The Man Gives an Apple to the Lobster:

Rule Reordering in Acadian

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1. Introduction

One feature of Acadian French is the pronuncia-tion of words like homme [um] "man", donne [dun] "gives' pomme [pum] "apple" and homard [humɒ:r] "lobster". The: words all have a mid back rounded vowel in Standard French and a high back rounded vowel in Acadian:

(1) orthography	Standard French	Acadian French	
homme	[ɔm]	[um]	"man
donne	[dɔn]	[dun]	"gives
pomme	[pɔm]	[pum]	"apple"
homard	[omɑ:r]	[humɒ:r]	"lobster"

Lucci (1972,41) suggests that this [u] pronunciation derives from a phonetic closing influence of a nasal consonant on a preceding vowel. He then concludes that derived forms like pommier [pumje] "apple tree" and donner [dune] "to give" are due to analogical extension of the [u]. This paper will attempt to show that there is no historical basis for Lucci's claim and that an

alternative explanation can account not only for the Acadian data but also for the data of another set of dialects in France. The framework for the argument is supplied by generative phonological theory.

The principal concept underlying generative diachronic studies is that language change is due to changes in the rule system which describes the organization of a language (Halle 1962, King 1969, Kiparsky 1968). Within this conception of language, rules can be added, lost, re-ordered or changed internally.

If the addition of rules to a grammar can account for historical change, and if two such rules are involved, there are five possible categories of results with respect to these rules. The simplest outcome is that neither rule applies and no change occurs. It is also possible that only one of the two rules is incorporated into the grammar. This would have two separate effects: Rule 1 applies but not Rule 2, or Rule 2 applies but not Rule 1. There are similarly two possibilities if both rules apply: either they are ordered so that Rule 1 precedes Rule 2 or so that Rule 2 precedes Rule 1. If the output of one of these rules is affected by the other, then ordering can be a significant factor and will be reflected in the succeeding stages of the language. Such

a theory would predict that there would be dialects reflecting each one of these possibilities. These possibilities are listed in (2).

> (2) a) No application--no change
>
> b) Application of Rule # 1 only
>
> c) Application of Rule # 2 only
>
> d) Application of Rule # 1
>
> followed by Rule # 2
>
> e) Application of Rule # 2
>
> followed by Rule # 1

This paper will propose that two rules were added to the grammars of Standard French and Acadian French during the seventeenth century and that the differences shown in the stressed vowels in (1) reflect the two possible orders for these rules. It will also point out evidence illustrating all five possible outcomes listed in (2).

2. Historical Setting

The etymological sources for the words in (1) are shown in (3):

> (3) C. L. hŏmĭnem   >   homme
>
> C. L. dōnáre   >   donner
>
> C. L. póma   >   pomme
>
> O. Scand. humarr > homard

The mid vowels of the modern Standard French examples
in (3) have four separate historical sources, namely
C. L. / ŏ, ó, ō/ and Old Scandinavian /u/.

Through a number of changes in Gallo-Romance
and Old French the reflexes of C. L. ó became [ø] and
[u] (Pope 1934). This meant that there was no stressed
[o] in late Old French. Scribal tradition continued to
use "o" to represent [u] until the thirteenth century.
At the end of the twelfth century there was a change in
the situation when O. F. [ɔ] began to close to [o].
This change rendered orthographic "o" inadequate as a
sufficient device to distinguish between [o] and [u]. A
new custom of spelling [u] as "ou" was therefore begun
early in the thirteenth century (Bourciez 1967, 290; Pope
§ 698). This convention is still followed today.

Apart from this general shift in phonemic struc-
ture there were a number of subsequent changes involving
the mid back vowels, culminating in the sixteenth century
with an additional raise of M. F. closed [o] to [u] in
words like arroser "to water, sprinkle", gros "big,
fat", chose "thing" and tôt "soon", and so on. There
was a great deal of controversy over the social accept-
ability of these pronunciations during the late six-
teenth and seventeenth centuries with the result that

the words lowered to [o]. During the controversy a verb chouser was formed which meant "to pronounce [u]". The verb was derived from the [u] pronunciation of chose "thing" (Poirier 1928,97).

