

A STUDY OF AUXILIARY REDUCTION IN ENGLISH

By

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0. In the body of this paper I examine the English contraction rule *Auxiliary Reduction*, while studying J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*.¹ It may be admitted that the rule is generally neglected or paid little attention to in our school grammar,² and it may be worth reexamining the conditions here under which contraction can occur. This is a preliminary paper, which will be followed later by my own data drawn from the study cooperated with American English speaking informants.

Perrin (1972, 532) describes briefly but clearly:

The term contraction is applied to the written forms of words in which an effort is made to indicate the colloquial pronunciation, usually by substituting an apostrophe for one or more letters of the standard spelling. As a trait of spoken English, contractions abound in Informal usage but are notably rare in Formal.³ In General usage a writer will favor or avoid them just as he makes other rhetorical choices, considering the rhythm of the particular sentence, how much distance he wants between himself and his readers, and whether the subject and the occasion call for a relaxed or a restrained style. Contractions are necessary, of course, in actual representations of speech, as in dialog.⁴

Transformationalists observe this phenomenon and categorize it as the *contraction transformation*.⁵ Roughly speaking, auxiliary reduction types are as follows:

is	} ⇒ [z]	would	} ⇒ [d]	have	⇒ [v]
has	}	had	}		
am	⇒ [m]	are	⇒ [r]	will	⇒ [l]

(*Having, was, were* are not subject to the rule)

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In the study of the reduction forms in J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, three of my students helped me, who were Kazuya Kabuki, Hideko Tsuchie, and Yasue Yoshihara.

Zwicky (1970) states that there are four classes of auxiliaries undergoing reduction: (i) *is, has*; (ii) *would, had*; (iii) *have, will, are*; (iv) *am*. He observes that the reduction takes place:

- (1) only after vowels for classes (ii) through (iv)
- (2) only after pronouns immediately dominated by S in classes (iii) and (iv)
- (3) only after the specific pronoun *I* for class (iv).⁶

1. BE⁷

Technically, all uses of *be* seem to be contracted, but we may find some phonologically restricted instances where no contraction occurs, which will be discussed later.

Zwicky classifies *is* into five types and admits that *is* contracts in all of its uses:

- a) progressive *be* (*He's going*)
- b) passive *be* (*He's criticized every day*)
- c) *be* of identity (*January's the first month of the year*)
- d) *be* of obligation (*He's to go right away*)
- e) predicative *be* with following:
 - adjective (*He's sick*)
 - noun phrase (*He's a farmer*)
 - adverbial of place (*He's in town, He's from Idaho*)
 - adverbial of time (*The concert's tonight*)

1.1 In *Catcher* I find the following instances. (See Table 1)

In the contraction *that's* I find two kinds of *that*: one is a demonstrative pronoun, and the other is a relative pronoun. Among the instances in the former use of *that*, I find the following expressions common: *that's all, that's right, that's because, that's why*. One of the few instances in the latter use of *that* is:

- (1) I know it's only his body and all *that's* in the cemetery 162

1.2 *Is* is contracted in any of the instances, regardless of the type of its predecessor, unlike other variants of *be*:

	he's	she's	it's	that's	-body's	NP's	I'm	we're	you're	they're
Progressive	14	4	3	2	11	6	88		29	16
Passive	2		3			2			8	3
+Adj	18	33	70	43	4	18	69	1	35	22
+NP	19	13	53	54		15	28	1	24	6
+Adverbial	9	9	11	22	1	6	20		13	6
= <i>has</i>	10	3	1		1	2				

(Table 1 BE contraction)

Consonant_____

- (2) My *aunt's* pretty charitable 119
 (3) Do you happen to know whose *band's* at the Taft or the New Yorker, by any chance? 64
 (4) I love it when a *kid's* nice and polite 125
 (5) *New York's* terrible when somebody laughs on the street very late at night. 86
 (6) But if a *girl's* quite young and all 84
 (7) It's not too bad when the *sun's* out 162
 (8) Nothing's the matter, it's just that all my money and *stuff's* in one of my bags. 199

[r]_____

- (9) His *mother's* blind as a bat. 144
 (10) And your *hair's* so lovely. 131
 Vowel_____
- (11) *Daddy's* gonna kill you. 172
 (12) I mean if somebody says the coffee's all ready and it isn't. 191
 what the hell_____
- (13) *what the hell's* in that bag? 212/6 more instances.
 (14) *What the heck's* his name? 101

