

Liaison in the PFC corpus: description and conceptual implications
Marie-Hélène Côté
University of Ottawa

The international project "Phonologie du français contemporain" (PFC; Durand et al. 2002, 2009) offers an exceptionally rich empirical basis for the study of contemporary spoken French, with an emphasis on dialectal variation. It has led in particular to a renewal of the analysis of liaison, whose theoretical accounts have often been based on meager, inconsistent and questionable data (see Morin 1987). Based on conversational data from the PFC corpus, this talk offers:

- (1) A description of liaison in Laurentian French;
- (2) A discussion of some of the implications of these facts for the analysis of liaison.

The PFC corpus currently includes data from 9 geographically dispersed locations in the Laurentian domain. Conversational data from 43 speakers and 4 locations (Quebec City, Chicoutimi, Trois-Rivières and Peace River, Alberta) have been transcribed and coded for liaison according to the common PFC protocol, yielding a total of more than 5300 potential liaison sites and more than 2300 realized liaison consonants. These data allow a comparison with earlier descriptions of liaison in Laurentian French, based on the the 1971 Sankoff-Cedergren Montreal French corpus (van Ameringen 1977; van Ameringen & Cedergren 1981; de Jong 1993), as well as a reexamination of some of the classic assumptions in the analysis of liaison (see Côté 2011 for a review). Of particular interest here is the relationship between the liaison consonant and the context in which it is inserted. Since Schane (1965), it is commonly assumed that liaison consonants are attached to the preceding word and that liaison contexts are defined independently from the liaison-triggering words, i.e. in general syntactic or prosodic terms (e.g. between a specifier and a head or within a prosodic phrase). This conception has been challenged by Bybee's (2000, 2001, 2005) lexicalist account, in which liaison consonants belong to lexicalized schemas that integrate both the liaison-triggering word or category and the following context (e.g. [*un* [n] NOUN]) (see also Chevrot et al. 2007, 2009). Our corpus data provide evidence against the former view in establishing that liaison depends on characteristics of the transition between the categories preceding and following the liaison consonant. More specifically, liaison appears to be productive after lexical items associated with low uncertainty over the lexical category that may follow it (a measure of entropy).

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