

## DUTCH MARGINAL PHONEMES AND THE ADAPTATION OF ENGLISH LOANS

Jan Posthumus, Department of English, University of Groningen,  
The Netherlands

A study of the adaptation of English loans highlights the existence of a fairly extensive, already well-established set of loan phonemes, readily drawn upon by the educated Dutch speaker for the pronunciation of foreign loans.

Qualifying for membership of this set are nine vowels and three consonants, most of them related in a fairly simple way to members of the primary system. In current accounts of Dutch phonology these marginal phonemes only receive scant attention. This paper will examine their status within the Dutchman's total inventory by seeking answers to the following questions: 1. In approximately how many words does the phoneme occur? 2. Are there common words among them used by all strata of the population? 3. To what extent do we find alternative pronunciations in which the loan phoneme is replaced by a member of the primary system?

It will be further pointed out how the influx of the more recent English loans is affecting the status of each loan phoneme. Attention is also drawn to certain areas of indecision in the adaptation of the English phonemes.

The following conclusions are drawn: Of the phonemes in question, /ɛ:/ and /ɜ,ʒ/ are irreplaceable members of the Dutch speaker's system; /ɔ:/ and /i:/ are well-established in certain words, but have alternatives in others; the same holds for /u:/, which, however, occurs in rather fewer words, now mostly English; /g/ is, on the whole, easily replaceable by /ɣ/ in older, mostly French loans, though not yet in English loans; /æ:/ and /ɤ:/ are so rare that they are little more than curiosities; lastly, the use of nasal vowels in French loans marks the well-educated speaker who knows his French: replacement by oral vowel plus nasal is practically always possible.