

Schwa (Re: non-phonetic english spelling)

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Bart Mathias wrote:

- > *In what way? The devoiced (or fricated[?], after a fricative) vowels in*
- > *Japanese are all lexically "there," not added because consonants have to*
- > *be released. In French there are perhaps two kinds, lexical as in, say,*
- > *"monde," and rule-derived, as in "cinq."*

Vous vous fourrez tous le doigt dans l'oeil jusqu'au coude.

Why?

Because you are trying to fit disparate phonetic phenomena into an arbitrary word ("schwa") instead of trying to find what makes the phenomena tick.

There is no "French schwa". There is an epenthetic vowel the phonetic value of which oscillates between rounded and less rounded, central and less central, and so on, the presence or absence of which is partly predictable, partly unpredictable. To call it "schwa" is fine. But to try to fit it into the Procrustean bed of English schwa (or, Jehovah forbid! Hebrew schwa)... it's a bit like... yes... here is my "Grammaire de la langue tahitienne" by R.D. Lovy and L.-J. Bouge... page 81:

Conjugaison de quelques verbes

Fabriquer (Conditionnel présent):

Je fabriquerais, si... E hamani au, ahiri...

and, page 88:

Etre arrêté -- Passé lointain, indéfini:

J'ai été arrêté Ua tapeahia vau

It's a bit like that.

I wrote: "There is an epenthetic vowel".

Well, no. I should have written: "there are circumstances ("environments" if you prefer) where an epenthetic vowel...". And there are circumstances when a vowel which was or should be there disappears in a puff of orange smoke(*), and you have no real idea why ... and when not.

(* Allusion to "Colossal Cave".