

## Final devoicing: Tertium datur

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Most textbook treatments of Final Devoicing ignore the fact that devoicing in many cases is not complete which means that it is not a neutralizing process in any sense of that term (cf. Brockhaus 1995 which, in all respects offers an excellent overview, and, as we will see, analysis of this process). One response to this fact is to attribute FD to the phonetic implementation (as proposed in Port and O'Dell 1985). In this case the implementation of voicing on obstruents is sensitive to context, in itself a property that implementation rulers must have anyway. The other is to account for the phonetic difference between final underlying /t/ and final underlying 'devoiced' /d/ in the phonology which means that these two entities must not be phonologically identical. As far as I can tell most phonological models have the means to arrive at this result. The basic idea is that a 'devoiced obstruent' (A, Bi) either lacks any voicing property or (Bii) never loses voicing, which, however, is marked as 'not licensed' in final position:

	<u>/t/</u>	<u>final /d/</u>	<u>/d/ elsewhere</u>	
A.	-voice	0voice	+voice	(Binary feature theory)
Bi.	H	-	L	(Element theory)
Bii.	H	*L	L	(* meaning 'not licensed')

Although I find it hard to discard the implementation approach, it has been my strategy in general to account for 'phenomena' phonologically if the apparatus is independently available. The solution in Bii, which I will support in this paper, is the one proposed in Brockhaus (1995). To account for the partiality of Final Devoicing we now only have to assume that phonetic implementation is sensitive to the difference between 'L' and '\*L'. Solution Bi represents final underlying voiced obstruents as lacking any laryngeal property and again this would allow for the three types of obstruents to receive different phonetic implementations. (In this case phonetic interpretation can be said to deliver contextually favored 'neutral voicing'.) But Bi involves 'deletion' which is sometimes considered a bad thing. Government Phonology, for one, adopts the idea that representations simply do not change at all. The question is whether there is any evidence for maintaining the L element in the representation, as in Bii? In van der Hulst and Ritter (2000) a case is made for keeping unlicensed elements in the representation (in the right place) so that they can play a role in accounting for certain types of opacity. If this is a sensible approach, solution Bii (the one proposed in Brockhaus 1995) comes out as the preferred phonological account.

Brockhaus, Wiebke (1995). *Final devoicing in the phonology of German*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.  
van der Hulst, Harry and Nancy Ritter (2000). No sympathy for opacity. In: S. Billings & A. Griffith (eds.)  
*The main session [CLS 35]*. Chicago: Chicago Linguistics Society, 153-173.  
Port. Robert and Michael O'Dell (1985). Neutralization of syllable-final voicing in German. *JPh* 13, 455-471.