

# Re: BBC does it again

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*Source:* <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2008-06/msg00298.html>

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- *From:* "Brian M. Scott" <b.scott@xxxxxxxxxxx>
  - *Date:* Wed, 11 Jun 2008 12:37:20 -0400
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On Wed, 11 Jun 2008 12:05:23 -0400, Harlan Messinger  
<hmessinger.removethis@xxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in  
<news:6babe2F3a67grU1@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> in sci.lang:

John Atkinson wrote:

"Harlan Messinger" <hmessinger.removethis@xxxxxxxxxxx> wrote...

Brian M. Scott wrote:

Harlan Messinger  
<hmessinger.removethis@xxxxxxxxxxx>  
wrote:

Brian M. Scott wrote:

Harlan  
Messinger  
wrote:

[...]

It  
does

Re: BBC does it again

seem  
(to  
me)  
reasonable  
to  
suggest  
that  
whatever  
phonemic  
representation  
one  
chooses  
to  
use  
ought  
to  
express  
the  
same  
thing  
as  
the  
phonemic  
model  
the  
same  
person  
uses  
to  
describe  
a  
language.  
[...]

I don't  
agree,

Why? Why \*would\* one  
use a representation that  
doesn't  
correspond to the model?  
[...]

John's given one reason. Another is to avoid  
throwing away

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information that may be useful, either to someone else or to me on another occasion. I'm not much interested in abstract phonology; I \*am\* interested in useful description.

Well—the phonetic representation conveys \*that\*!

Quite possibly not: it may convey far too much detail.

I'm talking about the phonemic representation, so by definition we're talking about the abstract phonology.

There is no reason to pretend while doing so that nothing else exists.

Are you saying that a phonemic representation isn't "useful description", or anyway that it's less useful than a phonetic one?

No, I'm saying it serves a different purpose. Since the whole point is that one phoneme can be realized in a given language as all kinds of sounds with different phonetic representations,

No. In principle it would be possible to have a 1–1 match between phonemes and phones (albeit probably not in a human language).

there isn't any constraint calling for the phonemic representation to look like any one of the phonetic ones, or like any of them at all,

There is: it's a usability constraint.

especially if attempting to copy a phonetic representation hides a detail of the phonemic model that it would be useful to convey.

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I'm not talking about hiding anything; I'm talking about showing a little \*more\*.

Brian

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