

**[0736]      HOW TO TEACH WEST FRISIANS THE SPELLING OF  
THEIR LANGUAGE**

Pieter Breuker

*1. Introduction*

This paper offers a contribution towards the didactics of the spelling of Westerlauwers Frisian (hereafter, for the sake of brevity: Frisian). I will thereby limit myself to some basic ideas. My points of departure are, for example, not applicable to foreign words and other secondary spelling matters such as writing words separately or as one word, hyphenation and punctuation. These four aspects of spelling have not or have not yet been laid down definitely in Frisian. With regard to the last three aspects mentioned, there are large similarities between Frisian and Dutch in daily practical use. These languages play a central role in this study. Whereas this paper is theoretically orientated, I will give a practical and also more detailed elaboration of my views in a second, separate publication.

It is important to establish here that my approach must still be further tested in practice. Up until now I have worked with it in two groups, both times in the academic year of 1995-1996. The first group of 10 consisted of my university students with command of Frisian as a main subject or as a subsidiary subject, and the second group of 33 consisted of teachers at the A(lgemeine) F(ryske) U(nderrjocht) K(ommissje) ('General Frisian Education Committee'), an educational institution offering, among other things, adult education courses. The evaluation results of my didactics are encouraging in both groups (for the AFUK: AFUK-Jierferslach 1995: 11).

Remarkably little has been written on the didactics of Frisian spelling, but all the more on the spelling itself. Supporters and opponents of a simplification of the spelling - it was the in-theme - held fierce discussions in the sixties and seventies. This came to an end in 1976 when the Provincial Government of Friesland, in view of the approaching obligation of Frisian as a subject in primary education (started in 1980), decided on a new spelling, the so-called 'Steatestavering' (Steaten 1976). It is only in recent years that there is some interest in the didactics of the spelling, in particular Oldenhof 1983, Nieuwenhuijsen 1994a and Kramer 1995 (the last two publications under my responsibility).

*2. Importance of the subject*

For many people, learning to spell is a difficult, time-consuming occupation, which

is not always successful and often also not very enjoyable. It does not make any difference whether it concerns Frisian or Dutch. For this reason alone good didactics are of great importance. This possibly applies even more to Frisian which, unlike Dutch, is only taught to a limited degree in Friesland.

Although Frisian has been an obligatory subject in primary education since 1980, schools do not spend much more time than an average of one hour a week on this subject. In particular, the written aspects of Frisian are not treated or are barely treated. In this way, only 10% of primary schools include writing lessons in their curriculum. As a result, the *actual* command of the language indeed leaves much to be desired: (I'm translating from Dutch): 'Both groups of pupils [namely Frisian-speaking and Dutch-speaking, PB] only have a limited command of the separate skills of technical reading, spelling and communicative writing.' Therefore, for the subject of communicative writing skills, only 16.6% of the Frisian-speaking pupils and 8.2% of the Dutch-speaking pupils receive a pass (De Jong and Riemersma 1994: 44, 164, 140). Although no comparable figures are available for secondary education, the situation there will not be essentially different. Frisian has been an obligatory subject since 1993 in the lower classes. My estimation is that approximately half of the pupils follow Frisian, only in the first year and for just one hour a week. Writing skills are not generally on the curriculum. Frisian in the higher years is unusual to very exceptional.

Apart from the *educational* importance of being able to spell there is a certain *economic* necessity: the increasing use of the Frisian language in formal fields such as education, official correspondence and the media, albeit modest, sometimes requires writing skills in Frisian on an *individual* level. From a *cultural* point of view, the need for good spelling didactics is perhaps even greater. In the present Western society, it is difficult to imagine a vital language which is not written (and read). There is, after all, surely also a *language-political* necessity for the written command of the minority language of Frisian, which is outstripped by the dominating Dutch language, both from a linguistic and a social point of view (Breuker 1993).

### 3. Skills in Frisian and Dutch

Since 1967 research has been carried out on a large scale and with some regularity into the level of the command of the Frisian language (Pietersen 1969; Gorter et al. 1984; Gorter and Jonkman 1995). According to the most recent research 17% of the Frisians of 12 years and older claim that they can write Frisian, meaning to say they can spell Frisian. The figures for the other skills are: reading 64.5%; speaking 74%; understanding 94.3% (Gorter and Jonkman 1995: 8). What is immediately striking with regard to these results of *reported* command

