A STUDY OF AUXILIARY REDUCTION IN ENGLISH

By

Masayoshi YAMADA*

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. It may be admitted that the rule is generally neglected or paid little attention to in our school grammar, 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. 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.

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

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{is} & \rightarrow [z] \quad \text{would} \rightarrow [d] \quad \text{have} \rightarrow [v] \\
\text{had} & \rightarrow [d] \\
\text{am} & \rightarrow [m] \quad \text{are} \rightarrow [r] \quad \text{will} \rightarrow [l] \\
(Having, was, were are not subject to the rule)
\end{align*}
\]

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. BE

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:

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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.
A Study of Auxiliary Reduction in English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Progressive</th>
<th>the's</th>
<th>she's</th>
<th>it's</th>
<th>that's</th>
<th>-body's</th>
<th>NP's</th>
<th>I'm</th>
<th>we're</th>
<th>you're</th>
<th>they're</th>
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<td>+ Adj</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>= has</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(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

Vowel

(9) His mother's blind as a bat. 144
(10) And your hair's so lovely. 131

1.3 Zwicky suggests that we should consider the following examples, all being unaccept-able:

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 Gloria'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 noth-ing to do with the preceding context. It might seem that the stress on 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.

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.

8) I wonder how tall he is.
   9) How tall they are!
   10) I am more evil than he is.
   11) He's at least as evil as I am.
   12) I am nice to Linda, and you are to the swan.
13) Mike is building a house, and
   [ Tom is] too.
14) Akira is tall for a Japanese, and
   [Samoset is] 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.]
   [he is.] [that/which he is.]
   [he's.]
16) A great man [my father is.] 12

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 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
(20) ‘How’s your sex life?’, I asked him. 150

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

   17) How is] the weather in Boston?
   How’s
   18) How is] it in Boston?
   *How’s

   (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 Auxiliar 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.’ 101
(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 [huːz], because no one would interpret it as whose [huːz], 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—even 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 (? [hwum]) 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 likeli-
hood, listing gonna as the firstorder con-
straint: 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
You're gonna

miss your ride.

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 (*[0 eyr]) arriving on the midnight
plane.

28) *The tallest of you are (*[yuwr]) 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pro___</th>
<th>I'll</th>
<th>we'll</th>
<th>you'll</th>
<th>he'll/she'll</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>they'll</th>
<th>it'll</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(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 [suwl]
31) *Diana'll [daiwanal]
32) *the car'll [karl]

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

33) *where'll [weyr] (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 pre-
sident. 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 coor-
dinate subjects, or the final words in em-
bedded complements, or the final words in various types of adjective phrases and clauses or of noun phrases and clauses(Cf. Zwicky, 1970, 332):

34) Grace and you will (*[yuwl]*) like it in Manitoba.

35) Knowing who will (*[huwl]*) help us
36) To see you will (*[yuwl]*) be nice
37) The guy next to you will (*[yuwl]*) speak first.
38) Anyone saying it was I will (*[ayl]*) be in deep trouble.
39) A man as tall as he will (*[hiyl]*)

3. HAVE

According to Zwicky, the uses of have fall into three classes:

a) perfective have
b) the main verb have in its central senses of possession, location, availability, etc.
c) the main verb have in various restricted, idiomatic, or derived usages:
   He has a party every night. ('hold', 'give')
   She has a baby every twelve months. ('give birth to')
   I have to write a letter. [Obligation]
   Mildred has Frank pick her up every day at noon. [Causative]

3.1 The forms of perfective have contract freely. Note the tags:

40) He has been watching TV, [hasn’t he? (*doesn’t he?]*

(55) I mean I’ve left schools and places I didn’t even know I was leaving them.

58) ‘How’ve you been, Mrs Spencer?’ I said again

69) Mostly people who’ve never read any of his stories. 91

70) I’m always saying ‘Glad to’ve met you’ to somebody I’m not at all glad I met.

