

# The Language Situation in the Low Countries

Lecture 2. Essentials of the Dutch language | Phonology

Pavel Rudnev

*University of Groningen*

p.rudnev@rug.nl

18th February 2016

# Last week

## Preliminaries

- ▶ about this course
- ▶ practicalities

The Saxon and Franconian elements — the languages of the Netherlands and Belgium — their status and vitality.

- ▶ terminology: a few definitions
- ▶ the territory
- ▶ Dutch and its neighbours

# Course topics

11/02/2016 Introduction: the languages of the Netherlands and Belgium

## **18/02/2016 Essentials of the Dutch language**

25/02/2016 continued from 18th February

03/03/2016 The history of Dutch

10/03/2016 continued from 3rd March

17/03/2016 Dutch orthography

14/04/2016 Purism and school grammar

21/04/2016 Dialects of Dutch; Frisian

28/04/2016 Dutch-based creole languages; Afrikaans

05/05/2016 Dutch sociolinguistics

# Aims for today

- ▶ phonetics and phonology
- ▶ the sounds of Dutch
  - ▶ Dutch consonants
  - ▶ Dutch vowels
    - ▶ monophthongs
    - ▶ diphthongs
- ▶ some phonetic and phonological processes
  - ▶ final devoicing
  - ▶ /n/-deletion

# Phonetics and phonology

What's in a name?

- ▶ phone (from Greek *φωνή* 'sound')

Similar but different

- ▶ both deal with the sound aspects of our language system, yet
  - ▶ **phonetics** studies the *physical aspect* of sounds, whereas
  - ▶ **phonology** is concerned with the *abstract aspect* of sounds
- ▶ expressed in an aphorism attributable to Dennis Preston,
  - ▶ the ear hears phonetics, but the brain hears phonology

# Notation: The International Phonetic Alphabet

- ▶ spelling is confusing: too many sounds and too few characters to represent them
- ▶ solution? → a dedicated alphabet
  - ▶ IPA
  - ▶ IPA for Dutch
- ▶ we'll revisit the relationship between pronunciation and spelling later in the term

# Phones and phonemes

## Phones

- ▶ sounds

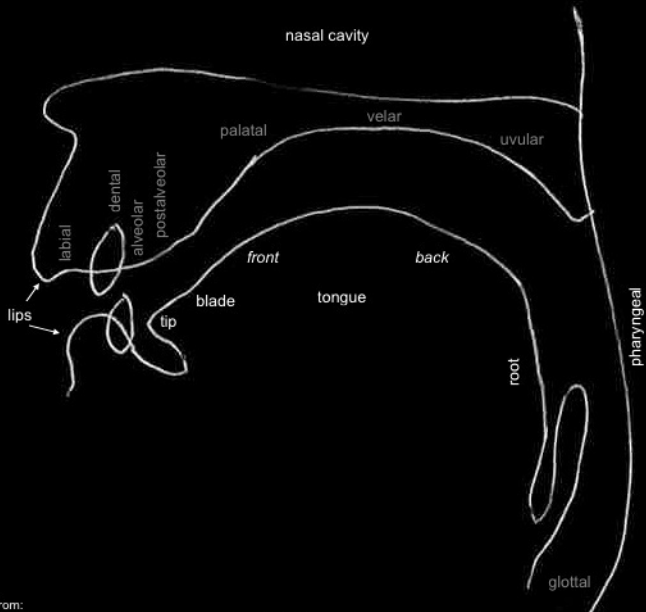
## Phonemes

- ▶ phones contributing to differences in meaning: /X + -æɪ/
- ▶ /kæɪ/ – /mæɪ/ – /hæɪ/ – /ræɪ/ – /pæɪ/ – /sæɪ/ – /fæɪ/
- ▶ sometimes sounds are clearly different yet are interpreted identically:
  - ▶ *night rate* vs. *nitrate*
  - ▶ *water – top – stop* etc.

## Minimal pairs

- ▶ pairs of words differing in one segment only, *e.g.*
  - ▶ dance – dense
  - ▶ pit – bit

# Sound production



adapted from:



# The sounds of Dutch: consonants

Medeklinkers | Consonantes | Kontsonanteak | Konsonanten  
Согласные | Ünsüzler | 辅音 | 닿소리

|             |           | Labial | Alveolar | Post-alveolar | Dorsal | Glottal |
|-------------|-----------|--------|----------|---------------|--------|---------|
| Nasal       |           | m      | n        |               | ŋ      |         |
| Plosive     | voiced    | b      | d        |               | (g)    |         |
|             | voiceless | p      | t        |               | k      | (ʔ)     |
| Fricative   | voiced    | v      | z        | (ʒ)           | ɣ      | ɦ       |
|             | voiceless | f      | s        | (ʃ)           | x      |         |
| Approximant |           | ʋ      | l        |               | j      |         |
| Rhotic      |           |        |          | r             |        |         |