of the language is the low percentage for writing. In addition, upon closer inspection, it appears that further nuancing is required: only 4 percent say that they can write Frisian varying from 'well' to 'very easily' and as many as 13 percent say 'reasonably well' (Gorter and Jonkman 1995: 68). Although the figures for reading skills, the other written aspect of language, are much better with 64.5%, that percentage is still not too high. This applies all the more if we compare the figures for Frisian with those for Dutch. Without any research figures being known on this subject, one can state that almost every Frisian-speaking person can not only speak and understand the Dutch language well, but is also competent in reading and writing it. The average Frisian-speaking person therefore has a command of the written aspects of Dutch much more than he has of Frisian. Considering the dominant position of Dutch, also in Friesland, a complete command of this language is a condition for every Frisian-speaking person in order to be able to function fully on an economic, social and cultural level. Without exaggerating too much, one could state that for the average person brought up with the Frisian language, not only Frisian, but also Dutch functions as a native language. In such a context both languages do not, of course, belong to separate worlds but they are continually used alternately.

Education is taking more and more advantage of this language situation. Limiting myself to secondary education, I only have to point to the connection made from the subject of Frisian in the field of key issues such as the curriculum, objectives, examination programmes and teaching materials with the subject of the Dutch language (Nieuwenhuijsen 1994a and 1994b; Breuker 1994; Breuker et al. 1982: 117-121; Bangma et al. 1995).

#### *4. The spelling of Frisian and Dutch*

With regard to the area of spelling it is certainly also worthwhile to make as much use as possible of the connection between Frisian and Dutch in education. In this way the spelling of both languages is based on the same four main principles, namely that of the pronunciation (also: 'the phonological principle'), the analogy, the uniformity (together also the morphological principle) and the etymology. In agreement with current views the phonological principle in this article only concerns distinctive features. More so than the morphological principle, the principle of the pronunciation is in this case of importance (see for example Assink and Verhoeven 1985: 105; Taaldidactiek 1992<sup>3</sup>: 414).

This applies to Frisian to a greater extent than to Dutch, in particular due to the spelling of a large number of weak verb forms and of foreign words. Also on a more detailed level, the similarities between both languages are considerable, in any case great enough to consider them as an important didactic factor.

The importance of this has increased even more due to the changes in the

Frisian spelling in 1976: the alterations which were made then meant in by far the most cases an adaptation towards the Dutch system. I will give a few typical examples:

1. *ae* → *aa*: 'tael' ('language') → 'taal' (Dutch: 'taal');
2. *é* → *ee*: 'sé' ('sea') → 'see' (Dutch: 'zee');
3. prefixes *to-*, *for-* and *bi-* → *te-*, *fer-* and *be-*:  
     'tobek' ('back') → 'tebek' (Dutch: 'terug');  
     'forjitte' ('to forget') → 'ferjitte' (Dutch: 'vergeten');  
     'bigjinne' ('to begin') → 'begjinne' (Dutch: 'beginnen');
4. disappearance of intermediate letter *j*: 'groeije' ('to grow') → 'groeie' (Dutch: 'groeien').

With regard to only one important point, a difference came into existence where up until then there had been similarity, namely in the spelling of the past tense form of a part of the weak *-e*-verbs. Therefore, for example, 'praatte' ('talked') became 'prate' (Dutch: 'praatte') and 'laadde' ('loaded') 'lade' (Dutch: 'laadde'). Apparently, the gain of this adjustment, namely using the phonological principle as a point of departure, was considered greater than the loss, namely deviating from the familiar, i.e. the Dutch language.

In all consideration, there is every reason to emphasise the similarities rather than the differences, otherwise than in the case of traditional spelling didactics (Oldenhof 1983) and spelling methods (Boersma 1980; Oldenhof 1988; Dijkstra 1991). Dutch must serve as the reference point because in practice the average Frisian-speaking person learns to spell this language first (the other way round is very unusual).

In the light of the above-mentioned, the following apply as the key points of my spelling didactics of Frisian:

1. *using 'the familiar' as a point of departure, i.e. Dutch;*
2. *using the main rule of the spelling as a point of departure, namely that of the pronunciation.*

Since the main rule applies to both languages, there is a certain degree of overlap with what was stated under point 1.

Whoever uses my didactic model as a basis, could come to the conclusion that first the similarities between Dutch and Frisian must be treated, subsequently the cases belonging to the phonological principle and only then the differences. From a didactic point of view, it seems to me to be incorrect to adhere so strictly to this order. As I know from experience, it can, on the contrary, be very enlightening to treat differences in connection with similarities. A general guideline could be

that where for a particular aspect of the spelling, e.g. the short vowels, the similarities are listed, the differences are also mentioned as long as they are not preponderant and determining. It is indeed difficult to indicate exact limits here. A further elaboration and testing of my model in practice will undoubtedly give more clarity.

