

# Studies in Generative Grammar

The goal of this series is to publish those texts that are representative of recent advances in the theory of formal grammar. Too many studies do not reach the public they deserve because of the depth and detail that make them unsuitable for publication in article form. We hope that the present series will make these studies available to a wider audience than has hitherto been possible.

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Joan Mascaró and  
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# Grammar in Progress

Glow Essays for Henk van Riemsdijk



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## Preface

"One thing about GLOW is that there is a sense of common purpose. People may have different ideas and approaches [...] but [...] one has the feeling [...] that they think they are working towards a common goal [...] There is a sort of common enterprise."

These thoughts were expressed by Noam Chomsky in an interview conducted by Riny Huybregts and Henk van Riemsdijk in 1979-1980 and they can be applied to any point in the by now long period of existence of GLOW (1977-1990). A common enterprise might be viewed as a set of beliefs spontaneously shared by a group of people, but it can be – and often is – the consequence of an act of will: the result of a willingness to make a project real, to share actively and to help others to share and to take part in a common enterprise. Whether or not this is an adequate description of GLOW, it is certainly true that Henk van Riemsdijk has been the member of GLOW who has taken this task most seriously, year after year. The fact that the eleven years of Henk's chairmanship coincide with the first eleven years of the life of GLOW may be seen as a reflection of his dedication to this common project.

Research is not just a matter of personal struggle with linguistic problems: it is influenced by contacts with others, stimulated by personal interchange and by the sense of sharing a common goal. One often fails to realize one's debt to those who sacrifice time and effort from their own research in order to create these indispensable elements for their fellow colleagues.

Hence, the *Fest* of this *Schrift* for Henk does not mark the end of a scholarly accomplishment (this would make no sense given Henk's age and promise), but the end of a period of active dedication to the organization and functioning of GLOW.

We have limited the length of the contributions not only to be able to have as many participants as possible, but also because we believe short papers better show the present state of research, of grammar in progress.

The list of contributors is intended to be representative of GLOW: generative linguists in the old worlds. Among these we limited the participation to those people who have been most active in the creation and in the organization of GLOW up till the point of Henk's request not to be considered eligible any longer for the position of chairman. Most papers included in this volume are therefore written either by linguists who have been board members at some

# What ever happened to dialect B?

Jonathan Kaye  
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Canadian English has received a good degree of notoriety in the linguistic literature over the years. This notoriety is due to the interaction of two phonological processes present in the phonology of the most populous of Canadian English dialects. These processes are the Canadian version of tapping, whereby a *t* is purported to be voiced between vowels. If this occurs within a cyclic domain the vowel following the *t* should be unstressed. Thus, *pretty* → *preddy*, but *retain* ↯ *\*redain*.<sup>1</sup>

The second and more well known process is that of “Canadian Raising”. The head of the heavy diphthongs [ay] and [aw] is raised to *ē* when followed by a voiceless stop or fricative. The process is subject to constraints on the stressing of the neighbouring vowels.<sup>2</sup> So “write” and “out” are realised as [rēyt] and [ēut], while “ride” and “loud” come out as [ra:yd] and [la:wd]. Leaving aside the theoretical implications of the formulation of both these processes, their interaction has engendered a great deal of interest over the years.

The Canadian English facts have been advanced as providing extremely strong evidence for the rule-based nature of phonology and for the fact that rule interactions (“rule ordering”) are part of the language-specific aspect of phonological systems. As such, these interactions must be learned along with the segmental inventories and, of course, the rules themselves. Canadian English is supposed to provide a “minimal pair” sort of situation. We find two dialects with very similar phonologies, differing in the order in which the processes described above apply to a given form. The situation is summed up in (1) below.

(1)		rayt	rayt+er	rayd	rayd+er
	Canadian Raising	rēyt	rēyt+er	_____	_____
	t-voicing	_____	rēyd+er	_____	_____
	output	[rēyt]	[rēydr]	[rayd]	[raydr]

Reversing the order of rule application in (1) results in different outputs.

(2)		rayt	rayt+er	rayd	rayd+er
t-voicing		_____	rayd+er	_____	_____
Canadian Raising	rēyt	rayd+er	_____	_____	_____
output	[rēyt]	[raydr]	[rayd]	[raydr]	

The situation in (1) has been referred to as dialect A and that of (2) as dialect B. We know that Canadian Raising must be present in dialect B since its effects are perceptible when it is not bled by t-voicing as in the form [rēyt]. This form is pronounced identically in the two dialects. Given the above account of the facts, the conclusion that language-specific ordering statements are necessary seems inescapable. Indeed, the Canadian English example has been cited repeatedly in the literature with references dating back to 1962.<sup>3</sup> Chambers (1973) notes Bloomfield (1948:62) and McDavid (1963:470) as two non-generative sources of discussion for this phenomenon. Chambers sums up the literature as follows:

The main facts about Canadian Raising were first organized systematically three decades ago by Martin Joos, in a short article entitled "A phonological dilemma in Canadian English" (1942). Since then, they have been cursorily referred to in the literature several times... and have been reorganized in a different theoretical framework... *with no augmentation – and usually a simplification – of Joos's observations* [emphasis mine/JK]. (1973:113)

Thus, the only primary source for the existence of dialect A and dialect B is that of Joos, 1942. The significance of this will become clear very soon. Clearly Halle and his co-workers attribute much importance to this case. It is one of the main arguments for positing language-specific rule ordering. Given the theoretical importance of this example it behooves us to establish beyond doubt its empirical basis. If one wishes to argue against language-specific rule ordering, some alternative account must be found for the Canadian English facts. Such an account naturally must depend of having fairly detailed knowledge of both dialect A and dialect B. Perhaps some other factor is at work here. If this is so then the example may be explained without recourse to rule ordering. Let us turn then to the original source, Joos (1942), and see what is said about the two dialects.

