

Re: Russian vowel <bl>

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Peter T. Daniels kirjoitti:

but a linguist might make the mistake of assuming that the [a] of language L1 is "the same" (in some mysterious way) as the [a] of language L2.

If L1 and L2 both have the vocalic system /i a u/ (as many languages do), then the /a/ of L1 is indeed "the same" as the /a/ of L2 (in some very straightforward way), regardless of the phonetic realizations of the low vowel.

That's exactly what I meant by "mistake". After abstracting out a phonological system with maximised oppositions like /i a u/, the linguist can easily claim to have found a universal like eg. "every language has a low and a high vowel". Of course: if you first modify the data to suit your intentions, you shouldn't be surprised that it does just that. Phoneticians can only sigh.

This what I find so baffling in linguists: even when they claim to work with "real" language data, they actually add layer after layer of abstractions to it so that in the end what they're studying is just their own theoretical constructions.

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Csak fűvön lt a kis zebra,
de most rkapott a zabra;
vgűl is elvittk Szobra,
ott oktattk szebbre-jobbra.
-Devecseri Gbor-

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