Only for reasons of space it is impossible to give a more or less complete overview here of the (many) spelling situations which fall under my key principles. I will therefore limit myself in §7 to more or less elaborating on two important parts, one from the category of 'the familiar', the other from that of 'the phonological principle'. I will only briefly point out other important situations.

### *5. Advantages of the proposed didactics*

In the above-mentioned it has already, sometimes implicitly, become clear for a part what the advantages are of the spelling didactics advocated by me. I will list them below, but this time in more detail.

#### *a. using 'the familiar' as a point of departure*

Using 'the familiar' as a point of departure is one of the most important didactic principles in education. In this way, one links up with what the pupil already has learned, partly by means of the spelling rules which he already knows through Dutch, but also through participating in the bilingual Frisian-Dutch community. Often the pupil disposes of far more knowledge than he is aware of. A great deal of hidden knowledge must only be made more explicit. This applies, for example, to many aspects which fall under the phonological principle. My Frisian-speaking students are surprised every single year when they realize how much they can already spell properly in Frisian if, by means of the spelling conventions of Dutch, they use something as fundamental as the pronunciation as a basis: 'beest' ('beast') is simply spelled as 'beest' and not as 'beast', 'hoop' ('hope') as 'hoop' (\*'hoap') and 'web' ('web') as 'web' (\*'wêb').

#### *b. connection and transfer*

Three key concepts of the didactics of present secondary education in the Netherlands are 'application', 'skill' and 'connection'. The last-mentioned concept assumes that [I am translating from Dutch] 'subjects are not islands [...] at school, but that mutual connections are made' (Van Vonderen 1993:40). I already briefly mentioned that, also from an educational point of view, there is ample connection between Frisian and Dutch. Through *transfer*, another key didactic concept, this connection can be given expression in a meaningful and efficient way. Along with

Nieuwenhuijsen I describe 'transfer' as (I'm translating from Dutch) 'using previously acquired knowledge and skills in situations which differ from those in which you learned them, therefore in new learning and application situations' (Nieuwenhuijsen 1994c: 121). Although Frisian can profit in this way from the knowledge and skills gained with regard to Dutch, the latter language has also an advantage through this method of working. By applying rules etcetera in other situations, they are better understood in their original context and therefore employed more successfully.

#### c. educational psychology

It is stimulating if from the very start of a learning task it is clear to someone what he already knows with regard to this subject. In addition to an intrinsic advantage, this method of working also results in a psychological advantage. Furthermore, one may assume that in this way the writing threshold for Frisian will become lower. Among teachers of Frisian it is a well known phenomenon that their Frisian-speaking pupils also find it difficult to start writing Frisian as long as they do not (think that they) have a command of its spelling on at least an elementary level.

#### d. reach of my didactics

The value of the spelling didactics advocated by me is indeed closely connected with the amount of spelling rules which it covers: the more, the greater the relevance. I will leave it here with the observation that a considerable part of the spelling falls under both my main points of departure: the familiar and the phonological principle. See §7 for a (non-exhaustive) overview.

In my view the benefits are not outweighed by any significant disadvantages. It could in itself be a drawback that the pupil learns a considerable part of the spelling by means of *rules*, therefore by means of a deductive method. There is much to be said in favour of a method of working by which he learns to discover rules for himself on the basis of concrete situations. Such an inductive method of working would teach him to remember the learned material better (see e.g. Taal-didactiek: 1992: 428; Van der Geest and Swüste 1980: 70, 112; for an elaboration Mommers 1985: 124-125, among others). If my approach were to include in a general sense these types of drawbacks, then they would be largely eliminated by the target group which I have in mind: after all, this group is, on the basis of its knowledge of Dutch, trained in thinking in terms of rules for spelling (see §6 for my target group). The phonological principle is strictly speaking not a rule: it is after all mainly based on what spelling in the first place is, namely writing what you hear.

A further drawback could be that the pupil does not immediately perceptibly learn something new, for example that the initial *v* in Dutch such as in 'vier' ('four') is always an *f* in Frisian: 'fjouwer'. In the first instance, this drawback neglects the fact that my method also conveys something new to the pupil from the beginning by confronting him with new insights by means of applying existing knowledge in a new situation or by activating hidden knowledge. In the second instance, the methods and didactics which lay all the emphasis on the differences must be characterized as at least one-sided and very incomplete.

It would be interesting to check how people who taught themselves to spell Frisian (and it is my estimation that their number amounts to perhaps as much as half of the previously mentioned 17%) did this. It appears extremely plausible to me that knowledge of Dutch and application of the phonological principle have played a large role in this.

