

[0053]

A reply to Mr. Hoekema.

I am indeed sorry that my formulation of the Frisian sound system 'forrifelt de lêzer efkes'. Mr. Hoekema is, of course, correct in his objection to my analysis of nasalized vowels (\tilde{V}), and I am grateful to him for calling my attention to the error. His example from French, *teste* and *tête*, is very well chosen; although my error is quite definitely orthographic rather than the mixing of synchronic and diachronic levels (although, of course, the grapheme `n' after certain vowels does represent a former actual pronunciation of an alveolar nasal continuant). I think that this is a good illustration of how carefully even a trained phonetician must (to use one of Professor Brouwer's favorite English words) `beware' of spellings in phonemic analysis and of how carefully he must listen to his informant.

What bothered me most was the limited distribution of nasalization in Frisian -- that is, the fact that / \tilde{V} / only occurs before certain consonants. But, of course, it is quite frequently the case that phonemes are 'defective'-witness, for example English /ŋ/ which occurs only finally and medially before velar consonants and /h/ which occurs only initially.

The temptations of graphemic residues are interestingly present in some English dialects, and causes great difficulties in phonemic analysis. In the 'r-less' dialects of English (British, Eastern United States, etc.) there is an allophonic or non-distinctive difference in vowel length in many word pairs which is attributable to voicing or lack of it in the following consonants, for example: [gat] 'got', [ga:d] 'God'; [pat] 'pot', [pa:d] 'pod', etc. Thus, phonemically /gat/ /gad/ /pat/ /pad./ The difficulty in the analysis of the 'r-less' dialects occurs when word pairs *written with "r"* are phonemically distinct *not* as a result of contrast in final consonant but rather as the result of the diachronic 'loss of 'r' ': e.g. [had], 'hod',¹⁾ [ha:d], 'hard', [kad] 'cod', [ka:d] 'card', etc. Now in these dialects of English, shall we suspend the laws of consistency long enough to say that sometimes vowel length is phonemic and sometimes it is not? Or should we resort to the diachronic method of pointing at 'r' and saying 'That is the culprit.' Mr. Hoekema would say that the latter course would be very dubious, and I must say I agree with him.

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1) British English has, of course, a rounded variant here; but there are some dialects of Eastern U.S. English where there is no qualitative but only a quantitative distinction.