

ONE RULE OF NEWS ENGLISH:
GEOGRAPHICAL, SOCIAL, AND HISTORICAL SPREAD

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A rule characteristic of the language of news is deletion of the determiner in name appositions. The rule deletes the definite article, indefinite article or possessive to produce noun phrases such as:

- (1) [the] *race relations conciliator Hiwi Taurua*
[a] *local resident Beth Anderson*
[his] *'Chips' series co-star Erik Estrada*

This paper reports work in progress on the variable rule of determiner deletion.¹ My analyses of both the syntax and semantics of the rule, and the quantitative data, are still preliminary. The data are some 3500 tokens of NPs which meet the structural description for determiner deletion. Most of these were collected as part of studies of news language in New Zealand during 1974 and 1984, and in the United States and United Kingdom in 1980-82. Historical data for the period 1920-80 come from British newspapers.

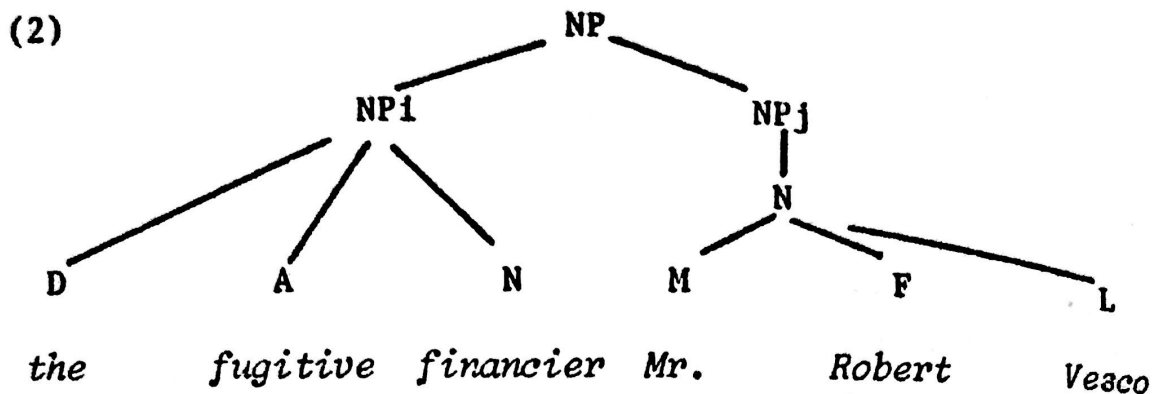
The sample is drawn from news in all media - radio, television, and newspapers. It consists only of 'hard' news, not current affairs, editorials, or the like. It excludes special-topic news such as sports or finance except where these occur within general news pages or bulletins. A few tokens of particular interest were gleaned from other media such as magazines, or from other content types such as photo captions.²

I will not be concerned with formal statement of the rule, but rather with exemplifying its syntactic operation and semantic repercussions. The latter part of the paper focuses on the extra-linguistic factors which affect the application of determiner deletion, since it is a variable rule. These factors are geographical - different English-speaking countries apply this rule at different frequencies; social - different media

apply the rule differentially depending on the status of their audiences; and historical - application of the rule has changed across time.

The structure

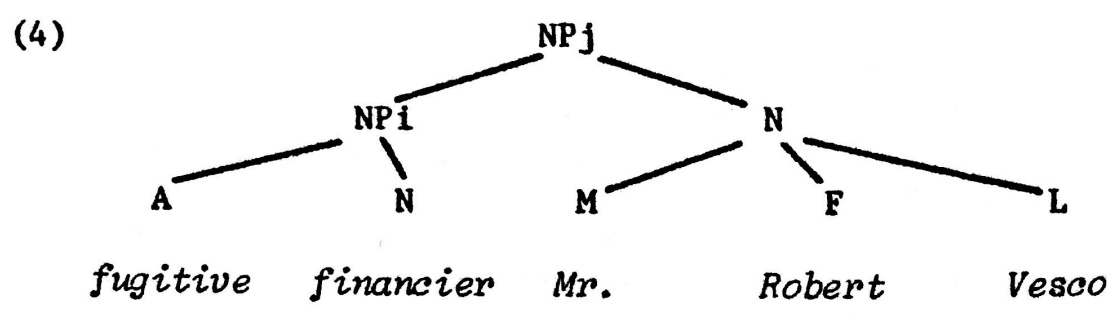
The rule of determiner deletion applies to structures of the form:³



The rule deletes the determiner in a descriptive NP which precedes an apposed name NP. The proper name typically refers to a person, but occasionally may denote an animal or a corporate entity. The personal name N must contain an L term as head,⁴ with M and/or F also present. The rule applies only when the descriptive NP1 precedes the name NPj. When the name NP precedes, the rule is inapplicable:

(3) *Mr. Robert Vesco the fugitive financier*

The syntactic change made by the rule is not purely one of a deletion which leaves the remaining structure untouched. In the input structure, the first, descriptive NP1 is the primary term of the apposition. The rule takes it and embeds it under the second, name NPj:



The first NP of an appositional phrase is the primary NP. The second NP is in some sense parenthetical to and explanatory of the first, regardless of whether the descriptive or name NP comes first. The written form invites a comma between the two NPs of the apposition, marking the parenthetical nature of the second NP. Indeed, newspapers once used to write

the second NP of the apposition in parentheses.

From the embedding of NP_i under NP_j, there follows a subtle but definite semantic change. NP_i is no longer the primary NP, for the name has become head of the whole expression. Yet NP_i seems to retain much of its force, while the name N is elevated to equal emphasis with it. The two apposed NPs become one NP. Two tone groups become one group which confers similar stress on its two parts. Determiner deletion thus creates a structure which serves the purposes of news language well. It compresses an expression while simultaneously strengthening its emphasis.

