

Re: French verb conjugation: "je harcele"? or "je harcelle"?

Re: French verb conjugation: "je harcele"? or "je harcelle"?

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2008-03/msg01068.html>

- *From:* naddy@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx (Christian Weisgerber)
 - *Date:* Fri, 28 Mar 2008 02:44:08 +0000 (UTC)
-

Adam Funk <a24061@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

I looked in a few apparently IPA-using French-English and French dictionaries: they all use "that upside-down-e" for the vowel in "je" and the first vowel in "jeter", but they use ø (slashed o) for the one in "jeu".

Are the dictionaries consistently misusing the IPA or idealizing French pronunciation,

Those are phonemic transcriptions. They don't necessarily describe the associated sounds precisely. Apart from omitting allophones (no English dictionary distinguishes aspirated and unaspirated voiceless stops), they will also tend to use the most convenient symbol if there is no conflict. IPA-using English dictionaries use /r/, despite this not being an alveolar trill in standard varieties of the language.

or am I wrong in thinking that "upside-down-e" means "schwa"?

It does, but the actual French vowel represented by it is different from the one represented by the same symbol in phonemic transcriptions of, say, English or German.

Regarding the actual phonemic inventory of modern French, the choices offered by the "phonetic" search function of the TLFi site are quite telling:

A Amour
E rEvoir, dEUx
É École, rÊve, AImable
I Innocent
O Obliger, AUrore, burEAU
U Unité

Re: French verb conjugation: "je harcele"? or "je harcelle"?

Re: French verb conjugation: "je harcele"? or "je harcelle"?

OU OUtre
Y fiLLe, raYé, tuYau

AN ANcre
IN INfini, mais aussi brUN
ON ONctueux

So while French dictionaries still maintain a three-way distinction between the vowels in "peu" and "peur" and the first one in "premier", your average French speaker is rather less certain. Most shocking, I know.

—
Christian "naddy" Weisgerber naddy@xxxxxxxxxxxxx