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## Dorsal Fricative Assimilation and opacity in Modern German

As is known, PGmc \*[x] is realized in Modern German as [x] after a back vowel (e.g. *Bach*), but as [ç] after a front vowel or liquid (e.g. *ich, durch*). The process responsible for the change from velar to palatal is referred to in the literature as Dorsal Fricative Assimilation (DFA). DFA also affected the reflexes of PGmc \*g (usually assumed to be a fricative \*[ɣ]): The overwhelming pattern in Modern German dialects is for \*[ɣ] to be realized as [ɣ] after a back vowel and before a vowel (e.g. *Tage*) and as palatal [j] after a liquid and before a vowel (e.g. *Berge*), or after a front vowel and before a vowel (e.g. *liegen*). In the same dialects, the realization of PGmc \*[ɣ] is predictably velar [x] or palatal [ç] in coda position (due to the effects of Coda Devoicing), depending on the preceding segment, e.g. *lag* with [x] and *liegst* with [ç]. The dialect data described here are confirmed by the generalizations established by [3] (pp. 308-316) and are discussed at length in a more recent treatment by [2].

Synchronically, the surface distribution of [x] and [ç] in the dialects described above is completely transparent – a point stressed by [2]. In rule-based terms, DFA (which affects /x/ and /ɣ/) and Coda Devoicing can apply in either order and the correct output will be obtained. The transparency of the dorsal fricatives is consistent with [2]’s belief that DFA is a ‘completely automatic’ (p. 19) and that it is a ‘low-level, phonetic rule’ (p. 77).

The purpose of this talk is to present data from a German dialect not discussed in [2] which fail to obey the generalizations concerning [x] and [ç] described above. According to [1], PGmc \*[x] is realized in a Low German (Westphalian) dialect as [x] after a back vowel and [ç] after a front vowel (in 1). PGmc \*[ɣ] surfaces as [ɣ] after a liquid and before a vowel (in 2) or between vowels (in 3). Note that \*[ɣ] is consistently realized as [ɣ], even if the preceding vowel is front. Significantly, \*[ɣ] surfaces as [x] in word-final position (via Coda Devoicing), even after a front vowel (in 4). Alternations (i.e. [x]~[ɣ]) permeate the inflectional system (in 5).

- (1) [naxt] Nacht, [lɛçt] Licht, [bɪçtə] Beichte
- (2) [falɣə] Felge, [zuɔrɣə] Sorge
- (3) [ma:ɣə] Magen, [iɣəl] Igel
- (4) [plo:x] Pflug, [de:x] Teig
- (5) [fle:ɣən] fliegen, [flaux] flog

Viewed synchronically, the data in (1-3) require that DFA is active, but that it only affects /x/ and not /ɣ/. Significantly, DFA can only operate successfully if the [x] in examples like [de:x] (from /de:ɣ/) in (4) is not yet present in the synchronic derivation, otherwise one would expect the [x] to surface as [ç]. In rule-based terms, this means that DFA operates before – and counterfeeds – Coda Devoicing.

The upshot of the present talk is that the dialect in [1] provides a serious setback to the claims made by [2] because (a) the distribution of [x] and [ç] is opaque and not transparent, and (b) DFA cannot be a completely automatic, low-level phonetic rule.

## References

- [1] Martin, B. 1925. *Studien zur Dialektgeographie des Fürstentums Waldeck und des nördlichen Teils des Kreises Frankenberg*. Marburg: N. G. Elwert.
- [2] Robinson, O. 2001. *Whose German? The ach/ich alternation and related phenomena in ‘standard’ and ‘colloquial’*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- [3] Schirmunski, V. M. 1962. *Deutsche Mundartkunde. Vergleichende Laut- und Formenlehre der deutschen Mundarten*. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag.