Titles

The embedding also confers on the NP_i expression something which it did not previously possess: titleness. It shifts out of the category of clear common count nouns and takes on a status akin to titles such as:

- (5) *Professor Butterworth*
President Reagan
Bishop Reeves
Lord Carrington
Major-General Thornton
Inspector Hound
Herr Schmidt

The test of a full title is that - like the M-terms *Mr.*, *Ms.* etc. - it can be followed by last name only, without the need for an intervening first name (or M-term). It is usually capitalized, and there is a large but more or less closed set of such titles within a language or speech community. In the sample I have collected, titles fall into just seven classes:

- (6) Professional: *Doctor, Professor*
- Political: *President, Chancellor, Alderman*
- Religious: *Bishop, Cardinal, Mother*
- Honours: *Dame, Earl, Countess*
- Military: *General, Corporal*
- Police: *Commissioner, Constable, Detective-Sergeant*
- Foreign: *Monsieur, Senorita*

Titles generally substitute for, and cannot co-occur with, M-terms, but two titles may in fact be aggregated in front of a name:

- (7) **President Mr. Reagan*
**Lady Mrs. Beattie*

Field-Marshal Earl Haig
Captain the Lord Claud N. Hamilton

The category of title has fluid boundaries. Certain items, such as those in (5) and (6) above, seem well frozen as titles. Nevertheless, most of them can still be used (uncapitalized) as count nouns (*the doctors, six aldermen*). They still evidence the ability to slide out of the category. In (8), *president* denotes not a head of state - its unmarked reference - but the head of another, non-state entity: the New Zealand Berryfruit Growers' Federation:

(8) *president Richard Somerfield*

Such usage leaves us confused over the status of the title, a confusion focused in our uncertainty over whether to capitalize. Similar confusion strikes when the title is modified by an adjective or past participle, a property which draws it back into the category of common noun:

(9) *assassinated President John Kennedy*

Conversely, alien items can sometimes exhibit properties we normally consider exclusive to titles, e.g. by taking last name only. Nouns which try to slip into the title category rather than out of it, again present us with an unclear choice over capitalization:

(10) *reporter Checkley*
cameraman Stubbs

Pseudo-titles

Semantically, determiner deletion elevates a description to the level of a pseudo-title. It implies that this person belongs to a class of human beings as exclusive as the clergy, military or nobility. It implies a uniqueness, even when we know a person's label is very common. Full titles usually represent a unique or near-unique position - that is, countries have only one president, armies have few generals, churches have few bishops. This same aura of the exclusive club clings to the pseudo-title even when it is clearly unwarranted - with *barmaid* or *decorator* in this list of titles from just a few 1980 issues of the British newspapers, the *Sun* and the *Daily Mirror*:

(11) *barmaid*
champion
Englishman
defiant housewife
Svengali starmaker
homeless refugee

politician husband
sexy fraulein
silly walker
bungling criminal
sultry actress
City financial wizard
George Medal winner
former Labour Industry Minister
Catholic father of four

However, almost all the pseudo-titles in (11) can claim an exclusive reference. That is, there is a small - or at least select - group of champions, politician husbands, City financial wizards and former Labour Industry Ministers.

For the media, a title embodies a person's claim to be newsworthy. Such people speak from their eminence as president, professor, bishop or princess. The pseudo-title embodies a perhaps obscure person's claim to the same news fame.

Given enough media exposure, a pseudo-title may develop unique reference to one individual. *Fugitive financier* was for a time Robert Vesco's label as exclusively as - in the United States - *President* is Reagan's. John Derek is (we are given to understand) *THE one and only Svengali starmaker*, and Joan Collins *THE sultry actress par excellence*.

Conferring titles on everyone mentioned in the news means that all people in the news are special. But paradoxically, if everyone is special, no one is. This is part of the effect caused by creating innumerable ad hoc classifications as listed in (11). The latent ridicule can rise to the surface, as in a *Guardian* theatre review's reference to actors' roles and names (capitalization as printed):

(12) *Signalman Montague*
Mysterious Stranger Richardson

The syntactic correlate of the invited semantic interpretation of exclusiveness is that deletion invites the reinsertion of the definite article as the missing determiner, even when this reading is improbably or impossible. That is, when we try to reinstate the deleted determiner, we invariably tend to *the*, even when - as in many of the examples in (11) - context demands indefinite article. This syntactic effect is arguably in some sense the cause of the semantic implication of exclusiveness.

Titleness squish

In categorizing pseudo-titles, we are dealing with a titleness squish, in the sense of Ross (1973). With the determiner deleted, descriptive NPs are neither clearly part of the category 'title', nor do they remain pure common nouns. They possess to certain degrees properties of both titles and common nouns. The titleness squish moves from M-terms, where no determiner is permissible, to complex NPs with postposed structure preceding last name only, where deletion is categorically unacceptable:

- (13) *Mr. Jones*
Dr. Geiringer
President Marcos
?Prime Minister Lange
??Finance Minister Douglas
*?*Works and Development Minister Colman*
*?*Minister of Finance Douglas*
**Minister of Works and Development Colman*

In general, the greater the amount of structure in the descriptive NP, the less acceptable determiner deletion becomes. Preposed modifiers accept deletion far more readily than does postposed modification of the head noun.

The acceptability of items such as those in (13) varies from place to place, time to time, and media to media. Expressions such as *Prime Minister Lange* have had full acceptance as titles in the United States media for many years. Ten years ago they were virtually unheard on New Zealand media, but in the mid-1980s they are the rule rather than the exception. In the British prestige media, they remain deviant. In New Zealand, *Prime Minister* has now almost gained de facto acceptance as a full title, and other ministerial terms are slowly following it into acceptability. Such increase in titleness is easiest to achieve where the NP describes a person's full-time occupation and long-term status - as with *Prime Minister* - and where the label occurs in a sphere, such as government, where titles like *President* are already accepted.

