

# TURNING THE TABLES ON PRE-EMPTIVE NEUTRALIZATION WHEN SETTING UP UNDERLYING REPRESENTATIONS

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There is a principle of reconstruction in historical linguistics and morphological analysis (and even in discredited phonemics) concerning neutralization that would seem to be off the screen as far as glottometrists doing cross-lectal analysis are concerned. Suppose a variety of English has got five unstressed nuclei and upwards of twenty stressed nuclei--the former being systematically related to the latter. Or suppose that a language like Marshallese has got (surfictionally, at least) twelve nuclei in formal pronunciation but, with neutralization, only nine in normal pronunciation. When phonemics existed, this was called the problem of *archiphonemes*.

The question facing us here is whether an underlying representation should indicate a neutralized unit--like whatever appears after tautosyllabic //s// in English *spy* rather than, say, the underlying difference between //p// in *pie* and //b// in *buy* and *bye*. Commonsense shows that while you can get to the neutralized form from one or both differentiated forms, you cannot get to those from the neutralized form. If this is so obvious in minilectal analysis, why is it so inobvious in glottometry, which tries to derive lects as variant as Okrakoke, Southern States English, and even Ulster English from very neutralized American northern East Coast English or even a mythical "network" English? If the "Keltic" types of English and Southern States English exhibit far fewer vowel-neutralizations (and even consonant neutralizations) than the mythical model, should *this--IF an existing lect has got to be selected as the basic format--*be the model for deriving the others? Better, shouldn't all be derived from an underlying pan-English model? If one cannot create one with the reconstructive and comparative methods, why is one doing cross-lectal analysis in the first place? The positivist, monolectal mentality is out of place here.

Even a beginning comparatist knows that if some lects change \*w to [v] while one or more others keep [w], the antecedent from which both are derived has got to be \*w; the mother language may have an independent [v], with which [v] from \*w merges. But the glottometrists furnish examples parallel to choosing underlying-*v* and trying to get to the *v/w* difference from there. Take *Mary*, *marry*, *merry* (and *Murray*), which are distinct in "Keltic" English and in British English generally as well as in Tidewater English and Southern States English.\* How can one get to these from an underlying neutralized sound found in, say, Northern "network" English, where they are all merged, or from northern New Jersey speech, where *Mary* has come to sound like *marry* in some subvarieties? But the positivist mentality runs into a contradiction, since comparative work is at war

with the essence of the positivist mentality. This work amounts to a covert monolectism. (This is evident on other grounds, as I've shown in *Variation in the data*.) It would be odious to cite actual analyses and dissertations to prove the point; CHECK IT OUT if you are entertaining any doubts!

But it is also true that glottometrists most often deal with only a handful of sound variants or syntactic constructs. The damage is consequently minimal enough (in many instances) that the paralogism, or indeed antilogism, of using minilectal models (they even use phonemes!) for polylectal analysis is not so glaring. It is worth adding that, since English syntax and morphology do not differ from lect to lect so very much, most of the damage occurs in phonetology. In the old days, one used to derive cleft and cloven sentences from the un-cloven ones, though it would be easier to begin with the multiplicity and derive the neutralized (un-cloven) type from any of them--but what a mess to have so many underlying representations. (Let those who now reject transformations and concentrate on surface forms hold their peace; I'm just giving an example for the point being made.) But fairly soon, one began to derive plain, cleft, and cloven sentences from a single, systematically more satisfying, abstract underlying form. That gave the system greater coherence. However, the positivist is repelled by such proceedings. Yet, even Bloomfield the behaviorist promoted (in morphology) the logic of beginning with the feminines in French and deriving the masculines from them--just the opposite of what the writers of textbooks do.

The principle advocated here is based on the commonsensical notion that *it's easy enough to subtract something from a whole, but getting to other parts of the whole from a single part is not on*. It's hard to see why glottometrists cannot understand this when they engage in cross-lectal analysis. (An unnatural development that reverses natural development, say one in which an older form is borrowed in place of a later form, is treated just like a natural development; and hypercorrections are, alas, considered to offer principles of [natural] linguistic development.)

It may sometimes happen in phonomorphology that it's easier to add something to a simple form than to try to get that out of a longer derivative. But that works only for languages with simple CV sound systems. If English *emergency* : *emergence* both end in //t+y//--//t// being affected by //y// exactly the way it is affected by /y/ in *inertia*--the formative //+y// can be subtracted to get *emergent* and also to get *emergence*--where //+y// gets deleted AFTER //t// has been spirantized (by a //y// not separated from it by a #) in the exception-marking unmarked rule ordering. (The derivation of *emergence* illustrates one aspect of changing rules from an unexceptional marked order to an exception-marking unmarked order. Note, incidentally, that *polity* : *policy* cannot be analysed with final //t+y//. For *polity*, like *special(i)ty*, has got to end in //t+i//, while solid reasons can be given for having *sooty*) end in //t#i//.)

One has sought to show that scientific procedure is defied when one analyses non-neutralized data from a neutralized basis. If it is not true that a rule is a rule

is a rule is a rule (which seems to what the glottometrist positivist concludes from excluding "natural" rules), it is also true that the whole cannot be derived from the part. Even in rhetoric, *pars pro toto* implies foreknowledge of the whole.

\*GEMINATION of internuclear //r// occurs only after heavy nuclei (cf. *vaRry*) in "non-Keltic" lects outside of the northerly and western parts of North America; the last-named varieties have geminate satellite-R also in *very* (*veRry*) (cf. satellite-L in their pronunciations of *siLly*). In British and most kinds of Southern States English, [r] is not tautosyllabic with the preceding stressed nucleus in *marry* and *merry*.) In contrast with obstruents and nasals, which are tautosyllabic with a preceding full-stressed nucleus, internuclear liquids and (in the Southern States and some British types) glides are tautosyllabic with the following vowel, whatever the stress. (Hence, *Myer* and *Ma~ya* contrast no less than do *feel* and *l-less fi(l)~ial* [ending in [y] plus syllabic-*l*]. But in the northerly parts of North America, gemination of internuclear liquids and glides causes the geminate satellite [cf. *veR~ry* as well as //y// in *lawy~er*] to be tautosyllabic with a preceding stressed nucleus.) In older phases of English, the glides were everywhere syllabized with a preceding stressed nucleus; contrast older *lee+w~ard* (like *stew~ard*) with current *lee#ward*; older Southerners in the US even had *lo~yal*; younger Southerners say *Ma~ya*, *law~yer*, *La Jo~lla*, etc. *Pishaw~ar* was pronounced this way when the British first came across the place; and that has generally been retained; but *Otta~wa* is so pronounced.



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