#### 6. *Target group*

In the aforesaid, I have already told, again mostly between the lines, one and another about my target group. I now wish to elaborate on this further, on the basis of three aspects: command of the language, language attitude and ease of learning.

The ideal person learning the spelling of Frisian is completely competent in the area of Dutch and can speak, understand and read Frisian. A less extensive command of Frisian is likewise not a drawback which cannot be overcome, but learning to spell Frisian will in that case be more laborious. One example to explain. If someone can understand and read Frisian but cannot speak it, for (further educated) Dutch-speaking people not an unusual situation at all, he will be less able to make a connection between sound and character, between what he hears and sees than someone who does speak Frisian. This can be an obstructing factor for the application of the phonological principle. Imagine that someone hears the Frisian word 'pet' ('cap') and he sees that in Frisian just as in Dutch it is spelled as 'pet', then he can draw the conclusion from this that for Frisian the same spelling rule applies here as for Dutch, namely that of the pronunciation. If he does not know the pronunciation of 'pet' in Frisian, he cannot directly apply the phonological principle. In the case of the Frisian word 'pet' he must first hear how it sounds in order to realize that for the spelling of this word the phonological principle also applies in Frisian.

Even if someone has no skills at all in Frisian, he can master a considerable part of the Frisian spelling with the aid of my main didactic points of departure. In addition to the principle of the familiar, he can appeal to the pronunciation, through his knowledge of Dutch, simply by writing down what he hears in

Frisian. With regard to the *language attitude*, it goes without saying that the optimal situation requires a motivated pupil. The stronger someone's motivation, the faster he will learn something, one may suppose. Looking at it this way, my method is also attractive in the first instance for people who wish to learn to spell Frisian from an intrinsic motivation. Therefore it is especially workable for those who master this skill themselves or those who receive spelling lessons on a voluntary basis, for example within the framework of a course by the Algemene Fryske Underrjocht Kommissje. Nevertheless, it also appears to me to be exactly suitable for less motivated pupils, for example those who are obliged to follow Frisian, such as in the lower classes of secondary education. If it can be made clear to them that, without knowing it themselves, they already have a command of a considerable part of the spelling of Frisian, this will undoubtedly work as a stimulus. In addition, it will encourage them to approach those parts more easily which they have still to learn.

Finally, the *ease of learning* of my didactics. My method is, with regard to the principles of the analogy, the uniformity and the etymology, based on rules and therefore abstract in character. This makes it less suitable for young pupils, for example those in the lower classes of primary education. For that matter it is also not suitable for another reason: in order to be able to make optimal use of the familiar, the user must be able to spell Dutch (properly). This skill is only present on average in or towards the end of the final years of primary education.

## 7. *Making my spelling didactics concrete*

### 7.1. *Introduction*

As already mentioned in §4, concerning the (global) elaboration of my didactic concepts, I will limit myself here to two important parts of the spelling. In addition, I will also mention a number of other main points. In a teaching method a complete elaboration of one and another can follow then. In the comparison between Dutch and Frisian I continually choose words which are as phonologically and morphologically similar to each other as possible. In this way I hope to make the comparison as optimal as possible.

In my division there is still one element preceding 'the familiar', which I consider important enough to mention here separately. The *terminology system* which is necessary for the teaching of spelling, is to a large extent the same in Dutch and Frisian. This similarity facilitates my approach, which is largely based on rules. I have in mind grammatical terms such as vowel and consonant, short and long vowel, diphthong, open and closed consonant, pronunciation, analogy, uniformity and etymology, grammar, phonetics, morphology and syntax, prefix, suffix, compound and derivation, verb, infinitive, singular and plural, subject,



present and past tense, past participle, strong and weak verb forms, article, male, female and neutral, conjunction and vocal contraction. One of the most important new terms for Frisian is 'breaking', the phenomenon of vowel contraction and accent shift of diphthongs.

A second similarity concerns the *alphabet*. This is largely the same for both languages. Since Frisian tends to spell foreign words more according to the phonological principle than Dutch, it does not have the characters *c* (except in *ch*), *q* and *x*. Although in the area of *letter combinations* there are numerous similarities, e.g. *au*, *ou*, *ei*, *ij*, *oe*, *eu*, *ui*, *ng* and *ch*, there are also considerable differences. Frisian, unlike Dutch, has for example *ea*, *oa*, *eo*, *ue*, *uo*, *uoi*, *oai*, *eau*, *sk-*, *-sk*, it makes use of diacritic characters for the vowels and it has many initial consonant clusters with *j* (*strj-*, *sj-*, *tsj-* etcetera).

The similarities in characters and terminology make the approach to the spelling rules of Frisian considerably easier. They must therefore be treated explicitly. For that matter, it does not have to cost much time.

