

## Re: non-phonetic english spelling

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John A Rea <[j.rea2@insightbb.com](mailto:j.rea2@insightbb.com)> wrote:

> *Greg Lee wrote:*

>> *John A Rea <[j.rea2@insightbb.com](mailto:j.rea2@insightbb.com)> wrote:*

>> ...

>>

>>> *In phonology, this term and its symbol are often called "the (note*

>>> *the definite article) reduced vowel.*

>>

>>

>> *That definite article can have a phonetic interpretation: schwa*

>> *is that unique vowel which is unrounded, not front, not back,*

> ^^^^^^^

> *Yet descriptions of French phonetics and French phonology*

> *usually describe the vowel they call "mute e" or "schwa"*

> *as being rounded. But on this one had best check with*

> *native speakers of "French"*

Yes. I don't doubt that it's rounded. I was just expressing a prescriptivist longing for a phonetic understanding of a phonetic symbol. If one were to reserve "schwa" for the phonetically neutral vowel, a rounded vowel would not be called schwa, and the world would be a better place.

I guess that the impulse to call a low front rounded vowel in Canadian French "schwa" is the same as what makes some transcribe the caret of "cut" as schwa. When an American English speaker tries to pronounce schwa in isolation, since he stresses it, what comes out is caret. This association between schwa and the caret vowel is an idiosyncrasy of the Am. English phonological system, though. In a transcription which is supposed to be phonetic, it's a contaminant.

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