Lucci (1972,41) makes reference to this controversy when he discusses chose and arroser in the Acadian of the Moncton area where they are pronounced [šuz] and [aruze]. He treats the [u] in these words as though it were related to the [u] which occurs before a nasal consonant in homme, pomme and so on. This view is historically inaccurate as the changes in the seventeenth century outlined below point out.

3. The Seventeenth Century Rule
   Additions

It is well established (Pope 1933 § 461) that [u] before a nasal consonant was nasalized during the sixteenth century. In this connection Palsgrave (1530) wrote:[1]

> If m or n folowe next after o in a frenche word both in one syllable, then shal the o be sounded almost lyke this diphthonge ou and something in the noose: as these words mon . . . shal be sownded moun . . . ; and in lyke wyse shall o be sownded though the next syllable followynge begynne with an other m or n, as in these wordes home, somme, bonne, tonnerre whiche they sound houme, boune, soumme, and tounner.[2] (Pope 1934 § 461)

Bovelles (1533) states,"Dans homme, somme, comme, sonne, tonne, les consonnes que suivent l'o diminuent de moitie le son qui lui est propre, c'est-a-dire lui donne le son nasal". These same ideas are presented by Meigret (1542), Behourt (1620), Wodroephe (1625), Martin (1632), Lonchamps (1637), Duez (1639) and Chifflet (1659). For the sake of convenience we will take Wodroephe (1625) as a fixed chronological point representing this pronunciation:

> O . . . changeth its sound being joynd to m, n or u then the french do sound it as we do double ao (oo) and that generally throughout the whole tongue: as homme, mon . . . comme, somme, vous.

The words in (4) present this pronunciation:

(4)

	homme	donne	pomme	homard	pont	bon
1625	[ũmə]	[dũnə]	[pũmə]	[ũmɑr]	[pũ]	[bũ]

During the seventeenth century rules which had the diachronic effect of lowering all [u] to [ɔ̃] were added to the grammar of French. Although the post facto effect was of a single rule lowering [ũ] > [ɔ̃], there seem to have been two stages. The first stage lowered [ũ] before a nasal consonant. This would affect words like homme, donne, pomme, and homard but not pont [pũ] "bridge" and bon [bũ] "good". The first mention of this lowering is in Oudin (1633):

> L'o francais se prononce fort ouvert, contre
> l'opinion fort impertinente de ceux qui le
> veulent prononcer comme ou, quand il est devant
> m ou n; car ceux qui parlent bien ne disent iamais
> houme, coume, boune, etc. (Thurot II,521)

Oudin's use of the term "fort ouvert" indicates that the change was directly from [u] to [ɔ̃].

The second stage in the lowering applied to [u] not followed by a nasal consonant. D'Allais (1681) indicates that "o devant une m ou une n rendant un son mitoyen entre o et ou pourroit bien constituer une dixième voyelle, exemple: homme, ombre, honte, garçon" (Thurot II,513). It is clear from this that nasalized [u] had by this time also lowered.

For expository purposes we will treat this two stage lowering as a single process and call it Nasal Vowel Lowering. Nasal Vowel Lowering seems to have become fixed very rapidly, for only thirteen years later, in 1694, Dangeau wrote, "Il y a des provinces dans lesqueles on prononce un ou nasal et ou l'on dit boun au lieu de dire bon" (Thurot II,513), indicating that a lowered nasal vowel was already firmly established and that the absence of lowering was a social stigma.

(5) Nasal Vowel Lowering

	homme	donne	pomme	homard	pont	bon
A 1633	[ɔ̃mə]	[dɔ̃nə]	[pɔ̃mə]	*[ɔ̃mɑr]	--	--
B 1681	--	--	--	--	[pɔ̃]	[bɔ̃]

Shortly after the onset of nasal vowel lowering, a second major rule was introduced. This second rule denasalized all [ɔ̃] sounds followed by a nasal consonant. Hindret (1687)(Thurot II,522) provides the first clear statement of the results of this rule when he condemns provicials "who pronounce the first syllable of the words gomme, homme, pomme, bonne like the words pompe, bonté." Dumas (1733) and Antonini (1753)(Thurot II,513) both speak of an [u] pronunciation as being a provincialism. Antonini goes so far as to call it "cette prononciation vicieuse". Féraud (1761) writes: "Autrefois on prononcait en ou l'o devant l'm et l'n suivie d'un e muet; on disoit houme, Roume, liounne. . . . Plusieurs, parmi les vieux surtout, ont conservé cette mauvaise prononciation." (Thurot II,524). This second major rule we will call Denasalization.