## 7.2. 'The familiar'

### 7.2.1. Vocalism

#### 7.2.1.1. Short vowels

Frisian and Dutch have (almost) the same short vowels, which are moreover written the same in most cases. The concept 'the same', with regard to the pronunciation, must be understood in a broad sense: identification by the speaker of two sounds related to each other is sufficient. This does by no way mean that, from a phonetic point of view, they are completely alike.

Vowel	Dutch	Frisian
i /ɪ/	ik ('I')	ik
e /ɛ/	pet ('cap')	pet
a /a/	dak ('roof')	dak
o /o/ <sup>1</sup>	dom ('stupid')	dom

<sup>1</sup> The most important problem for the short vowels treated here is that in Frisian, otherwise than in Dutch, the character *o* can stand for two phonemes: /o/ and /ɔ/, such as in 'holle' ('hoofd', 'head') and in 'holle' ('holle', 'hollow') respectively, as well as in numerous other minimal pairs. Dutch has only the phoneme /o/, spelled as *o*. The pupil must learn that, otherwise than he perhaps expects, the phoneme difference in Frisian is not expressed in the spelling: both the /o/ and /ɔ/ are spelled as *o*.

For the spelling of the /ɔ/ sometimes yet an extra complication applies: this sound is spelled as *a* before the dentals *d*, *n*, *t*, *l* and *s*, for example in 'wat' /wɔ/ ('wat', 'what'). Although such a rule falls outside the similarities, I consider it justified to mention it here (and also to treat it in a teaching method): it is important on the grounds of the number of cases which belong to it and it can therefore come up for discussion in connection with the o-problem.

	/ɔ/	hok ('shed')	hok
u	/ʌ/	put ('well')	put
oe	/u/ <sup>2</sup>	poes ('puss')	poes
e	/ə/	in common affixes such as:	
		<i>te-gemoet</i> ('towards')	<i>te-mjitte</i>
		<i>be-doelen</i> ('to mean')	<i>be-doele</i>
		<i>ver-geeten</i> ('to forget')	<i>fer-jitte</i>
		<i>ge-noeg</i> ('enough')	<i>ge-nôch</i>
		<i>hand-elen</i> ('to trade')	<i>hann-elje</i>
		<i>mind-eren</i> ('to decrease')	<i>mind-erje</i>
		<i>eind-igen</i> ('to end')	<i>ein-igje</i>
		<i>rom-ig</i> ('creamy')	<i>rjemm-ich</i>
		<i>lief-de</i> ('love')	<i>leaf-de</i>
		<i>hoog-te</i> ('height')	<i>hich-te</i>
		<i>laad-de</i> ('loaded')	<i>la-de</i>
		and also in frequently used words such as:	
		<i>de</i> ('the')	<i>de</i>
		<i>te</i> ('too')	<i>te</i>
		<i>we</i> ('we')	<i>we</i>

The most important deviations in spelling from Dutch must be learned *separately*, such as (Dutch) 'een' ('a') - (Fr.) 'in', 'het' ('it') - 'it' and the suffix *-lijk*, such as in 'eer-*lijk*' ('honest') - 'ear-*lik*'.

With regard to the remaining two short vowels, the /ü/ and the /i/, the uniformities in the spelling vary from less to no uniformities. Exactly because of the dominant character of the uniformities within the group of short vowels as a whole, I would still like to treat them here. For the /ü/, with which I will begin the examples, it applies furthermore that the spelling is sometimes the same.

<sup>2</sup> A complicating factor is that the /u/ in Frisian is frequently written as *û*, for example in 'strûk' ('bush').

vowel	Dutch	Frisian
/ü/	kluut ('avocat')	klút
	bruut ('brute')	brút
	saluut ('salute')	salút

Due to the lack of original Dutch and Frisian forms I have used two word forms which, on closer examination, do not fall within this study: 'bruut' / 'brút' and 'saluut' / 'salút' belong, in any case from a historical point of view, to the group of foreign words. It is the question, however, whether this point of view is to be defended to its ultimate consequences: certainly 'bruut' / 'brút' will not be experienced by the average language user as foreign.

If the /ü/ is in an open consonant or at the end of a foreign word, it will be spelled in both languages in *the same* way:

Dutch	Frisian
brute ('brute')	brute
accu ('battery')	akku

Finally, the spelling of the /i/ is completely different:

vowel	Dutch	Frisian
/i/	kiel ('keel')	kyl
	biet ('beet')	byt
	die ('those')	dy

#### 7.2.1.2. Some other important elements of 'the familiar' in vocalism

Below three other important similarities between Frisian and Dutch follow, which fall under 'the familiar'. Since I must limit myself to only indicating parallels, there is of course no room for all kinds of details.

