

Kathrin S. Bussmann (2004)

*Diphthongs in Frisian. A Comparative Analysis of Phonemic Inventories Past and Present* (= Germanistische Bibliothek, Band 21). (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, ISBN: 3-8253-5003-7, xv + 271 s., € 54,00).

No one involved in Frisian linguistics had ever heard of Kathrin Bussmann before the book under consideration, her doctoral thesis, was published. This is for the better and for the worse. For the better, because this guarantees a certain ‘freshness’ of Bussmann's contribution to the field, free of biased points of view. For the worse, because consulting Frisian linguists could have made things much easier for her.

On page 53, Bussmann complains about the paucity of recent linguistic studies of the modern Frisian dialects: “Many of the scholarly descriptions which are available for modern Frisian dialects, particularly for Nfris. ones, are half a century old or older, some dating back to the late 19th century. Unfortunately, they confront today's scholar with a confusing variety of antiquated, idiosyncratic notational systems.” Compare what is said on page 2: “Most of the dialects in these groups [those of the Modern Frisian dialects] have been described, at one time or another, by scholars with various backgrounds and objectives. However, modern phonological analyses of dialects other than Standard New Wfris. are still very few and far between”. No doubt, any Frisian linguist would have recommended Bussmann to first consult the *Handbuch des Friesischen/Handbook of Frisian Studies*. It is hard to understand why this huge and much-praised volume, published as early as 2001, is absent from the References (pages 261-267), to the detriment of Bussmann's study and its primary objective, which is “to provide the phonological community with a broader and more accurate picture of Frisian phonemic vowel systems and the place of diphthongs within them”.

Chapter one starts with an introduction, in which Bussmann gives a brief chronology of Frisian and sets out the scope and objectives of her study. But above all she introduces the theoretical context and framework of her phonological journey through the world of Frisian diphthongs. Chapter two gives an overview of Old Frisian, whereas chapter three is devoted to Modern Frisian, i.e. West-Frisian (and its dialects), East-Frisian, and (the dialects of) North-Frisian. With its 84 pages, this is the longest chapter by far. Chapter four offers a comparative analysis, in which Bussmann tries to arrive at generalisations over the findings of the previous chapter, e.g. as to the size of phonemic diphthong inventories, the most common diphthong types, length, rounding, and accentuation as a redundant feature of diphthongs, and the reflexes of certain Old Frisian diphthongs in Modern Frisian. Bussmann also investigates how Frisian, diphthongally speaking, fits into West-Germanic as a whole. Chapter five – with its four pages the shortest one – tries to set up a taxonomy of vowel-system types, followed by some conclusions. The two appendices offer overviews of the various Old and Modern Frisian diphthongs and the lexemes in which they occur, comprising no less than 80 pages. These are fol-

lowed by the References and a Zusammenfassung. According to the Table of Contents, a *Lebenslauf* concludes the book, but this career record is nowhere to be found. As we will see, Bussmann's book exhibits more instances of this type of carelessness.

In this review, I will concentrate on Bussmann's analysis of Modern West Frisian, called Standard New West-Frisian (henceforth: SNWF), for the obvious reasons that this is the language which I am most familiar with and to the diphthongs of which I have devoted several pages in my doctoral thesis from 1977 (*The Syllable in Frisian*).

In comparison to the other Frisian dialects, the space allotted to the analysis of SNWF is inversely proportional to its number of speakers. This is partly due to the fact that for SNWF Bussmann could rely on more in-depth grammatical studies than are available for the other dialects. But Bussmann's analysis is different as well. Whereas for the other dialects she treats every diphthong separately, the diphthongs of SNWF are grouped together. This has the advantage that similar things need not be stated at several places.

Bussmann asserts that both the falling diphthongs ([a.j], [ɛ.j], [ʌ.y], [ɔ.w], [o.j]) and the centering ones ([i.ə], [y.ə], [u.ə], [I.ə], [ö.ə], [o.ə]) have (mono)phonemic status. As to the former, this is demonstrated by their "indivisibility in prevocalic position". Bussmann's phonetic transcriptions, however, do not include the glide which is inserted between a falling diphthong and the initial vowel of a following syllable (provided they all belong to the same word). As to the centering diphthongs, there are minimal pairs of forms with a centering diphthong and with a long monophthong, though Bussmann's intended illustration of this with examples did not turn out well. All this is rather uncontroversial.

In contrast, glide + vowel sequences, in which Frisian abounds, do pose analytical problems. Are they to be analysed as rising diphthongs, in which case both glide and vowel belong to the nucleus, or as a combination of an onset glide and a nuclear vowel? A careful assessment of the literature is a prerequisite for doing justice to the various points of view. Unfortunately, Bussmann did not succeed in this. What, for instance, makes her assert that in my thesis I have been raising arguments against the monophonemic status of rising diphthongs in SNWF? On the contrary, I devoted several pages (203-218) to an analysis of the glide + vowel sequences as rising diphthongs, in which case glide as well as vowel belong to one and the same syllable nucleus, and to the derivation of this type of diphthong. What is at stake here, however, might also be a matter of terminological confusion. What does Bussmann exactly mean by saying (on page 56) that [ja], [jɛ], [jɔ], [jö], [wɛ], [wɪ], and [wo], for instance, are "biphonemic 'glide + vowel' sequences, not monophonemic diphthongs"? I also analyse them as a sequence of two phonemes, since I do not assume diphthongs to belong to the underlying phoneme inventory of Frisian, for which I give two reasons: 1) the shape of diphthongs is predictable from the vowel sequences they consist of, 2) in this way, it is no coincidence that diphthongs are only made up of vowels which are present

underlyingly. Yet, diphthongs figure in minimal pairs, which means that they, as a whole, are phonemic. Thus, phonemically speaking, diphthongs have a dual status: being made up of two independent phonemes, they are biphonemic internally; but externally, i.e. in relation to other vowels, they act as one phoneme. A proper understanding of monophonemicity is crucial here (compare Bussmann on page 178: "The very definition of what exactly constitutes a phonemic diphthong has yet to be agreed upon"). Once this is recognised, there may be more agreement between Bussmann and myself than there seems to be at first sight.