1.3 Zwicky suggests that we should consider the following examples, all being unacceptable:

- 1) *Tell me where the concert's this evening.
 Cf. The concert's in Royce Hall this evening.
- 2) *I just realized how happy Kurt's these days.
 Cf. Kurt's very happy these days./I just realized how happy Kurt's been these days.
- 3) *Do you know who the king's now?
- 4) *Bert is more distinguished than Jean-Claud's.
 Cf. Bert is more distinguished than Jean-Claud's ever been.
- 5) *Herman is as fond of peanuts as Glo-

ria's of almonds.

Cf. Herman is as fond of peanuts as Gloria's enamoured of almonds.

- 6) *Fafnir is nasty when you tickle him, and Fasolt's when you tell jokes.
 7) *Bruce is thin, and Thelma's too.
 Cf. Bruce is thin, and so's Thelma.

The failure of *Auxiliary Reduction* to apply in these cases, as Zwicky observes, has nothing to do with the preceding context. It might seem that the stress on *is* is too heavy for the contraction rule to apply.

In 1), as well as in 2) and 3), *is* bears stress because it is the last constituent within the VP, other material that originally followed *is* having been removed by transformational rule, and adverbs of the type *this evening*, *these days*, and *now* not falling within the VP. ⁸

In 7), *Thelma's too* and *so's Thelma* have identical stress patterns as Zwicky justly noted, but we find the former unacceptable, while the latter the reverse. In the former we know the constituent following Aux has been removed by deletion transformation, leaving the sentence unacceptable. In the latter, on the other hand, we find *so*, the most common pro-form for predication.

- (15) He's carrying this copy of *Oliver Twist* and *so's she*. 144

Further, I study the instances in which no contraction occurs, the constituent following Aux having been deleted or moved away. ⁹

- 8) I wonder how tall { he is.
 { *he's.
- 9) How tall { they are!
 { *they're!
- 10) I am more evil than { he is.
 { *he's.
- 11) He's at least as evil as { I am.
 { *I'm.
- 12) I am nice to Linda, and
 { you are } to the swan. ¹⁰
 { *you're }

- 13) Mike is building a house, and

{ Tom is }
{ *Tom's } too.

- 14) Akira is tall for a Japanese, and

{ Samoset is }
{ *Samoset's } for a Mic-Mac. ¹¹

- 15) Horace said that his brother is seven feet tall, and

{ so he is. } / { that he is. } /
{ *so he's. } / { *that he's. } /
{ he is. } / { that/which he is. }
{ *he's. } / { *that/which he's. }

- 16) A great man { my father is. }¹²
 { *my father's. }

The following example may show that the reduction is blocked when there exist the stress conditions.

- (16) I don't mean *I'm* oversexed or anything like that—although I *am* quite sexy. 58

Here the second *am* is stressed, being contrasted with the former *am*, which, in its deep structure, is negative *am* (I *am not* oversexed or anything like that—although I *am* quite sexy).

1.4 First observe Table 2 and the instances :

there's	here's	how's	what's	where's	why's	who's
11	7	15	26	3	1	12
who're	what're	how're	where're	that're		
1	6	1	1	1		

(Table 2)

- (17) I can understand somebody going to the movies because *there's* nothing else to do 122

- (18) *Here's* my idea. 137

There's, *here's* are quite usual, but I find no *there're*, *here're* forms in *Catcher*.¹³ Labov (1969, 756) describes the process of a phonetic equivalent to *they* being produced.¹⁴

- (19) 'Well! *How's* Connecticut?' or '*How's* Florida?' 148

- (20) '*How's* your sex life?', I asked him. 150

Zwicky suggests a case, stating that stress restrictions are operative :

- 17) How is |
How's } the weather in Boston?

- 18) How is |
*How's } it in Boston?

