

Don't Put Your 'and on the Hoven: A variationist study of /h/ insertion and /h/ dropping in Kosraean English

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1. Introduction

The aim of this presentation is to explore the role of /h/ insertion and /h/ deletion in the variety of English spoken on Kosrae, Federated States of Micronesia.

Variation:

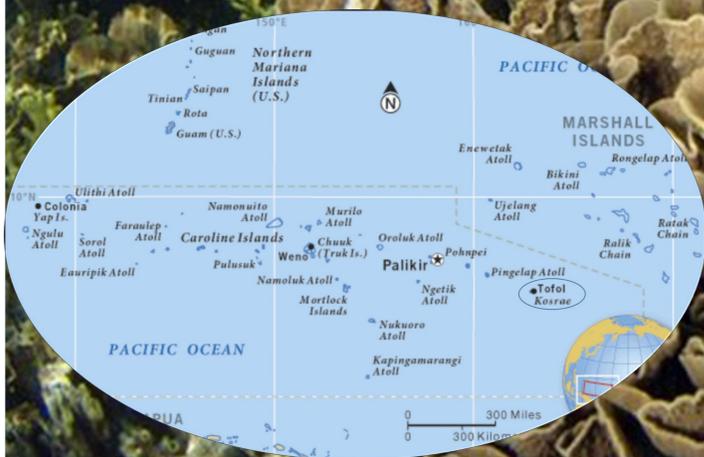
- /h/ insertion to provide a consonantal onset to vowel-initial syllables
e.g. Male, 31: *that guy is really hold now*
- /h/ realization as deleted /h/
e.g. Male, 31: *yeah I build their house their local huts and they pay me*

Population: approx. 6,616
(6% of FSM)
Size: 111.3 km² (=Dublin)
Government: Federated States of Micronesia (1986)
Religion: Christian
Economy: Compact of Free Association

2. Methodology

- Based on a corpus of 96 speakers collected over a 3 month period in Kosrae, summer 2015.
- The sociolinguistics interviews are conducted for an average of 45 minutes.
- In this paper, 1000 tokens are taken from 8 speakers with intersecting social categories.

Age	Sex	Occupation	Education	Time spent off-island
<20	Men	Publically employed	High School	Within FSM
21-35	Women	Privately employed	COMFSM	Within Micronesia
36-50		Self employed	Micronesian College	Hawaii
>50		Unemployed	US University/ College	US
				Military
				Work
				Education

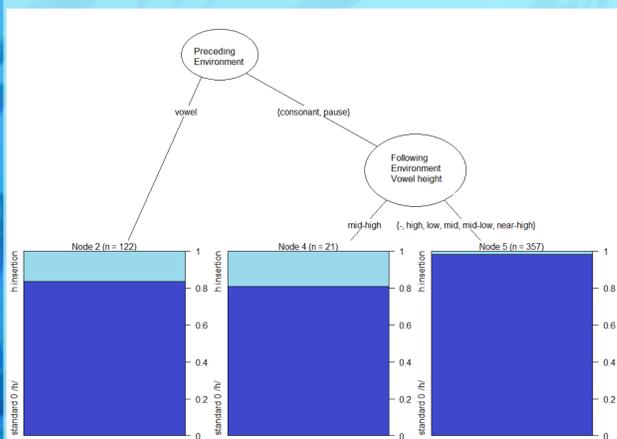


3. /h/ Variable in Previous Studies

- Initial H in Newfoundland English of British origin (unconscious H transposition): "Many of us have dropped an H in house and picked it up in hegg" (Strowbridge, 2008).
- Historical and intrusive [h] more likely to occur before a non-rounded front or low vowel than following a back rounded vowel (Whalen, 1978).
- The probability of [h] presence is greater after a vowel (e.g. *the end, I hope*). Almost always in a stressed syllable and self-correction occurs (Clarke, 2010).
- /h/ insertion in Francophone learners of English: "h-epenthesis is due to a form of lexical confusion, Francophones' uncertainty as to which words are supposed to contain [h], combined with their desire to produce this prestige marker in their speech." (Watkins, 2009)
- Tristan Da Cunha English (on /h/ insertion): "Hypercorrection seems unlikely as there was limited impact of Standard English and... little status consciousness." (Schreier and Trudgill, 2005)
- "[h] is a strong voiceless onset of the following vowel. It's presence or absence is describable in terms of a linguistic rule which may be variably applied to delete the [h]" (Gimson, 1970).

