

Canadian Raising, Opacity and Rephonemicization

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It is entirely appropriate that the *Canadian English in the Global Context* conference should be held exactly 30 years following the publication of Jack's book *Canadian English: Origins and Structures*. I will offer here a small contribution on the suprisingly long-lived debate on The "Raised" Diphthongs. I will argue that recent efforts by Mielke, Armstrong and Hume 2003 (MAH) to revive Joos's 1942 phonemic splitting analysis and to deny the existence of allophonic opacity are incorrect, and I will offer new evidence of active alternation which also exhibits typical "poverty of the stimulus" characteristics.

Joos 1942 describes the basic pattern of raised diphthongs before voiceless consonants leading to the familiar alternations in (1).

- (1) a. knife [nʌyf] b. knives [nayvz]

Joos goes on to describe two dialects of Canadian English, A and B, which differ in their pronunciation of the word "writer." Chomsky 1964: 73-74 and Chomsky and Halle 1968: 342 famously analyze the dialect difference as a matter of rule ordering. Chambers 1975: 89-90 shows the derivations for the two dialects for "writer" and "rider", repeated in (2).

(2)	Dialect A	/rayt-ʔ/	/rayd-ʔ/	Dialect B	/rayt-ʔ/	/rayd-ʔ/
	Raising	rʌytʔ	----	Voicing	raydʔ	(vacuous)
	Voicing	rʌydʔ	----	Raising	----	----
		[rʌydʔ]	[raydʔ]		[raydʔ]	[raydʔ]

Dialect A maintains a distinction in surface pronunciation through the opaque application of Raising, whose environment is obscured by the later application of Voicing. MAH see the matter differently, however, it "can be described transparently" (p. 130) by phonemicizing the raised diphthong, "outputs such as riding/writing show the 'opaque' vowel quality forms a minimal contrast in the language." (p. 131) Alternations such as those in (1) are then lexically listed as morphological relics, parallel to the fricative voicing also displayed in (1). Thus, following Lexicon Optimization, the concept KNIFE then has two allomorphs, /nʌyf/ and /nayv/. They further claim that Raising is being limited, for instance Bermudez-Otero (2003) contrasts Eiffel [ʌy] with eyeful [ay]. I think this is better explained by residual secondary stress on the suffix -ful; such stress would block raising, as noted by Chambers 1975: 94. Their account relies crucially on the non-existence of active phonological alternations involving Raising. However, such alternations do exist, even though they are difficult to construct. One example is the ordinal suffix -th, as in ninth [nʌynθ] which is pronounced with raising. Of course one could argue from cases such as five/fifth that small ordinals are morphologically irregular. However, productive use of -th can be found in mathematical contexts when referring to arbitrary sequences of elements. Phrases such as "the ith element" (> 9400 hits on Google) or even "the yth element" (17 hits on Google) are commonplace in computer science texts. The pronunciations of these words do exhibit raising: [ʌyθ], [wʌyθ]. Clearly such words do not form part of the "primary linguistic experience" of the child, forming a classic poverty of the stimulus argument.

It is also possible to construct further opaque cases involving phrasal degemination. I have a clear contrast between the sentences in (3) when spoken in a casual style at a conversational rate.

- (3) a. He lied to me. [hɪlɪɪtəmi] b. Don't lie to me. [dɒŋlɪtəmi]

The past tense -d prevents the application of raising in (3a) but this is subsequently merged with the following /t/, ultimately pronounced as a flap. When the -d is not present, raising does occur, (3b). Such syntactic constructions cannot be handled by MAH, demonstrating conclusively that Canadian Raising is alive and well, just as Chambers documented 30 years ago.