(where *is* receives greater stress because of the stresslessness of pronouns like *it*)

- (21) *What's* your name, anyhow, may I ask? -69

- (22) '*What's* the matter?' I said. 183

I read one instance of *has* being contracted, followed by *got to* :

- (23) *What's* old Phoebe *got to* spread out? Nothing. 166

- (24) She did? *Where's* she from? 152

- (25) '*Where's* the light?' I couldn't find the light. 50

- (26) '*Where's* your date?' I asked him. 30

Labov (1969) notes that *Who's it?* with dummy *it* is unacceptable, while *Who's IT?* with lexical *IT* ('the person who is *IT* in a game') is acceptable. In the following first two examples we find *is* after *where*. In such case *Auxiliary Reduction* may or may not occur, only leaving the full form *is* stressed.

- (27) 'The thing is, I had an operation very recently.'

'Yeah? Where?'

'On my wuddayacallit—my clavichord.'

'Yeah? Where the *hell's* that?'

'The clavichord?' I said. 'Well, actually, it's in the spinal canal. I mean it's quite a ways down in the spinal canal.'

- (28) He came in griping about how cold it was out. Then he said, 'Where the hell *is* everybody? It's like a goddam morgue around here.' 44

- (29) No kidding. *Why's* it better in the East? 152

- (30) *Who's* calling me up at this crazy goddam hour? 68

- (31) Where are you? *Who's* with you? 157

- (32) *Who's* this boy? 31

- (33) *Who's* that? 11

- (34) '*Who's* this?' she said. 68

- (35) '*Who's* your date?' he said. 27

In standard English we may find no ambiguity in the form *who's* [hu:z], because no one would interpret it as *whose* [hu:z], in which case he finds no verb in the sentence.

- (36) '*Who're* you going around with now?', I asked him. 151

- (37) *What're* you trying to be—funny? 150

- (38) '*What're* you majoring in?' I asked him. 150

- (39) '*What're* ya gonna do—sleep in Ely's bed' Ackley said. 52

- (40) *How're* all your women? 197

- (41) '*Where're* the mummies, fella?' the kid

said again. 209

- (42) Just because somebody's dead, you don't just stop liking them, for God's sake—especially if they were about a thousand times nicer than the people you know *that're* alive and all. 178

1.5 The reduction of *am*, except after *I*, is less acceptable than the reductions of *have*, *will*, and *are*. *Wh-* + *'m* (*wh-* + *am*) is unacceptable :

- 19) **Why'm* I to go there?
20) **How'm* I to do this?
21) ?*Who am* (?[huwm]) I to see?/, *Who'm* I to see?

1.6 Zwicky states that the condition that only one segment follow the vowel to be deleted prevents the rule from applying to the forms with enclitic *n't*, or to *having* and that there are no double contractions of the type :

- 22) *John'sn't* (only *John's not* / *John isn't*)
23) *we'ren't* (only *we're not* / *we aren't*)
Cf. § 3.5.

1.7 Cedergren and D. Sankoff (1972) show the statistical method of maximum likelihood, listing *gonna* as the firstorder constraint :¹⁵

- .89 ___gonna
.86 Pro ___
.65 V ___
.49 ___Verb
.16 ___NP

0 [+nuc] ___, Pro ___, ___Adj / Loc

- (43) *I'm gonna* start reading some good books. I really am. 200
(44) Relax. *I'm not gonna* sleep here. I wouldn't abuse your goddam hospitality. 52
(45) *You're gonna* miss your ride. 218
I find 8 more instances. We may find the following three types :

- 24) You are going to
 You're going to } miss your ride.
 You're gonna

but not

- 25) **You are gonna* to miss your ride.

1.8 *Auxiliary Reduction* fails to apply even after pronouns when they are the last nouns in coordinate subjects, or the final words in relative clauses, or in various types of reduced relatives :¹⁶

- 26) **You and I're* old friends.
27) **The two men who* said it was they

are (*[ðeyr]) arriving on the midnight plane.

- 28) **The tallest of you are* (*[yuwɹ]) being shipped off to Frederick the Great.