In his article Joos presents the facts more or less as they appear above. The theoretical terms are obviously different (recall this was 1942) but the reformulation appears to accurately reflect Joos' observations. Let us now take up Joos' discussion. He is talking about the voicing process referred to as "t-voicing" above.

In Ontario the voicing of /t/ is a rather recent innovation, to judge by the disagreement among age-groups and cultural groups. The most advanced group is formed by the public-school children: corresponding to my /t/ in the above mentioned context they have a stop which is not

merely voiced, but is voiced lenis [d]. Before it, each syllabic, except perhaps /aj, aw/, has its typical pre-lenis articulation, so that *latter* = *ladder*, *betting* = *bedding*, etc.

Now such speakers divide into two groups according to their pronunciation of words like *typewriter*. Group A says [tēlprēldr] while Group B says [tēlprāldr]. Each group has its own problems. (1942:143)

Joos goes on to say that Group A "...distinguishes *writer* from *rider*, *clouting* from *clouding* by the choice of the diphthong alone" (1942:143). That is, these words are distinguished by whether or not they have undergone Canadian Raising.

What about Group B? Joos states that "...Group B has shifted the articulation of all vowels alike before the new /d/ from earlier /t/, and none of them, not even our two diphthongs, has been split." (1942:144). What this means is that for Group B the diphthongs /aI/ and /aU/ are pronounced [ai] and [aU] before /s/ that have undergone "t-voicing." So *writer* is supposedly pronounced [raldr].<sup>4</sup>

The above paragraph represents the sum total of all that is known about Dialect B – hardly sufficient material to mount a reasonable counterattack against the forces of rule ordering. Nevertheless, Canada is not all that inaccessible and I am a Canadian citizen. It should be a routine matter to track down a speaker of Dialect B and supplement the scanty empirical record.<sup>5</sup> But what are the chances of finding such a speaker? Chambers (1973) is the definitive work on Canadian Raising. What does he have to say about this dialect? Chambers (1973:121) discusses Joos' examples *writer* and *rider*, *clouting* and *clouding* and concludes that "...Dialect B must have the ordering shown in (9a) [voicing before Raising/JK] but Dialect A has the ordering shown in (9b) [Raising before voicing/JK]." He then goes on to state (1973:122), "In the three intervening decades Dialect B has disappeared and Dialect A is ubiquitous throughout heartland Canada." So much for doing fieldwork on Dialect B. It does not exist! In the early seventies, when Chambers wrote his article, there were no remaining speakers of Dialect B. All would indicate that they ceased to exist some time before that period. Let us return to Joos and see what other information is provided about speakers of Dialect B. Perhaps there were only a few octogenarians in his sample.

The only hint of who actually spoke Dialect B is given by Joos' reference to "public-school children" (1942:143). Earlier on the same page he speaks of Ontario and it would be reasonable to assume that his sample group consisted of Ontario public-school children, at least in part. "Public-school" in the North American sense refers to state run schools and the primary and secondary level. "Children" would imply minors, i.e., those under 18 years of age. Joos' closing paragraph gives a clue as to how numerous each respective group was. I quote this paragraph in its entirety.

Meanwhile this phonetic contrast may or may not become a phonemic opposition, according to whether Group A or Group B sets the standard. There is no use guessing which will happen. It would not even help us if we should count noses today, for it may be that the smaller group is gaining recruits faster. I have gone as far as I dare towards predicting a linguistic change; perhaps I have gone too far for the present state of our science: perhaps this sort of prediction is not legitimate. (1942:144)

Joos is unsure of which dialect, A or B, will predominate in years to come. While he does not state which dialect is more common at the time of his writing, it is reasonable to assume that both were fairly well represented in his sample. This gives us the following picture: a group of Ontario public-school children in the early 1940's spoke Dialect B. Taking the most conservative view, let us assume that Joos was dealing with the upper end of the age scale (he could well have been dealing with ten year olds) and that his group consisted of 18 year olds. Assuming that his article was written in 1940 that would place the date of birth of his speakers in roughly 1922. They could have been born a good deal later. Now Chambers writes in 1972<sup>6</sup> that "In the three intervening decades Dialect B has disappeared...". So in 1972 not a single speaker of Dialect B remained! Where did they all go? The oldest members of Joos' sample should have been at most 50 years old in 1972. Even in Canada, people tend to live a good deal longer than that. Are we to believe that every speaker of Dialect B died prematurely? Can ruleordering, whatever its theoretical merits, be bad for your health? Joos can no longer provide any answers. He passed away in 1978. All that remains of Dialect B is the single datum: Joos' transcription of the word "typewriter." Never in the course of theoretical conflict has so much been written by so many about so little. Whatever happened to Dialect B?

## NOTES

1. Various aspects of English tapping are discussed in Harris & Kaye (1988) and Harris (1989).
2. See Chambers (1973) for a detailed account of Canadian Raising. This process has been described in metrical terms by Paradis (1980).
3. Halle (1962:343) is a first example. See also Chomsky & Halle (1968:342) and most recently Bromberger & Halle (1989:58).
4. The reason for the "supposedly" is that Joos provides exactly one datum from dialect B: the pronunciation of *typewriter*.
5. Recall that Joos (1942) is the *only* primary source for these data.
6. I assume a turnaround time of one year for publication. As a former member of the editorial board of the *Canadian Journal of Linguistics* I can say that this is being quite conservative.

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