- a. Spelled the same are the *long vowels* aa /a:/, ee /e:/, oo /o:/ and eu /ö:/, both in open and closed syllable and at the end of a word.  
In addition, Frisian has also, in comparison with Dutch, an extra number of long vowels: the ii /i:/, ê /e:/, ô/â /ɔ:/, û /u:/ and the ú /ü:/. These must be learned separately.
- b. Also spelled the same are the *diphthongs* oei /ui/, ui /Nü/ and au/ou /ɔ:/, again in open and closed syllable and at the end of a word.

The *ij/ei* /ɛi/ and *aai* /a:i/ are spelled the same and can also be pronounced the same, depending on the concrete word and on the dialect of the speaker. Another spelling, namely (Dutch) *ooi* - (Fr.) *oai*, but the same pronunciation applies for the /o:i/.

Also in the area of diphthongs Frisian has a richer variety than Dutch. This concerns *ai* /ai/ /ɛi/, *ie* /iə/, *ea* /iə/, *oe* /uə/, *oa* /oə/, *ue* /üə/ and *eo* /ʌə/. Because of its complex character I will leave the spelling of *ieu/ iuw* aside.

- c. I will conclude this incomplete overview by pointing out spelling similarities in the area of *etymology*, in particular in words with *au/ou* and *ij/ei*.

### 7.2.2. Consonantism

Most spelling methods for Frisian pay little attention to the consonants, probably because, in comparison with the vowels, they cause few difficulties. There are two reasons for this: 1. The spelling of the consonants is, just as in Dutch, especially based on the phonological principle. 2. Also on the grounds of what was stated under point 1, the spelling of Frisian shows here relatively few deviations from Dutch (an important exception to this is formed by the group of weak verbs to be treated hereafter).

Some examples:

Dutch		Frisian
bof	('mumps')	<i>bof</i>
dak	('roof')	<i>dak</i>
huigen	('uvulas')	<i>hûgen</i>
jol	('yawl')	<i>jol</i>
mop	('joke')	<i>mop</i>
wever	('weaver')	<i>wever</i>
tas	('bag')	<i>tas</i>

I will mention as an illustration a few other important similarities between Dutch and Frisian in the spelling of the consonants.

- The same spelling applies for the consonants *b*, *d*, *s* and *f* at the end of a word; for the *b* and the *d* the principle of uniformity applies for both languages, for the *s* and the *f* that of the pronunciation.
- In both languages *doubling of the consonant* occurs after the short vowels *i* /i/, *e* /ɛ/, *u* /ʊ/, *a* /a/, *o* /o/ and *o* /ɔ/, but *no doubling* after the short vowels *ie* /y/, *uu* /ü/ and *oe* /ʌ/.

There is likewise no doubling after *long vowels* and after *diphthongs*. This rule applies for the long vowels *aa* /a:/, *ee* /e:/, *oo* /o:/, *eu* /ö:/ and for the diphthongs *oei* /ui/, *ui* / **Ä** /, *au/ou* /**Ö** /, *ij/ei* /**Ë** /, as well as for the *aa* /a:/ and *ooi/oai* /o:i/, in so far as the phenomenon could be existent there.

In addition, no doubling occurs after the long vowels and diphthongs, which Frisian has extra (unless these vowels and diphthongs undergo breaking). There are numerous uniformities related to *morphological* phenomena, such as inflections of verbs, forms of the plural and of the diminutive and affixes.

### 7.3. The phonological principle

#### 7.3.1. Introduction

Within 'the familiar' there are a great number of spelling rules which are based on the phonological principle, e.g. the spelling of the short vowels such as *a*, *e*, *i*, long such as *aa*, *ee*, *oo* (and in Frisian also *ê* and *ii*) and the *s* and *f* at the end of a word. I will not mention them here again separately. In more elaborate didactics I believe it must be done: in this way the pupil receives a clear insight into the importance and the range of the phonological principle.

#### 7.3. 1.1. Verb forms

In addition to seven (irregular) verbs ending in *-n*, Frisian has two classes of weak verbs, the one ending in *-e* (Dutch *-en*), the other in *-je* (not in Dutch). In my comparison hereafter I will leave aside the relatively small group of strong and other irregular verbs (in both languages about 200 altogether), because they have a deviating conjugation, which must be learned for each case.