Figure 2: Dutch consonants

# The sounds of Dutch: consonants

Example words for consonants

# The sounds of Dutch: vowels

Klinkers | Vocales | Bokalak | Vokale | Гласные | Ünlüler | 元音 | 홀소리

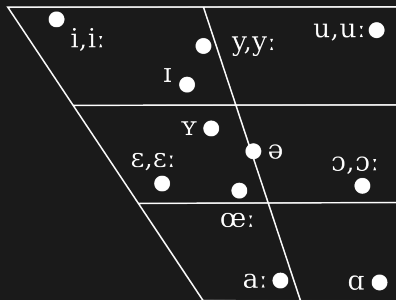


Figure 1: Netherlandic

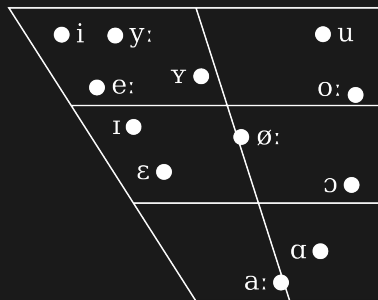


Figure 2: Belgian

Figure 3: Standard Dutch monophthongs

# The sounds of Dutch: vowels

## Diphthongs

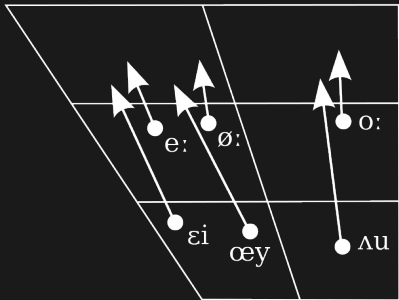


Figure 1: Netherlandic

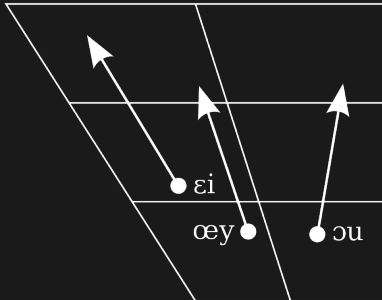


Figure 2: Belgian

Figure 4: Dutch diphthongs

# The sounds of Dutch: vowels

Example words for vowels

# Phonological processes: Final devoicing

- ▶ voiced obstruents not found syllable-finally, cf.
  - ▶ [hant] ‘hand’ vs. [hænd]
  - ▶ {hænd}
- ▶ consider [hant] ‘hand’ vs. [kant] ‘side’:
  - ▶ do they form they a minimal pair?
    - ▶ yes, as they only differ in the initial segment
    - ▶ but is that sufficient?
  - ▶ how many different phonemes are there?

# Phonological processes: Final devoicing

/ħant/ vs. /kant/

Two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1

[ħant] vs. [kant] form a minimal pair

► /ħant/ vs. /kant/

# Phonological processes: Final devoicing

/hant/ vs. /kant/

Two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1

[hant] vs. [kant] form a minimal pair

- ▶ /hant/ vs. /kant/

However, if we pluralise both nouns, we get

- ▶ /'handə(n)/ but /'kantə(n)/

- ▶ why is that?



# Phonological processes: Final devoicing

/hant/ vs. /kant/

## Hypothesis 2

[hant] vs. [kant] don't form a minimal pair

- ▶ the voiceless *sound* [t] in [hant] is in fact underlyingly voiced *phoneme* /d/ (i.e. /hand/)
- ▶ but turns into [t] due to an independently existing process
- ▶ every Dutch speaker knows this before the age of 3
  - ▶ how?

# Phonological processes: Final devoicing

Let's see if other pairs of voiced-voiceless consonants behave in a similar fashion:

- ▶ /s/ – /z/

- ▶ /hœyz/, phonetically [hœys] ‘house’ → /hœyzə(n)/ ‘houses’
- ▶ /kaus/, phonetically [kaus] ‘stocking’ → /kausə(n)/ ‘stockings’

- ▶ /x/ – /ɣ/

- ▶ /laxə/ ‘to laugh’ → /laxtə/, phonetically [laxtə] ‘laughed’
- ▶ /vlaxə/ ‘to flag’ → /vlaxdə/, phonetically [vlaxdə] ‘flagged’
  - ▶ even more stunning, as both phonemes are phonetically indistinguishable

# Phonological processes: /n/-deletion

- ▶ a syllable-final /n/ can be deleted:
  - ▶ *regen* /reɣən/ ['reɣə] or ['reɣən] or ['reɣŋ]
- ▶ but there are exceptions:
  - ▶ *teken* /tekən/ ['tekə(n)] 'sign' vs. *(ik) teken* ['tekən] '(I) draw'
  - ▶ *open* /opən/ ['opə(n)] 'open' vs. *(ik) open* ['opən] '(I) open'

Next time: Syntax

## Useful links on Dutch phonology

- ▶ Taalportaal <http://taalportaal.org/taalportaal/topic/>
- ▶ more to come