Frozen pseudo-titles

The examples in (11) show that a semblance of titleness can be conferred on almost anyone by the use of almost any label. There is an awful warning here for those who hanker to be in the news. Labels can stick, and the title under which you first make it into the media may be the one which stays with

you for ever. Take the case of a European medical man who practised in New Zealand in the early 1970s, was eventually deregistered as not possessing the qualifications he had claimed, and moved on to California, where the process was in due course repeated. His standard label in 1974 reports in the New Zealand media was:

(14) *controversial cancer therapist Milan Brych*
cancer therapist Milan Brych

In 1980, some years after departing this country and having dropped out of the news, he was suddenly reported in the New Zealand media as under arrest for fraud in California. His label:

(15) *controversial cancer therapist Milan Brych*

He came to trial in Los Angeles, and one of the labellings used in reports of his conviction in June 1983 encapsules his downward slide:

(16) *self-styled cancer therapist Milan Brych*
controversial cancer therapist Milan Brych

The demotion was completed when he was sentenced a month later:

(17) *bogus cancer therapist Milan Brych*
self-styled cancer therapist Milan Brych
the self-proclaimed cancer therapist Milan Brych
controversial cancer therapist Milan Brych

When he applied for bail in November 1983, the descriptions reverted to type:

(18) *cancer therapist Milan Brych*
Brych, who practised - controversially - in New Zealand

The example shows both the deterioration of Brych's image in the media as the labellings became increasingly negative, and the power of the original pseudo-title to persist for a decade even in different countries. The pseudo-title had become uniquely his, to the extent that the mere phrase *controversial cancer therapist* was sufficient identification without the need to mention Brych's name. In this case, the deterioration in titling is paralleled by a shift from *Dr. Brych* initially, to *Mr. Brych* after his medical qualifications became suspect, and finally to plain *Brych* - the conventional reference to convicted criminals by last name alone.

Complexities

The typical structure favouring determiner deletion is brief like the titles which it imitates: a single noun, perhaps with one preposed modifier. But the rule can still apply when the constituent NPs reach a high or even uninterpretable degree of syntactic complexity. There may be coordination within the first, descriptive NP:

- (19) *Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Sir Thomas Davis*
Dominion transport reporter and motoring writer
Russell Scoular

Deletion in this context is no great problem when the coordinated NPs are semantically alike, such as ministerial positions. But it can result in bizarre effects when unlikes are coordinated:

- (20) *Australian and favourite Rob de Castella*

Coordinations may also occur in the second, name NP - sometimes with the familiar journalistic detail of age and place:

- (21) *runaway sweethearts Colin Alabaster, 22, and 14-year-old Ann Schofield of Wellingborough, Northants*
Middlesex Polytechnic BA in performance arts students
Sally Parkinson and Tracy Bernhardt

Descriptive NPs may be simultaneously apposed both before and after a name NP, with the determiner deleted from the preposed NP:

- (22) *ex-convict Jack Cody, self-confessed thief and a gambler*

Double preceding apposition of descriptive NPs is possible, with at least one determiner deletion necessary to make the structure workable:

- (23) *proud dad, deputy Labour leader Geoffrey Palmer*
husband, journalist David Robie
wife, dancer Anna Scarpova
44-year-old millionaire, Los Angeles lawyer
James Stilwell

Such expressions tend to sound bizarre in isolation, and it is notable that to make them comprehensible, the comma has been inserted between the two descriptive nouns. Note also that three out of the four examples in (23) involve deletion of a possessive determiner from the first descriptive NP (the noun of family relationship), followed by article deletion with the following occupational noun.

The determiner can be deleted from an expression which

is acting as a preposed genitive to another NP. In such cases deletion even seems to be favoured, as retaining the determiner hinders interpretation of the full expression:

- (24) *State Minister Frank O'Flynn QC's former firm
guerilla leader Robert Mugabe's men*

The wide applicability of the rule is shown where the determiner is deleted in a preposed genitive. Here the determiner had in fact governed the possessive noun of the descriptive NP and not the head noun:

- (25) *Hussar officer's daughter Stella Quekett
boxer's wife Jackie Magri*

The determiner can also be deleted when there is an increasing amount of structure in the descriptive NP, preferably preposed before the head noun, but in some cases postposed. The shift to acceptance of the rule by New Zealand media is perhaps most remarkable at this point. Expressions where deletion would have been severely deviant ten years ago are now increasingly occurring without determiners:

- (26) *former Radio New Zealand business editor Ron Quennell
Tongariro National Park ski shop owner Roy Turner
reporters' representative on the Auckland Star chapel
for nine years, Cei Richardson
Dunedin member of the Board of the Child Health
Research Foundation, Mr. Iain Galloway*

Determiner deletion typically occurs before the names of persons. But non-personal names are increasingly taking deleted determiner. Names of animals and entities like firms and sports teams are following personal names into determiner deletion:

- (27) *cut-price non-unionised newcomers Air Florida
diversified group Alex Harvey Industries
South Island warrant hopeful Southern Television,
another newspaper consortium
Listener rival Cue
leading horse Liquid Lightning
leaders Liverpool*

Note that most of the head nouns of the descriptive NPs in (27) normally apply to persons - *newcomers, hopeful, rival, leader*. This eases the path to determiner deletion, while non-person nouns like *firm* or *team* would inhibit deletion (but cf. *group* in (27) above).

When determiner deletion operates on complex structures, or where many expressions with deletion follow each other

closely, the density of the information results in structures which are very hard to decode. Note the triple preceding apposition involved in (28), and the complete sentence cited in (29) with its repeated appositions and determiner deletions, culminating in the almost indecipherable final phrase:

(28) *the joint editors of 'Dimension One' - Ranger Guide Alison High, 16, and her 21-year-old boy friend, Venture Scout Nigel Goodman*

(29) *Godparents are Aston Martin chairman Alan Curtis, also part of the MG rescue, Exeter's Tory MP John Hamman, the French-born Dora Abrahams, wife of a DeBeers director, Marcia Girard (former actress Marcia Fox) and Marley tile heir Robin Alsher's wife Val.*

A variable rule

The number of structures where determiner deletion is categorically inadmissible is rapidly shrinking. However, a few do seem to remain. Where the head noun is semantically vacuous deletion is unacceptable:

(30) *the man, Mr. Fred Berryman, 22*
**man, Mr. Fred Berryman, 22*

However, where the pseudo-title adds some information, deletion will be acceptable:

(31) *Waipawa boy Timothy Story, 10*
schoolboy Timothy Story
**boy Timothy Story*

Certain expressions with numerals do not permit deletion - *the two* has anaphoric reference while *two* does not. Pseudo-numerals may also be included:

(32) *the two other girls, Denise Clayton and Jackquie Wakelin the pair, Richard Balmforth of Reuters and Liz Thurgood of the Guardian*

The squishiness of what expressions are acceptable as titles, and therefore what structures determiner deletion can apply to, is reflected in the fact that this rule is variable, subject to differential linguistic constraints (Labov 1980). I have not yet done the detailed analysis on this. Suffice to note that there seem to be three main groupings of variable constraints, already hinted at in the discussion of acceptability:

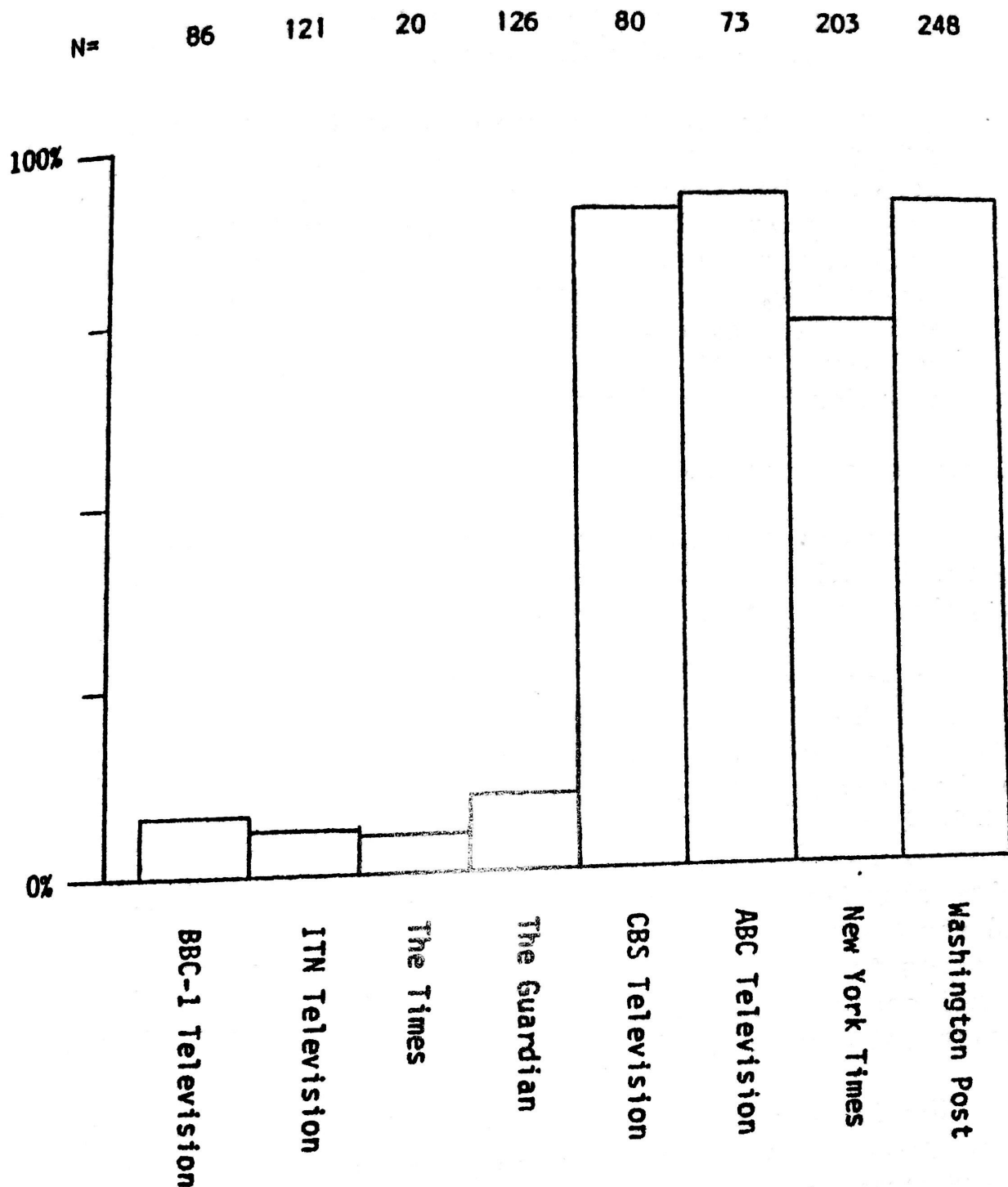


Figure 1

Percentage of determiner deletion on 4 British and 4 United States prestige media, 1980/82 (number of cases where rule actually applied as percentage of all cases where potentially could have applied).

1. The type of determiner affects the frequency of deletion, with articles *the* and *a* favouring deletion, and possessives disfavoured (except for first person *our* referring to the news medium itself, as in [*our*] *business editor Ron Quennell*).
2. Limited premodification favours deletion, but multiple premodification in the descriptive NP and any post-modification inhibit deletion.
3. Finally, the co-occurrence of deletion with first name (F), M-term, or null term preceding the last name (L) affects the frequency of deletion. Null term inhibits deletion strongly, since using L-only implies full title-ness in the descriptive noun. With M-term it is more acceptable, and favoured with F - partly because the informality of referring to someone by first name co-occurs readily with the less formal style with which determiner deletion is identified.

Geographical variation

Application of the determiner deletion rule varies according to (at least) three sets of extralinguistic factors: geographical, social and historical.

Geographically, there is a clear polarization between media in Britain and in the United States. Figure 1 graphs determiner deletion in prestige media in both countries: in the United States, on CBS and ABC network television news, and in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*; in Britain, on BBC-1 television's *Nine O'clock News*, and on the Independent Television News programme *News at Ten*, together with the *Times* and the *Guardian* newspapers. The figure shows the number of cases in which the rule was actually applied as a percentage of all cases where it could have been applied, i.e. where the structural description was met.