When forming the *present* tense forms of verbs ending in (Dutch) *-en* - (Fr.) *-e* the rules of, among others, analogy and uniformity are operative. If we consider a form such as '(hy) laadt' ('(he) loads'), then the *d* can be explained on the basis of the uniformity with the *d* in the infinitive (Dutch) 'laden' / (Fr.) 'lade' ('to load') and the *t* according to an analogy of this sound in forms such as '(hy) wint' ('(he) wins'). However, in a form such as '(hy) sett' ('(he) puts') the principle of analogy is secondary to that of the pronunciation: on the grounds of the first principle we should spell '(hy) sett', but in such a situation there is no consonant doubling in either Dutch or Frisian.

Nevertheless, when forming the *past* tense forms Dutch and Frisian differ. Whereas for Dutch the rules of analogy and uniformity also apply, for Frisian the rule of pronunciation is applicable. This can be made clear from the inflection forms of the two main types of weak verbs ending in *-en/-e*. For this purpose I

will choose a verb ending in *-te(n)* ('prate(n)' ('to talk')) and in *-de(n)* ('lade(n)' ('to load')).

Dutch			Frisian		
ik	praat-te	laad-de	ik	pra-te	la-de
jij	praat-te	laad-de	do	pra-test*	la-dest*
hij	praat-te	laad-de	hy	pra-te	la-de
wij	praat-ten	laad-den	wy	pra-ten	la-den
jullie	praat-ten	laad-den	jimme	pra-ten	la-den
zij	praat-ten	laad-den	sy	pra-ten	la-den

\* originally and especially still in the case of elderly people in certain regions: 'praat-ste' and 'laad-ste'

In my opinion, the difference between both languages has been made sufficiently visible in this way. For comprehensiveness I will also state that doubling of the consonant, therefore *-tt-* or *-dd-*, is necessary in Frisian if the pronunciation requires it, therefore for example '(ik) sette' /setə/ ('(I) put'), '(ik) bidde' /bidə/ ('(I) prayed').

As already stated, in comparison with Dutch, Frisian also has an extra class of weak verbs, namely the (considerable) group in *-je*. For this type it applies for both the forms of the past tense and of the present tense that the phonological principle is applicable. I will demonstrate this with the verb 'hoedzje' ('to tend').

Frisian			Dutch		
ik	hoed-zje	hoed-e	ik	hoed	hoed-de
do	hoed-est	hoed-est	jij	hoed-t	hoed-de
hy	hoed-et	hoed-e	hij	hoed-t	hoed-de
wy	hoed-zje	hoed-en	wij	hoed-en	hoed-den
jimme	hoed-zje	hoed-en	jullie	hoed-en	hoed-den
sy	hoed-zje	hoed-en	zij	hoed-en	hoed-den

Taking everything into consideration, we can state that between Dutch and Frisian, in addition to similarities, considerable differences also exist in the spelling of the weak verb forms. Purely from the point of view of Frisian, the advantage of the dominant character of the phonological principle applies: '(hy) lade' appears in itself to be easier to learn than '(hij) laadde'. From a didactic point of view this is problematic for my target group. However, purely from the point of view of Frisian the phonological spelling of the previously treated verb

forms indeed appears to be an advantage: there are indications that the phonological principle is easier to apply than the morphological principle (Assink 1985:143; Nieuwenhuijsen 1995: 56, 58-59). On the other hand, there is the great disadvantage that the learners of the Frisian spelling are confronted with a deviating rule: after all, the often so laboriously acquired morphological rule no longer applies. Further research could make it clear whether the possible advantage of linking up with the pronunciation of Frisian weighs up against the disadvantage of deviating from Dutch.

#### 7.3.1.2. *Some other important elements of 'the phonological principle'*

Just as with 'the familiar' I will limit myself here to a few important examples.

- a. The *contraction* of the *long vowels* (not occurring in Dutch) *ii* /i:/, *ê* /ɛ:/ and *ô/â* /ɔ:/ to *y* /i/ respectively, *e* /ɛ/ and *o/a* /ɔ:/ is visible in the spelling, such as in 'bêd' ('bed') - 'bedsje' ('small bed').
- b. At the *word beginning* there is only the voiceless *f*- and *s*-, such as in 'fisk' ('fish') and 'see' ('sea') and not the voiced *v*- and *z*-. Dutch adheres to the voiced pronunciation, in spite of an increasing realization of the *f*- and the *s*-, especially in the West Netherlands.
- c. Recognition of the difference in pronunciation between the *voiceless* *ch* /χ/, e.g. in 'each' ('eye') and the voiced *g* /ɣ/, e.g. in 'eagen' ('eyes'). Compare also: 'seachje' ('small saw') - 'seagje' ('to saw'). In Dutch the difference in pronunciation which also exists there is not made visible. Compare: 'oog' /o:/ - 'ogen' /o:ɣən/ ('eye' - 'eyes').
- d. Save a few exceptions (e.g. 'ieuwenâld' ('age-old')), Frisian has no *intermediate -n in compounds*, therefore in conformity with the pronunciation 'boekekast' ('bookcase'), 'hinnehok' ('chicken coop'), 'heldedied' ('heroic deed') etc. In Dutch this intermediate -n is written as a rule, but generally does not belong there linguistically. In cases where it does, it is realized optionally (with a strong tendency of being unrealized in the received pronunciation).