(6) Denasalization

	homme	donne	pomme	homard	pont	bon
1687	[ɔmə]	[dɔnə]	[pɔmə]	*[ɔmɑr]	--	--

There are then, two diachronic rules which

changed the pronunciation of homme, pomme and donne from
[ũmə], [pũmə] and [dũnə] in the beginning of the seven-
teenth century, to [ɔmə], [pɔmə], [dɔnə] by the end of
the century, namely Nasal Vowel Lowering and
Denasalization.

These two rules interacted as outlined in (7) to
yield the present pronunciations:

(7) Seventeenth-century changes leading to
    Standard French

	homme	donne	pomme	pont	bon
1625	[ũmə]	[dũnə]	[pũmə]	[pũ]	[bũ]
Nasal Vowel Lowering					
A 1633 (Oudin)	[ɔ̃mə]	[dɔ̃nə]	[pɔ̃mə]	--	--
B 1681 (D'Allais)	--	--	--	[pɔ̃]	[bɔ̃]
Denasalization					
1687 (Hindret)	[ɔmə]	[dɔnə]	[pɔmə]	--	--

4. The Origins of Acadian [u + N]

In one variety of Acadian French the words pont
and bon occur as [pãw̃] and [bãw̃]. Their relationship to
sixteenth century [pũ] and [bũ] is not immediately
apparent. A comparison of son "his, her" with son
"sound" clarifies this relationship. Son "his, her" is not
stressed as it always occurs in pre-nominal position and
stress occurs only on phrase final words in Acadian (as in

S. F.). This word is always [sõ], with a mid nasal mon-
ophthong. <u>Son</u> "sound" on the other hand is a noun and as
such occurs in stress position. This dialect of Acadian
then must have a rule which diphthongizes stressed [õ]
to [ãw]. It is then clear that [paw] and [baw] can be
derived diachronically from sixteenth century [pu] and
[bu] by a lowering rule and a diphthongizing rule. The
same process is possible for <u>comté</u> [kõte] "county",
<u>bonté</u> [bõte] "goodness" and so on. That is the same
nasal vowel lowering rule which applied to seventeenth
century "standard" French also applied to Acadian French.

 At the same time words like <u>homme</u>, <u>donne</u>, <u>pomme</u>
have not participated in the lowering process, although
they have oral vowels. It is therefore certain that
denasalization applied. If we assume that both lowering
and denasalization applied to historical Acadian as they
did in Standard French then we cannot account for all the
data. If, however, these two rules applied in the
opposite order, then we can very nicely derive Acadian:

(8) Seventeenth-century changes leading
  to Acadian French

	homme	donne	pomme	pont	bon
1625	[ũmə]	[dũnə]	[pũmə]	[pũ]	[bũ]
Denasalization					
	[umə]	[dunə]	[pumə]	--	--

Nasal vowel lowering

        --   --   --   [pɔ̃]   [bɔ̃]

Diphthongization (date unknown)

        --   --   --   [paw̃]   [baw̃]

5. The Lobster Problem

This leaves us with Acadian <u>homard</u> [humɒːr] "lobster" from the original set of words with [u] listed under (1). The first appearance in French texts of the word <u>homard</u> is in 1532, and it is spelled <u>houmar</u>. In 1614 it is spelled <u>houmart</u> by Marc Lescarbot in his <u>Histoire de la Nouvelle France</u> which he wrote after spending a year at Port Royal (today Annapolis Royal, Annapolis County, Nova Scotia). This spelling clearly indicated a high back rounded vowel. Given the facts con cerning nasalization during this time it is reasonable to assume that this vowel was nasalized [ũ].

There is no problem with explaining this word in Acadian; it simply derives from its sixteenth-century form by the usual ordering of denasalization and lowering. In Standard French, however, it has a closed [o] rather than the anticipated open [ɔ] produced by the nasal vowel lowering rule.

In modern Standard French there is a partial alternation between closed [o] and open [ɔ] such that

open [ɔ] never occurs in an open stressed syllable.
Morphophonemic alternations like [ɔs] os "bone" ～ [o]
os "bones" illustrate this.   There is also a tendency for
[ɔ] to occur only in closed syllables, although there
are exceptions.   It is only through appeal to this alter-
nation that any explanation of the [o] of S. F. [oma:r]
can be made.