The dichotomy between British and American prestige media is absolute. All four British media delete a maximum 10% of determiners - that is, they hold to semi-categorical retention of the determiner. Three of the American media delete about 90% of determiners, with the *New York Times* a little below at 75%. For the American media, then, semi-categorical deletion is the norm. This signifies that in the United States, the rule has little social force. It is not identified with any class of media. Less prestigious American media are likely to delete at least as much as these four, meaning

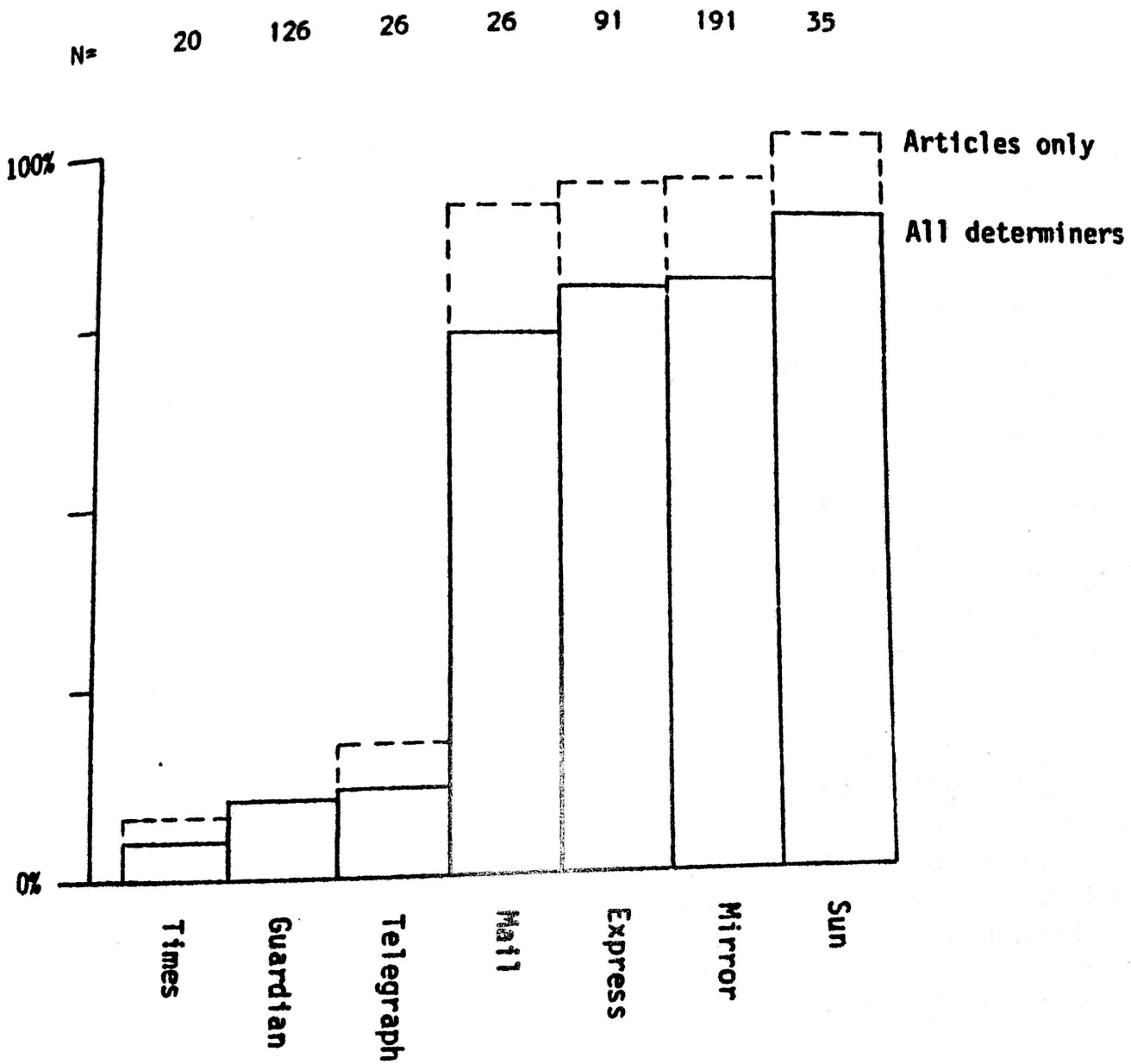


Figure 2

Percentage of determiner deletion in 7 British daily papers, 1980
 Dashed bars ----- articles only.

deletion is so universally accepted as to be quite unremarkable.

My assertion that deletion is unnoticed and normal in the U.S. is supported by American informants. But to non-American speakers of English, the rule is a hallmark of American journalistic style. In New Zealand, at least two of the style books written to guide journalists and copy editors warn them 'not to follow this American style'.

Social variation

With such polarization between the two main international varieties of English, it becomes possible that different media within a country may adopt one or other model as their target. In both New Zealand and the United Kingdom this is the case.

Figure 2 shows the proportion of deletion in seven of Britain's national daily newspapers. The split into two camps is strikingly similar to that between British and U.S. media in Figure 1. The three lower-circulation, 'quality' papers - *Times*, *Guardian* and *Telegraph* - delete at low levels. The *Daily Telegraph* is highest at 12%. Then there is a leap to the four so-called 'popular' dailies,⁵ with the *Daily Mail* using the least determiner deletion (73%). We can interpret this dichotomy as the mass press going over to what they see as the less formal, more popular American style using determiner deletion. The prestige papers remain with the older retention of the determiner, now regarded - evidently with only partial justification - as characteristic of British versus American news style. Note also that while the structure of Figure 2 is very similar to Figure 1, it is less severely polarized. I take this to result from the fact that the British popular media are imitating American norms. As with most reflections, the image is a little less sharp than the original.

Also shown in Figure 2 are the data for deletion of articles only, excluding the possessives, which permit deletion much less frequently. All four mass newspapers delete the articles at semi-categorical levels (90% plus). The *Sun* has pushed the rule to completion for articles, with 100% deletion, although the number of tokens (35) is too small to say this is absolute.