3.2 The forms of have in its central senses do not normally contract in Zwicky’s dialect, but he admits that they do in some British dialects. Note the tags:

41) He has some money left, [hasn’t he? (*doesn’t he?]*

42) *He’s some money left.
43) *I’ve a wart on my nose.
44) *Cecilia’d a car at her disposal.

3.3 The forms of have in its special senses do not contract at all. Note the tags:

45) He has a party every night,
   [hasn’t he? (*doesn’t he?]*

46) *He’s a party every night.
47) *She’s a baby every twelve months.
48) *Mildred’s Frank pick her up every day at noon.

3.4 Wh-

58) ‘How’ve you been, Mrs Spencer?’ I said again
59) Mostly people who’ve never read any of his stories. 91

60) I’m always saying ‘Glad to’ve met you’ to somebody I’m not at all glad I met.

3.5 Double contraction

There are no double contractions like:

49) we’ve’n’t (only we’ve not, we haven’t)

50) we’d’n’t have (only we wouldn’t have, we wouldn’t’ve)

51) He’d go
52) Mary’d go
53) Kermit and Kay’d gone by the time we arrived.

Also the following type:

68) You’d’ve thought I wanted to marry them or something. 74/4 more instances.

4. WOULD / HAD

Zwicky observes that would and had contract after vowels, but they contract in no other contexts. Some cases with [r] are marginal.

51) He’d go
52) Mary’d go
53) Kermit and Kay’d gone by the time we arrived.
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 *Phoebe'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 [hau̯dza] 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

NOTES

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 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:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{[nuc]} \rightarrow (\phi)/ \text{[nuc]} \\
\text{[con]} \rightarrow \text{[son]} \\
\end{align*}
\]

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.

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 (\[\text{int}\]).


6. \[ \begin{array}{cccc}
\text{[tense]} & \text{[+cons]} & \text{[+auxiliary]} \\
\text{[stress]} & \# & \phi & 4 & 5 \\
\end{array} \]
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) if the following constituent, if not a verb, is a noun phrase (e.g., John is a
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 proceeded (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 proceeded, the rest of the constraints can be ignored and contraction applies to every copula and auxiliary.


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.


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.


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.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preceding vowel</th>
<th>Following verb</th>
<th>Following noun phrase</th>
<th>Percent Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preceding vowel</td>
<td>Following verb</td>
<td>No following noun phrase</td>
<td>Joe is going 86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preceding vowel</td>
<td>No following verb</td>
<td>Following noun phrase</td>
<td>The play is a musical 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preceding vowel</td>
<td>No following verb</td>
<td>No following noun phrase</td>
<td>The tree is in the yard 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preceding consonant</td>
<td>Following verb</td>
<td>Following noun phrase</td>
<td>(Not possible) —</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preceding consonant</td>
<td>Following verb</td>
<td>No following noun phrase</td>
<td>The men are going 65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preceding consonant</td>
<td>No following verb</td>
<td>Following noun phrase</td>
<td>The women are leaders 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preceding consonant</td>
<td>No following verb</td>
<td>No following noun phrase</td>
<td>The children are fine 25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Ranking of three linguistic factors favoring contraction.

Wolfram and Fasold (1974, 119)
Table 5 Observed frequencies of contraction by preceding and following environment with frequencies predicted by a variable rule with probabilities. (Sankoff 1972)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preceding Environments</th>
<th>gonna</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Noun Phrase</th>
<th>Adj/Locative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>8/9</td>
<td>9/14</td>
<td>18/35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Predicted</td>
<td>8.2/9</td>
<td>8.7/14</td>
<td>13.1/35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>6/6</td>
<td>12/14</td>
<td>51/64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Predicted</td>
<td>5.8/6</td>
<td>12.1/14</td>
<td>50/64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro_</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>23/23</td>
<td>33/34</td>
<td>30/32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Predicted</td>
<td>22.9/23</td>
<td>33.4/34</td>
<td>31/32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 Observed frequencies of contraction by preceding and following environment with frequencies predicted by a variable rule with probabilities. (Sankoff 1972)
A Study of Auxiliary Reduction in English