But *is* is acceptable :

- 29) The man I told you about's here. (Cf. *All I need's* an audience. 33)

2. WILL

First, study the types in *Catcher* :

Pro ___	I'll	we'll	you'll	he'll/she'll
	61	5	16	7
	they'll	it'll		
	7	6		

(Table 3)

- (46) What *it'll* fit and, maybe, what it won't. 197
(47) *It'll* depress you. 201
 there ___
(48) *There'll* be oodles of marvellous places to go to. 138
 Noun ___
(49) the *blame'll* be on you, not them 97
(50) *Holden'll* be home on Wednesday, won't he? 184
(51) If he ever gets married, his own *wife'll* probably call him 'Ackley'. 23

2.1 Zwicky states that *Auxiliary Reduction* does not apply after nonpronouns, even those ending in vowels, but in *Catcher* it does :

- 30) **Sue'll* [suwɹ]
31) **Diana'll* [dayænal]
32) **the car'll* [karl]

Also, he states that it does not apply after some pronominal forms (but *who'll* is acceptable) :

- 33) **where'll* [weyɹl] (*Where will you go?*)
 Vowel ___¹⁷
(52) 'Daddy'll kill you!' she said. 171
(53) Mrs *Morrow'll* keep thinking of him now as this very shy, modest guy that wouldn't let us nominate him for president. 61
(54) *Phoebe'll* say right out loud in the movie 72

2.2 As with *am*, *are*, *Auxiliary Reduction* fails to apply after *I*, *you*, *he*, *she*, *we*, *they* and *who* when they are the last nouns in coordinate subjects, or the final words in em-

- 52) *John'd [jand]
 *Sam'd [sæmd]
 *Bill'd [bild]
 *the mob'd [ðə mabd]
- 53) ?The car'd been destroyed. / ?Homer'd go if you let him.

4.1 Pronoun_____

'd = would

- (69) I thought *I'd* go downstairs and see what the hell was going on in the Lavender Room. 71/120 more instances.
- (70) *we'd* know where to get off 7/9 more instances.
- (71) *You'd* be surprised what was going on the other side of the hotel. 65/30 more instances.
- (72) *He'd* have been the king of the hotel. 66/39 more instances. / Also 29 instances of *she'd* type.
- (73) *They'd* know it was me. 71/21 more instances.

'd rather, 'd better forms are often found:

- (74) *I'd rather* be bald than do that. 65/7 more instances.

'd = had

- (75) *I'd* wiped off all the finger prints and all. 109/60 more instances.
- (76) *We'd* gone in to New York that morning for this fencing meet with McBurney School. 7
- (77) He didn't care if *you'd* packed something or not and had it way in the top of the closet. 27/1 more instance.
- (78) *She'd* turned it on low, though, so the maid wouldn't hear it. 181/10 more instances. / Also 16 instances of *he'd* type.
- (79) Not that they would've killed me or anything if *they'd* caught me home 185
 I find *nobody'd*, *somebody'd*, *everybody'd*, *someone'd*, the 'd of each being interpreted as *would* in most of the cases.

- (80) *Everybody'd* think I was just a poor deaf mute bastard and they'd leave me alone. 205
- (81) *somebody'd* stolen my camel's-hair coat right out of my room 8

It'd, and *that'd* are usual in *Catcher*:

- (82) '*It'd* be entirely different,' I said. 138
- (83) I figured it was some perverted bum *that'd* sneaked into the school late at night to take a leaf or something and then wrote it on the wall. 207

I find four instances of *it'd* (= it would), and two instances of *that'd* (= that had) in all.

4.2 Noun_____

4.2.1 After nominal forms with vowel endings. Zwicky states that *would* and *had* do not contract in no other contexts than after vowels. (Cf. 4.2.2)

- (84) And when Allie and I were having some conversation about things in general, old *Phoeb'e'd* be listening. 73
- (85) I laid awake for just a couple of seconds thinking about all that stuff Mr *Antolini'd* told me. 198
- (86) I had a feeling old *Ackley'd* probably heard all the racket and was awake. 49
 The following instance has 'd after adverb:
- (87) I mean I started thinking that even if he was a flit he *certainly'd* been very nice to me. 202

4.2.2 After nominal forms with consonant endings:

- (88) What a *mob'd* be there. 161
- (89) Old *Luce'd* say, 'Certainly.' 149/1 more instance.