The ranking of newspapers in Figure 2 for their degree of determiner deletion corresponds almost exactly to the social status of their readerships. The National Readership

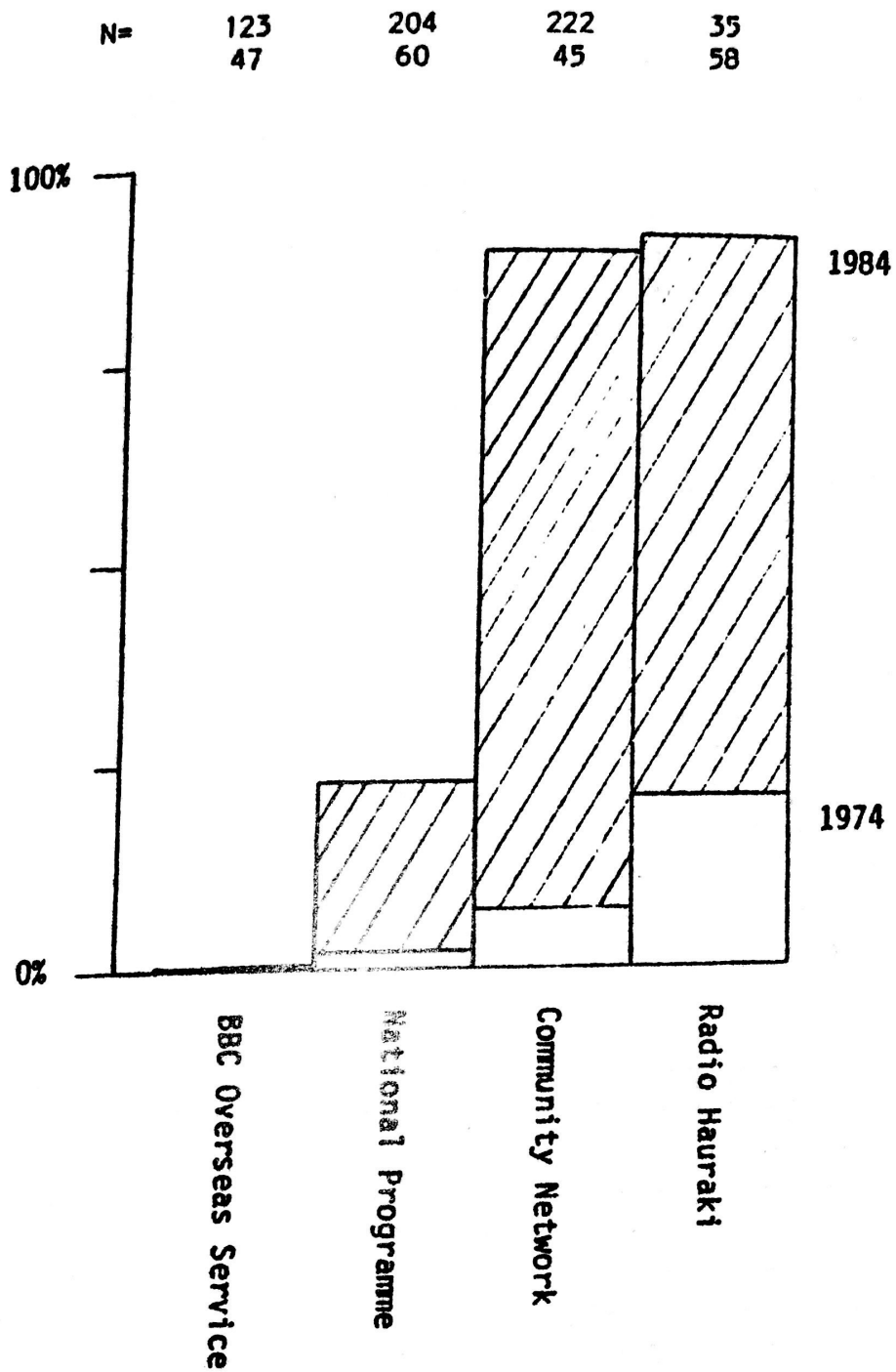


Figure 3

Percentage of determiner deletion on 4 radio stations in New Zealand, 1974 and 1984.

Surveys conducted during 1980 (JICNARS 1980) rank the newspapers by the social grade of their readership: the *Times* at the top, then *Telegraph* and *Guardian*; then a considerable drop to the *Mail*, followed by *Express*, *Mirror*, and *Sun*. Only the *Guardian* breaks the perfect correlation between social grade and determiner deletion, and then by just one percentage point.

The same structure is evident for New Zealand radio stations. In a 1984 sample (Figure 3), two stations with lower status audience - Radio New Zealand's middle-of-road Community Network, and the Auckland private rock music station Radio Hauraki - had high determiner deletion. By contrast, Radio NZ's prestigious National Programme deletes less than a quarter of determiners. The polarization of radio stations reflects very accurately their orientation towards British or American cultural and linguistic norms (Bell 1984). The rule of determiner deletion turns out to be diagnostic of New Zealand media orientations, just as it was for British media. And as with the British newspapers, the correlation of determiner deletion with the social standing of the audience is strong.

Historical development

Media polarize according to what I take to be an original, British non-deleting norm and a newer, American norm of high deletion. This implies that we should be able to research the spread of this rule over time. Figure 3 again shows that this is the case. When I collected my original data in 1974, all these radio stations had a rather low level of determiner deletion. Radio Hauraki - the young-audience, rock station - was predictably the highest, but still reached only 21% deletion.

But ten years later, a resampling shows that all stations have shifted towards the higher levels of deletion we have already noted. In the case of the Community Network and Radio Hauraki, that shift is 70-80% in just ten years - a rapid and massive leap in the normally slow timetable of linguistic change.⁶ Even the National Programme has edged up to an appreciable number of deletions - 23% - and away from its traditional model, the BBC Overseas Service news (Figure 3). BBC news is rebroadcast several times daily on the highbrow Concert Programme, and in 1984 remains as committed as in 1974 to absolute non-deletion. The correlation of audience status with the linguistic variable holds in both 1974 and 1984 (cf. Bell 1980), with remarkably little shift in the social composition of the stations' audiences