On superficial examination words like zône
"zone", aumone "alms", baume "balsam" which all contain
[o] could provide evidence that they raised from [ɔ]
because of a closing influence of the nasal consonant.
However, this explanation would leave hôte "host", vôtre
"yours", and rose [ro:z] "pink" unaccounted for.   All of
these words have etymologies different from those words
which had become [u] during Old French.   The hôte group
closed from [ɔ] to [o] in the Middle French period and
were involved in the ouiste controversy of the seventeenth
century.

Lucci (1972,41), in a side comment, suggests
that the closed [o] of French baume "balsam" is retained
because of the influence of the orthography au.   Since
baume evolved its closed [o] in Middle French we can
assume that it maintains this value for whatever reason
that [o] is maintained in vôtre, hôte, rose and so on.

These words have historically had [o] since the six-
teenth century and although it would be descriptively
convenient for them to open to [ɔ], so that we could show
a nice alternation of [o] in open syllables and [ɔ] in
closed syllables, it seems that they have no intention of
so changing. Furthermore it is not consistent on the
part of Lucci to attribute the [u] in Acadian homme [um]
to the phonetic closing influence of N and to say that
the [o] of baume is closed in S. F. because of the ortho-
graphy. This inconsistency is accented by the [o] of
Acadian embaumer [ãbome] "to embalm", the only sponta-
neous form I was able to elicit, where the [o] occurs in
an open syllable.

6. Conclusion

It is evident in all of the above discussion
that seventeenth-century nasal vowel lowering applied only
to nasalized [ũ] and that words like chose (chouse) with
oral [u] were unaffected by it. The preservation of
historical [u] in nous, vous, touche, louve, bouge and so
on indicates that the ouiste controversy of the seven-
teenth century affected only words which were raised by a
recent raising rule which Bèze (1584) indicates may have
originated in Bourges or Lyon (Thurot I,240). If this
is the case, then it is possible that the raising rule

may have been adopted into proto-Acadian, and that with-
out a firm central literary influence subsequent to its
adoption, it was retained. If this is so, then the fact
that Acadian has both homme [um] and chose [šuz] is
accidental: the result of two separate phonema and is
not due to some common phonetic closing influence of [m]
and [z]. In addition if we were to accept that Acadian
[u + N] were the result of a phonetic closing influence
of nasal consonants we would be very hard put to explain
how seventeenth-century vowel lowering (opening) could
happen when it would be in direct violation of the closing
principle.

In addition, Lucci's conjecture that the high
vowel of pommier [pumje] "apple tree", and donner [dune] "to
give" is the result of analogical extension from [pum]
and [dun] is unnecessary. A theory of language change
which incorporates rules like those proposed above obvi-
ates the need for ad hoc conjecture of this sort.

In the introduction to this question of rule
governed language change it was pointed out that the
theory had the power to predict five possible outcomes
with respect to any two rules. The following data are
drawn from the Atlas Linguistique de la France and illus-
trate these five possibilities as they relate to Nasal

Vowel Lowering and Denasalization.

(9) Possible outcomes of Nasal Vowel Lowering
and Denasalization

a) No application--no change

ALF Map #	Item	Location	Form
243	charogne	509	[šarũñ]
1056	pomme	533	[pũm]
1059	pondre	611	[pũnə]

b) Nasal lowering only (difficult to be certain)

147	bon/bonne	445	[bõ/bõn]

c) Denasalization only

147	bon/bonne	614,624	[bũ/bun]

d) Rules ordered # 1 - Nasal vowel lowering

   # 2 - Denasalization   } S. F.

   [bɔ̃/bɔn]

e) Rules ordered # 2 - Denasalization

   # 1 - Nasal vowel lowering } A. F.

   [bãw̃/bun]

147	bon/bonne	504	[bõ/bun]
147	bon/bonne	409	[bõ/bun]

A descriptive device which can account for such a
wide variety of data in such a straightforward fashion
ought to be highly valued.

Footnotes

[1]References to sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth century works are taken either from Pope (1933) or Thurot (1881).

[2]For another interpretation of this quote see Rochet (1976:109).

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