Although I must leave aside the foreign words, as already remarked in §1, the spelling of which has not yet been definitely laid down in a number of aspects (Westra 1994), I will point out here that, in so far as it has been laid down, they are written much more according to the pronunciation in Frisian than in Dutch. As opposed to a possible advantage from a didactic perspective, there is the disadvantage of discrepancy with Dutch, just as with the orthography of a part of the weak verbs.

#### 7.4. Some important 'other cases'

In §§ 7.2 and 7.3 a number of important cases were mentioned which fall under 'the familiar' and the 'phonological principle' respectively. Also outside these two main groups there are still essential elements of the Frisian spelling system to be mentioned. I consider them in principle more difficult to learn than the examples from the previous categories because with the 'other cases' neither knowledge of Dutch nor of the pronunciation offer support. I will again give a few examples.

- a. *Nasality* plays a greater role in Frisian than in Dutch. Many, especially short vowels, can be nasalized, for example by lengthening the basic word with *-s/* *-s* + other consonant(s). Although the quality of the vowel clearly changes, the spelling generally stays the same on the grounds of the rule of *uniformity*. The phenomenon occurs in for example '(ik) win' /wɪn/ ('(I) win') - '(do) winst' /wɪ.st/ ('(you) win'), 'jûn' /jun/ ('evening')- 'jûns' /jũ.s/ ('in the evening'), 'wa' /wa:/ ('who') - 'waans' /wã:s/ ('whose').
- b. In the case of *assimilation* in both Dutch and Frisian, again on the grounds of the rule of *uniformity*, the word in which the phenomenon occurs is nevertheless generally written according to the basic form. For the spelling of Frisian especially those forms which deviate from Dutch are difficult. I have in mind *verb forms* such as '(do) litst' /list/ ('(you) let'), '(do) liest' /liəst/ ('(you) let'), '(do) silst' /sɪst/ ('(you) shall'), *breaking cases* such as 'fier' /fiər/ ('far') - 'fierte' /fiutə/ ('distance') and *plural forms* such as 'iter' /itər/ ('eater') - 'iters' /itəs/ ('eaters') and 'lekken' /lɛkən/ ('sheet') - 'lekkens' /lɛkəs/ ('sheets').
- c. Frisian has many *mute letters*, certainly again in comparison with Dutch. They are written on the basis of the rule of *etymology*. This applies in particular to the *r* before the *dentals* *d*, *n*, *t*, *l*, *s* and *z* (e.g. in 'burd' /bʌt/ ('beard'), the *l* before *d* and *t* (e.g. in 'âld' /ʌt/ ('old')), the *k* at the end of a word (e.g. in 'Sweedsk' /Swe:ts/ ('Swedish')), the *h* at the beginning of a word (e.g. in 'hja' /ja:/ ('she' 'they')) and the *j*, *d* and *f* in a very limited number of words (e.g. in 'jier' /iər/ ('year')).
- d. The Dutch articles 'een' ('a') and 'het' ('the') have the same pronunciation in Frisian, but they are spelled differently: 'in' and 'it' respectively. Although it concerns isolated cases here I mention them because of their high frequency.

#### 8. Conclusion

My didactics of the spelling of Frisian undoubtedly cover the greatest part of the



spelling rules, although it is difficult to indicate to what extent. The question is how far my approach will also lead to better and quicker results than the usual methods. As already said in § 1, the first results are encouraging. I hope after a further testing in practice to come with a detailed spelling method within not too long a period of time. I will of course also use as a basis other, in my view, important didactic points of departure not discussed here, such as the combination of a visual and auditive approach, integration of spelling education in the complete language education, evaluation and differentiation. An essential part of a teaching method is of course also training exercise.

My didactics have been inspired to a great extent by the bilingual situation of Dutch-Frisian in Friesland. Its usefulness will therefore have to be expressed within this framework in the first instance. Nevertheless, it is perhaps worthwhile to research even broader connections: also the spelling of modern foreign languages such as French, German and English is based on the same four main rules. For that matter, French and English in particular are far removed from the phonological principle.

*Rijksuniversiteit Groningen  
Fries Instituut*

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