N= 19 35 68 42 97 92 191

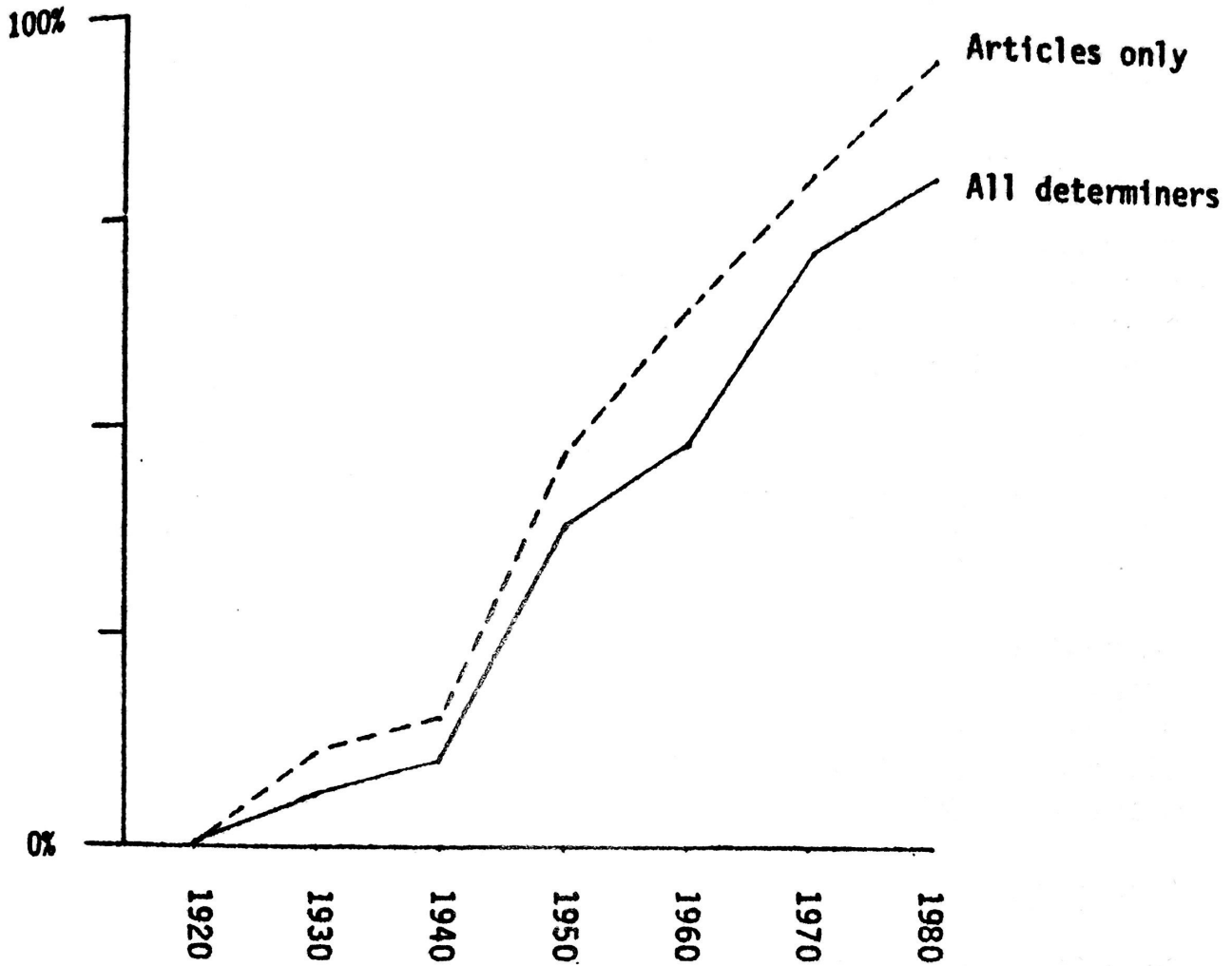


Figure 4

Percentage of determiner deletion in the British newspaper, the *Daily Mirror*, 1920-1980.

Dashed line ----- articles only.

in the ten years (although new stations have drawn off audience numbers from the existing stations, they have not changed the structure of those audiences).

We can see the shift from low to high deletion at work in a longer time frame in the press, studying language change in real time. Here the preservation of a precisely dated, accessible and high-quality archive allows us to study the history of media language in a way impossible in almost any other variety. Figure 4 graphs the spread of determiner deletion from 1920 to 1980 in the British mass circulation paper, the *Daily Mirror*. From categorical non-deletion in 1920, the rule has risen to the 1980 level of 80%. Application of the rule has increased each decade, sometimes by only a few percent (1930-40), at other times by as much as 28% (in 1940-50). Again, we can see that articles are deleted more frequently, leading the possessives at each stage of the rule spread. Although this shift is much slower than that for New Zealand radio, from nil to 80% in 60 years is rapid for language change.

We can also see how the synchronic structure of determiner deletion in Figure 2 relates to the diachronic structure in Figure 4. The prestige British press in 1980 is at a level of determiner deletion similar to where the popular papers were in 1940: about 10%. Figure 4 shows change in real time, while Figure 2 is akin to Labov's 'change in apparent time'. The popular media are thus leading the conservative prestige media in the application of this rule, although only time will tell at what pace and to what extent determiner deletion will spread to the 'quality' papers.

A changing structure

As well as the shift to increased determiner deletion, two related changes have occurred in the past sixty years. First is a shift from postposing of the descriptive NP in the name apposition to preposing. The following instances of name appositions in earlier decades of the *Mirror* show that the structure of the expression has changed:

- | | |
|--|------|
| (33) <i>a Croat, Leontitch by name</i> | 1930 |
| <i>a police informer named Julius Rosenheim</i> | 1930 |
| <i>Mr. Anthony Yates, of Kirby Overblow, near Harrogate, a director of a Leeds firm of cloth manufacturers</i> | 1940 |
| <i>the dead woman, Mrs. Mary Ann Message, a widow, aged about fifty, of Fulham-road, London, S.W.</i> | 1940 |

<i>Golden, the gunner</i>	1940
<i>Mrs. Robinson, the landlady</i>	1940
<i>Fuchs, Communist, German-born naturalised British subject</i>	1950

These structures are looser, more discursive than 1980 tokens of name appositions. They are more complex, accumulating details of a person's age, occupation, place.⁷ Most notably, the descriptive NP often follows the name NP. This is significant for the determiner deletion rule, since its structural description is met only if the descriptive NP precedes the name NP. As the proportion of determiner deletion has risen, so has the proportion of preceding descriptive NPs which permit the deletion to occur. A graph of the increase in descriptive NPs preceding name NPs in the *Daily Mirror* across the same period 1920-80 is strikingly parallel to the graph of increasing determiner deletion in Figure 4. The move from following to preceding descriptive NP has gone hand in hand with - and is the prerequisite to - the predominance of determiner deletion. Deletion could be frequent but not so widespread if following descriptive NP was still the norm.