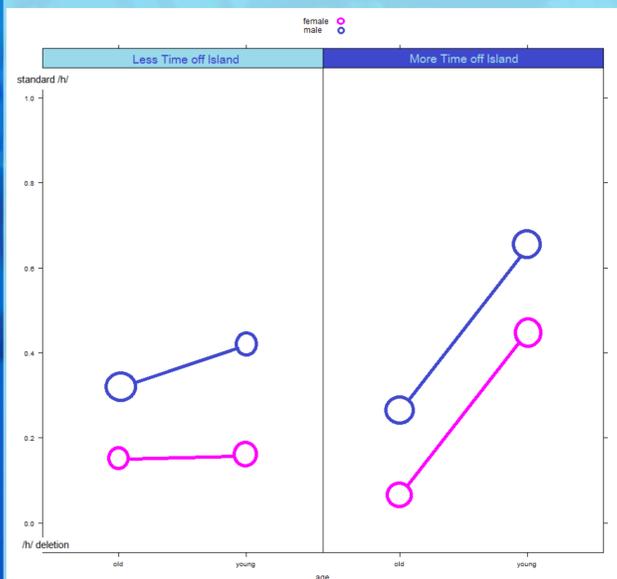
4. Some Quantitative Results

Effects of phonological environment on production of /h/ insertion:



- /h/ insertion prefers the preceding environment of a vowel
- If a consonant or pause precedes, /h/ insertion almost exclusively happens before mid-high vowels

Effects of social factors on production of /h/ deletion:



- Age: old > young
- Sex: female > male
- (Time off island: correlated with age and sex)

5. Analysis

/h/ insertion:

- 30 instances of /h/ insertion were found as against 470 standard 0 /h/ variant realisations
- /h/ insertion favours a preceding vowel or a consonant or pause in the case of a mid-high, back vowel succeeding
- Seriality also appears to affect the production of /h/ in non-standard instances when a /h/ is realised earlier in the clause or phrase
- Males produce /h/ insertion more than female speakers, however age and time of island produce little difference in output frequency
- If preceding environment is a consonant, only an alveolar may be succeeded by a non standard /h/ insert
- Insertion occurs in the onset of stressed syllables as opposed to unstressed syllables

/h/ deletion:

- is a common feature of Kosraean English with 335 instances found as against 165 of standard /h/ production
- Social factors are the most significant influence with regards to the pattern of /h/ deletion
- Age is the leading instigator of /h/ deletion usage with a significant p value of /h/ deletion performed by the older category (35+)
- Sex is then the second most influential stimulus again showing a significant p value with female participants producing a higher number of instances than male speakers
- Time off island is less causative but still proves a to be a motivating factor
- The largest group of /h/ deletion users are older women
- The most standard production of /h/ (little /h/ deletion) is produced by younger males who have spent more than three years off the island

6. Discussion

Factors affecting realisation of variable /h/:

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| English mediated | Media |
| | Second-level education |
| | Free mobility to the US |
| | US Military Service |
- /h/ is absent in the Kosraean substrate language (Lee, 1975)
 - /h/ insertion – often assumed to be a form of hypercorrection (Häcker, 2004)
 - Rather than hypercorrection in its simplest definition, the results suggest that this is a linguistic process formed out of phonetic compulsion, in some cases as hiatus resolution, in others to introduce a stressed onset.
 - /h/ deletion – appears to be used mostly by older informants hinting that this may be a feature which is dying out
 - /h/ remains to be deleted more often by females than males (the instigators of language change) implying that this feature may be retained (Labov, 2001a).
 - Previous studies show that /h/ deletion is generally more influenced by social factors rather than intralinguistic causes (Wells, 1982) as aligns with the patterns in Kosraean English which intralinguistic features show little significance.
 - An interesting finding is that while /h/ insertion is most likely to occur before a mid high vowel, /h/ deletion is considerably the least likely of vowel heights to occur in this environment confirming that intralinguistics are vital to understanding the pattern of /h/ in Kosraean English.

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