. 3rd p. sg. ind. morpheme: <eth> → <(e)s>)
- can be shown to have worked in analogous changes in languages other than English

THANK YOU SO, REALLY, VERY MUCH!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK...

THE ICE TEAMS WHO HAVE COMPILED THE DATA FOR THE CURRENT STUDY
(WITHOUT THEM THE CURRENT STUDY WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE)

MY COLLEAGUES AT UQ

FOR COMMENTS AND THEIR FEEDBACK ON EARLIER VERSIONS OF THIS TALK

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