This shift is not strictly a prerequisite for determiner deletion per se, since there were low levels of preposed descriptive NPs back in 1920. But if there were no preposing whatever, then determiner deletion would be inoperative, since its structural description would never be met. The prevalence of determiner deletion requires that a large proportion of name appositions contain preposed not postposed descriptive NPs. In 1920, 80% of the name appositions had postposed descriptive NP. In 1980, 80% had preposed descriptive NP. It is hard to escape the conclusion that the urge to determiner deletion has to a large extent powered the move to preposing.

Again, we can see that in terms of the structure as well as degree of application of the rule, the prestige papers find themselves today where the popular papers were some decades ago. These examples from the *Times* in 1980 could equally well have come from the *Mirror* in 1940:

- (34) *Mr. Eric Heffer, the chairman and left-wing MP for
Liverpool, Walton*
Mrs. Mary Glen Haig, its chairman
Joan Baez, the singer

Like the popular papers earlier this century, the *Times* uses name appositions with mainly following descriptive NPs.

That is, the structural description of the rule is hardly ever met. Of about 170 occurrences of name appositions in an average issue of the *Times*, 150 have following descriptive NPs. The *Times* thus maintains a pre-war pattern of newspaper style for name appositions. But using following descriptive NP has a pay-off for the *Times*. Because the structural description for deletion is hardly ever met within its pages, it rarely gives itself the chance to delete - or retain - the determiner. Therefore it does not so obviously appear to be clinging to a conservative formula of retention.

The second shift related to determiner deletion is in the internal structure of the apposition NPs. The development from 1920 down to the present involves not just increased determiner deletion, nor just increased preposing of descriptive NPs, but a honing down of the whole descriptive NP towards abbreviated, formulaic pseudo-titles. The expressions from the *Mirror* of 1920-50 in (33) above are often long, even rambling. The typical expressions from the *Mirror* in 1980 listed earlier in (11) are very different. By preposing material, they eliminate prepositions and articles. They are cut-down, staccato, pithy. My impression is that increasingly the structure of the whole name apposition is being tailored to the deletion rule. It represents a shorthand titling, which compresses information into one or more staccato lexical items in front of the name NP. It achieves therefore simultaneously two of the main goals of news writing: it compresses information, while successfully highlighting it. Determiner deletion and the two associated changes are thus highly functional for news English. The canonical form of the name apposition has now become a pseudo-title noun followed by first and last names, and optionally preceded by one or two modifiers:

(35) (A/N) (A/N) N F L
(Australian) (science) minister Barry Jones

The future of determiner deletion

We have examined the syntactic and semantic nature of determiner deletion, and its quantitative distribution according to several extralinguistic factors. Tentatively, I will speculate on some of the directions in which this rule may move in the future.

In one sense, determiner deletion represents a democratization of the news. It confers a title on everyone who appears. It thus runs parallel to the use of F rather than

M-term in the name NP, by which we are all put on first-name rather than formal terms with people appearing in the news. However, if everyone in the news receives a pseudo-title, then news language has lost some of its ability to mark out special people in a society. Perhaps in future we will see developments which try to reassert the language's resources to make such distinctions among persons.

Certainly, I think we will see the refinement of this expression continue, increasing its staccato, formulaic nature. Some pseudo-titles will gradually become so accepted that they pass into the realm of fully accepted titles. I would expect that within five years *Prime Minister* will be in such a position in New Zealand, no more unusual than *President* without a determiner. Other ministerial titles may eventually follow suit. Thus, some hitherto common count nouns will move into the title category, or at least further towards the titleness end of the squish.

Quantitatively, the 'popular' media in both New Zealand and Britain seem certain to take the rule to virtual completion, so that determiner deletion becomes as unremarkable in these media as it is in the United States. This shift is likely to be complete within another decade. However, as long as the prestige media within a country hold to determiner retention, the rule keeps its social force.

The prestige media in New Zealand and Britain will be inevitably drawn into deleting more and more of the determiners. We can see that National Programme radio has already moved to a significant level of 23% in its standard news bulletins. Its less formal 'Report' news magazine programmes - *Morning Report*, *Midday Report* etc. - are already deleting well beyond that percentage. In Britain, even the *Times* and BBC Overseas Service will lose their rearguard action and be drawn into increasing determiner deletion. By the end of the century, they may well be where the popular press was in 1950. The elite media are linguistically conservative - often deliberately so. Yet they are unlikely to be able to resist the force of the more popular media dragging them into the news language of twentieth century.

Finally, determiner deletion will probably spread to adjacent registers of language, and eventually into conversational English. It is already common in all genres of media language, and spreading out into related registers such as public speaking. It will always be inhibited in everyday, face-to-face interaction by the fact that such name appositions

are, in any case, unnatural to informal English. Nevertheless, we do say *President Reagan* in conversational speech, and perhaps by the end of the century *Prime Minister Lange* may be just as acceptable an expression - although the name of the incumbent may not remain the same.

NOTES

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²Most of the tokens cited in this paper are drawn direct from the sample. In a few cases, the examples have been permuted in order to test or illustrate a point. Commas and capitals are used as in the original scripts of printed news but, in transcribing broadcast tokens, they are kept to the minimum demanded by the sense. Determiner deletion has also been studied by Rydén (1975).

³The name NP is analyzed as a branching N node with three possible constituents (cf. Ervin-Tripp 1972):

M = the honorifics *Ms.*, *Miss*, *Mrs.*, and *Mr.*
F = first name
L = last name.

⁴Exceptionally, F can sometimes be found as head of the name phrase, e.g. *secretary Jodi*, *son Matthew*.

⁵'Quality' versus 'popular' are the well-established elitist terms for referring to the two kinds of newspapers. Perhaps they would be better labelled 'quality' versus 'quantity' press, or 'popular' versus 'unpopular'.

⁶The very salience of determiner deletion as diagnostic of British versus American orientation undoubtedly accelerates the move. Comparatively high deletion - 55% - was already present in 1974 on the private station Radio 1, expressive of its attempt to woo a young audience.

Where a nation or speech community awards its titles tells us something about priorities in that society. The titles of one nation or period are not necessarily the titles of another, and we may be able to trace a certain amount of social history from a society's allocation of titles. Reading titles from British newspapers of 1940 and before is to find oneself in another world. Especially notable is the predominance in 1920-40 of nobility and military titles, with the latter largely absent in 1980.

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