

MASTER'S THESIS

Expletive Epenthesis in Hong Kong Cantonese

TAM, Nga Wing Olivia

Date of Award:
2020

[Link to publication](#)

General rights

Copyright and intellectual property rights for the publications made accessible in HKBU Scholars are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners. In addition to the restrictions prescribed by the Copyright Ordinance of Hong Kong, all users and readers must also observe the following terms of use:

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from HKBU Scholars for the purpose of private study or research
- Users cannot further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- To share publications in HKBU Scholars with others, users are welcome to freely distribute the permanent URL assigned to the publication

Expletive Epenthesis in Hong Kong Cantonese

Olivia N-W. Tam

Hong Kong Baptist University
olviatamnw@hotmail.com
December 2020

ABSTRACT: Monosyllabic expletives (curse words) like *diu2*, *lan2*, *kau1*, *ceon1* and *hail* are often inserted within utterances in daily colloquial conversations of Hong Kong Cantonese and there seems to be some patterns to the way they are used. For instance, among the five available slots we can put to ‘Ma-lay-si-a’, prefixing or suffixing the monosyllabic expletive to the quadrisyllabic translated name is not possible and the position between -si- and -a is not acceptable. We would like to know why is there such a preference to the insertion places. This dissertation aims to investigate Hong Kong Cantonese expletive epenthesis within the framework of Optimality Theory. Through analysing monomorphemes and polymorphemes with two to five syllables, the author provides an Optimally Theory analysis to explain the puzzle is the result of complex interactions of prosody, foot and syntax and can predict where the expletive can appear with five constraints.

KEYWORDS: Hong Kong Cantonese · Optimality Theory · Prosody · Alignment