Bussmann points out that segments within the same phonological constituent are subjected to collocational restrictions, a fact which can shed light on the question which constituent a given segment belongs to. Now, glides in Frisian can be preceded by almost every permissible consonant and consonant cluster, but at the same time they can be followed by almost every vowel, be it short or long, and diphthong. The former is an indication that glides do not belong to the onset, the latter that they do not belong to the nucleus either or, put differently, that they do not seem to contribute to the complexity of either onset or nucleus.

Bussmann puts full emphasis on the fact that glides can be followed by long vowels and falling diphthongs, which she considers a clear indication that glides cannot possibly belong to the nucleus, since the latter can accommodate two phonological timing positions at most. This entails that Frisian has to allow for an enormous amount of (complex) onsets ending in a glide. This issue has not gone unnoticed in the literature on Frisian. Regrettably, Bussmann does not refer to section 3.3.4.2 ("Sequences with prevocalic glides") of my thesis (pages 227-232), where it is addressed, though in a more 'technical' way. Had she contacted me, I could have pointed out to her a long article on breaking of mine from 2002, in which mention is made of a slight asymmetry between onset + j/w and j/w + nucleus. On the one hand, the combinations [jy:, jöə, jo:j, jɔ:, wi:w, wy(:), wyə, wö:, wöə, wo:, woə, wɔy] do not occur, and the combination [jle] only in the now obsolete words *tsjea* 'thigh', *tsjeaf* 'thief', and *tsjeak* 'jaw'. On the other hand, it is only [plw, drw, vrw, fnw, strw, sprw] which are impossible (note that *j* combines with every consonant (cluster)). There seem to be more collocational restrictions between glide and nucleus than between onset and glide, which suggests that glides belong to the nucleus, not to the onset.

A final point in this respect. On page 12 Bussmann asserts that both Booij and I support Kenstowicz and Rubach (1987), who maintain that in one and the same language the glides of diphthongs are oriented leftward or rightward with respect to the head, which boils down to claiming that a language cannot have both falling and rising diphthongs. I am astonished, since I explicitly state (page 214/215) that Frisian has set the Diphthong Parameter to the marked value, which implies a bidirectional orientation of the glides.

Admittedly, the status and syllabic position of the glides remains one of the murkier issues in Frisian phonology. My point here is, that Bussmann might and should have profited much more than she actually did from the

knowledge already gathered in the field of Frisian linguistics. Her treatment of SNWF also casts doubt on the reliability of her treatment of the other dialects, no matter how many (more) pages these are devoted to.

In the concluding chapter, Bussmann sets up a taxonomy of vowel-system types, eventually arriving at a system with five types. This chapter is interesting and well written. However, its essentially deductive nature conveys the impression that Bussmann could have written it without ever studying the diphthongs in Frisian.

The final editing of the book must have been rather careless. There simply are too many misprints, omitted words, and unfinished sentences. Most of the time, however, these do not undermine the understandability of the text. On page 165/166 the reader is referred to, a.o., Mitchell & Robinson (1986), Wright & Wright 1925, Kuhn 1961, Kuhn & Quirk 1953, Campbell 1959, Lass & Anderson 1975, Daunt 1939, Stockwell & Barritt 1955, Hockett 1959, Keyser & O'Neill 1983, none of which is to be found in the References. It looks as if these references have been added at a late stage, since most of the years have not been put in parentheses, as is the case otherwise. As they undermine the verifiability of the study, these omissions are severe, and for that matter quite annoying as well.

Demanding attention to diphthongs in Frisian is the merit of Bussmann's study. It is a pity that it could have been a much better one. The more so, since a study of this scope and with these aims is not likely to be undertaken again, at least not in the foreseeable future.

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Jan Popkema (2006)

*Grammatica Fries. De regels van het Fries.* (Utrecht: Uitgeverij Het Spectrum / Leeuwarden: Fryske Akademy, ISBN-13: 978-90-274-3207-0; 377 p., € 24,50)

De voorliggende (Westerlauwers) Friese grammatica is een baanbrekende bijdrage tot de systematische beschrijving van het Nieuwfries, staand in een traditie van bijna vijftien decennia. Zowel kwantitatief als kwalitatief overtreft deze grammatica haar voorgangers verre. De resultaten van de moderne taalkundige bestudering van het Fries zijn goed verwerkt, en met toevoeging van originele opmerkingen van de auteur is er een solide grammaticaal bouwwerk opgetrokken. Dit in de reeks Prisma Taalbeheersing opgenomen werk geeft tevens voldoende aandacht aan het contrastieve aspect, alsook aan de toenevende interferentie van het Fries met het Nederlands. De doelgroep van deze grammatica wordt door de Nederlandstaligen gevormd. Voor Friessprekers die een beter wetenschappelijk inzicht in hun moedertaal willen verwerven, is