4.3 [r]_____

We find ten instances with [r], which phenomenon is marginal according to Zwicky:

- (90) If you was a fish, Mother *Nature'd* take care of you, wouldn't she? 88
- (91) Old *Spencer'd* practically kill himself chuckling and smiling and all, like as if Thurmer was a goddam prince or something. 175
- (92) I knew my *mother'd* get nervous as hell and start to cry 211
- (93) *there'd* be this terrific silence in the back of the car 53
- (94) I kept wanting to kill *whoever'd* written it. 207

4.4 Wh-_____

'd = had

- (95) I wished I knew *who'd* swiped my gloves at Pency, because my hands were freezing. 93
- (96) For instance, if I'd found out at Pency *who'd* stolen my gloves, I probably would've gone down to the crook's room 93

How is exceptional in that *how'd* occurs when [haudʒə] is possible in *how did you*,

how had you, and how would you.

(97) 'What was the trouble?' Mr Antolini asked me. 'How'd you do in English? I'll show you the door in short order if you flunked in English, you little ace composition writer.' (= did) 189

(98) How'd she happen to mention me? Does she go to B. M. now? She said she might go there. She said she might go to Shipley, too. I thought she went to Shipley. How'd she happen to mention me? (= did) 35

After *where* neither *would* nor *had* contracts :

54) *Where'd he gone?

55) *Where'd you go if you had a chance? Note that *did* contracts to [d] quite extensively after *wh*-words :

56) Who'd he see? [huwd]

57) When'd they go? [wend]

58) What'd he want? [wad]

(99) What'd he say to you? 12

(100) 'What'd she say?' I said. 'Did you ask her if she still keeps all her kings in the back row?' 46

(101) 'What'd you do?' I said. 'Give her the time in Ed Banky's goddam car?' 47

(102) What'd you say the name of it was? 168

(103) I laughed, and Mrs Antolini yelled something in to me from the kitchen, but I couldn't hear her. 'What'd she say?' I asked Mr Antolini. 189

(104) 'Where'dja get that hat?' Stradlater said. He meant my hunting hat. He'd never seen it before : 33

(105) If you didn't go to New York, where'd ya go with her? 46

(106) Where'd you go with her if you didn't go to New York? 46

(107) Leave it alone. Why'd he push you down the stairs? 171

English) contraction have never been explored in print in any detail.'

3. It is necessary that we should study linguistic phenomena from a sociolinguistic standpoint. Wolfram and Fasold (1974, 117) note :

$$\begin{bmatrix} -\text{nuc} \\ -\text{son} \\ -\text{con} \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow (\phi) / \begin{bmatrix} -\text{nuc} \\ (+\text{son}) \end{bmatrix}$$

_____ ## ~ ([+nuc])

This rule formally includes only linguistic constraints on variability, but it may be possible to incorporate the types of social constraints ... into such rules as well.

4. Also, Bryant, M. M. (1962), 61-62.

5. In the first-generation transformational grammar, it means introduction of the morpheme Cntr after the modal or *have* or *be* in the auxiliary of a negative sentence : X + *not* -Contr + Y \Rightarrow X + *n't* + Y. In the second-generation, it means a phonological transformation, the contraction rule, which converts a sentence with the full form of the negator *not* into a sentence with the contracted form of *not* ([*nt*]).

Cf. Lees(1960), Chomsky (1962), Jacobs-Rosenbaum(1968).

$$6. \begin{bmatrix} \text{V} \\ -\text{tense} \\ -\text{stress} \\ +\text{auxiliary} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} [+cons] \\ \# \\ \# \end{bmatrix}$$

1	2	3	4	5	\Rightarrow
1	#	ϕ	4	5	

Restrictions

- (a) If 4 is not [z], then 1 is a word ;
- (b) if 4 is not a coronal obstruent ([z] or [d]), then 1 is a segment of a pronominal NP immediately dominated by S ;
- (c) if 4 is [m], then 1 is a segment of the pronoun *I*. (Zwicky, 1970, 333).

Also, Labov (1969, 748).

7. Wolfram and Fasold (1974) found the constraints that affect the output of the contraction rule. The rule is favored :

- 1) if a verb follows : (e. g., *John is going* is more likely to undergo contraction than an example like *John is good* or *John is a man*) ;
- 2) if the preceding word ends in a vowel (e. g., *Joe is going* is favored over *John is going*) ;
- 3) the following constituent, if not a verb, is a noun phrase (e. g., *John is a*

NOTES

1. Penguin Modern Classics edition. 'A study of the language of J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* can be justified not only on the basis of literary interest, but also on the basis of linguistic significance.' (Costello, D. P., 1959)
2. Labov (1969) describes : 'To the best of my knowledge, the rules for SE (i. e. Standard

man is favored over *John is good* or *John is in Chicago*).

