

## **Variation and change in the Japanese velar consonant (g) in a new town**

Akiko Okumura

*University of Tokyo*

This paper examines variation and change in the velar consonant (g) in a new town in Japan where different dialects have been in contact. Traditionally, non-word-initial (g) is pronounced as nasal in Eastern dialects but as stop in Western dialects. In metropolises in Eastern-dialect speaking area (e.g. Tokyo, Sendai), however, the nasal has been replaced by the stop among younger speakers (Kindaichi 1942, Inoue 1986, Nagata 1987, Hibiya 1988, Ohashi 2000). Since one of the factors promoting the change has been reported to be dialect contact, it is worth examining the change in a new town, where intensive dialect contact occurred. Although there are many studies that investigated koineization occurring in new towns (Kerswill 2013, Kerswill & Williams 2002; 2005), not many studies have been done in Japan (Aashi 2008) and the variation of (g) in a new town has not yet been studied.

Both speech (word list, reading passage, conversations) and perceptual data (interviews and tasks) were collected from roughly 30 speakers of different generations in a new town located in a suburb of Sendai, where the nasal variant was dominantly used in the traditional dialect. The results show that the speech of the second generation is focusing toward the stop variant. It was also observed that compared to the speakers in central Sendai (Ohashi 2000), the change is more advanced in the new town, possibly due to more extensive dialect contact. The analysis of the perceptual data was conducted to see what kind of social meaning the speakers of each generation tend to attribute to each variant and how those meanings are related to the change. The results show the nasal pronunciation has lost its meaning as “standard” and is instead perceived as more “rural” among the second generation, which may have influenced them to use the stop variant more than their parents' generation.