See Table 4, and Table 5.

Labov observed another constraint on the output of the contraction rule.

4) If a pronoun preceded (e. g., *He is running*), then contraction is heavily favored.

Labov's data shows that regardless of the preceding vowel or consonant or following constituent, contraction took place in over 97 percent of the cases. If a pronoun preceded, the rest of the constraints can be ignored and contraction applies to every copula and auxiliary.

8. Cf. Chomsky, N. (1965); Lakoff and Ross (1966). Also, Thomas and Kintgen (1974, 186).

Labov (1969) states that it is evident that the grammatical relations between *is* and *are* and the following elements are important. He introduces his own stress rule and a figure.

See FIGURE 1.

9. Cf. Zwicky (1970, 335). Also, King (1970); Lakoff (1969a, b).

10. 'Gapping' (Ross, 1967).

11. 'VP Deletion' (Ross, 1967).

12. 'Topicalization'

13. T. Toda (1975) studied 1273 instances of 'there be' variants from *Time*, *Newsweek*, etc., but found no *there're* instance.

14. Cf. Labov's study of non-standard Negro English (1969).

15. Labov (1969) also shows per cent of full, contracted, and deleted forms of *is*, according to grammatical category of complement. The least deletion and contraction take place before a following noun phrase; more occur before predicate adjectives and locatives; both rules apply with even greater frequency before a following verb with the progressive *-ing*, and with the highest frequency before the future form *gonna*.

16. Cf. Zwicky (1970, 332).

17. In Palmer, F. R. (1974²) we find: *The key'll be waiting*.

	ENVIRONMENT		EXAMPLE	PERCENT DELETED
Preceding vowel	Following verb	{Following noun phrase	(Not possible)	—
		{No following noun phrase	Joe is going	86
Preceding vowel	No following verb	{Following noun phrase	The play is a musical	80
		{No following noun phrase	The tree is in the yard	70
Preceding consonant	Following verb	{Following noun phrase	(Not possible)	—
		{No following noun phrase	The men are going	65
Preceding consonant	No following verb	{Following noun phrase	The women are leaders	37
		{No following noun phrase	The children are fine	25

Table 4 Ranking of three linguistic factors favoring contraction.

FOLLOWING ENVIRONMENTS

PRECEDING ENVIRONMENTS		___gonna	___Verb	___Noun Phrase	___Adj/Locative
C___	Observed	8/9	9/14	18/35	8/32
	Predicted	8.2/9	8.7/14	13.1/35	8/32
V___	Observed	6/6	12/14	51/64	16/23
	Predicted	5.8/6	12.1/14	50/64	17/23
Pro__	Observed	23/23	33/34	30/32	64/65
	Predicted	22.9/23	33.4/34	31/32	62.7/65

Table 5 Observed frequencies of contraction by preceding and following environment with frequencies predicted by a variable rule with probabilities. (Sankoff 1972)

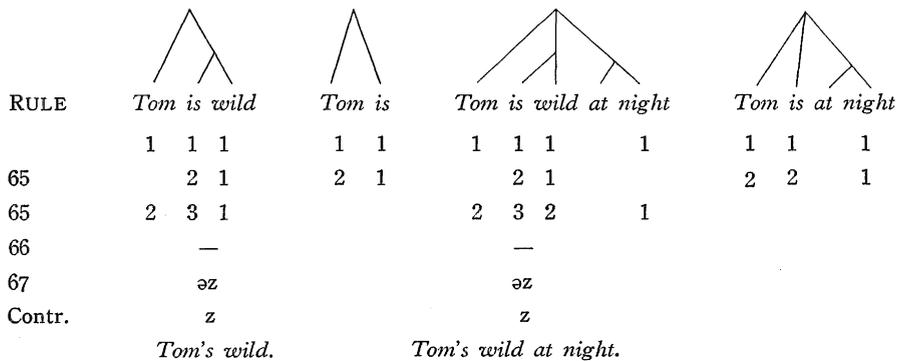


FIGURE 1

Labov (1969, 724)

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