

Low German: A profile of a word language – and why it matters

Steffen Höder, Universität Hamburg

Structure

- 2
- Preliminaries
 - ▣ Modern Low German
 - ▣ Word vs. syllable languages
- Typological profile
 - ▣ Syllable structure
 - ▣ Syllable nuclei and stress
 - ▣ Word-medial consonants
 - ▣ Pitch accent
- Why it matters
 - ▣ Low German as non-standard German
 - ▣ Low German in an areal perspective

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3 Preliminaries

Modern Low German
Word vs. syllable languages

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Modern Low German (1)

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- Overview based on
 - ▣ a synchronic analysis
 - ▣ an intralingual analysis
- For brevity's sake
 - ▣ Focus on unexpected features (from a Standard German perspective)
- Caveat: A lot could be said (but isn't) about
 - ▣ sentence intonation, sandhi phenomena, details in compound phonology, loanwords vs. core lexicon, multilectalism, effects of code-mixing (of whatever kind)

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Modern Low German (2)

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- Exemplary analysis
 - ▣ North Low Saxon
 - ▣ Presumably representative for dialects in at least Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein
- Based on a detailed survey of one dialect
 - ▣ Altenwerder (Höder in prep.)
 - ▣ compared with Finkenwerder (Kloeke 1913), Kirchwerder (von Essen 1958, 1964), traditional Hamburg urban variety (*Hafenplatt*, native dialect)

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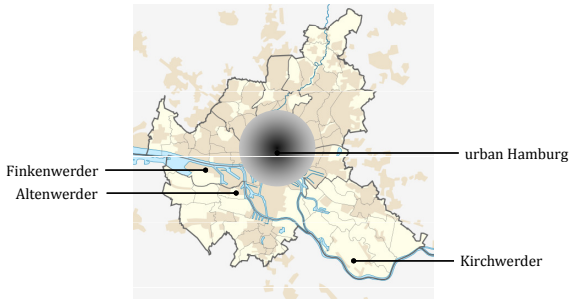
Modern Low German (3)



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Modern Low German (4)

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Word vs. syllable languages

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- Word vs. syllable as most prominent/relevant phonological unit
 - ▣ internal structure, phoneme inventories, suprasegmental features, scope of phonological rules/processes, boundary markers, diachronic development ...
- Selected criteria
 - ▣ proposed by Auer (2001), Szczepaniak (2007), Nübling et al. (2008)

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Word vs. syllable languages

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	Prototypical syllable language	Prototypical word language
Stress	phrase level	word level
Syllable structure	simple	complex
	word-independent	word-sensitive
Vowel system	uniform	differentiated (stress-sensitive)
Phonological processes	syllable-related (e.g. resyllabification across word boundaries)	word-related (e.g. word-medial allophones)
Tone (if present)	syllable-related	word-related
Quantity (if present)	uniform	stress-sensitive
Geminates	yes	no

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Typological profile

- Phoneme inventory
- Syllable structure
- Syllable nuclei and stress
- Word-medial consonants
- Pitch accent
- Profile summary

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Phoneme inventory (1)

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	labial	dental	palatal	velar	glottal
plosives [-voiced]	p	t		k	
plosives [+voiced]	b	d		g	
fricatives [-voiced]	f	s; ʃ		x	h
fricatives [+voiced]	v	z			
nasals	m	n		ŋ	
lateral		l			
vibrant		r			

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Phoneme inventory (2)

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	front [-rounded]	front [+rounded]	back
close	i	y	u
near close	ɪ	ʏ	ʊ
close-mid	e	ø	o
open-mid	ɛ	œ	ɔ; ɔː
open	a; aː		ɒ

	front	back
close-mid	eɔ	
open-mid	ɛɪ	ɔɪ
open	aɪ	ɑɪ

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Syllable structure (1)

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- Possible syllables & words
 - ▣ *teɔ* 'too (much)' – *dva:x* 'dwarf'
- Impossible syllables & words
 - ▣ **kmø* – **srofp*
- Possible syllables, but impossible words
 - ▣ *gŋ* – *bl*
 - ▣ cf. '*krigŋ* 'to get' – '*tsɪbl* 'onion'
- Possible words, but how many syllables?
 - ▣ *korŋ* 'to come' – *fɪŋ* 'to find'

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Syllable structure (2)

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- Mainly = Standard German
- Word-initial clusters
 - ▣ *stem* 'stone' – *sprok* 'language' – *svat* 'black'
 - ▣ '*smɪtn* 'to throw' – '*snakŋ* 'to speak' – *slarŋ* 'snake'
 - ▣ *dvas* 'across' – *tvɛŋ* 'two'
 - ▣ *vrak* 'wreck' – '*vroŋln* 'to nag, to niggle'
- Syllabic consonants
 - ▣ '*zupm* 'to drink' – '*zɪtn* 'to sit' – '*zεgŋ* 'to say'
 - ▣ '*tsɛdl* 'sheet (of paper)' – '*votr* 'water'

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Syllable nuclei and stress

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Monophthongs	front [-rounded]	front [+rounded]	back
close	i	y	u
near close	ɪ	ʏ	ʊ
close-mid	e	ø	o
open-mid	ɛ	œ	ɔ
open	a	a:	ɔ:
Diphthongs	front	back	
close-mid	eɔ		
open-mid	ɛɪ	ɔɪ	
open	aʊ	ɑɪ	
Consonants	labial	dental	velar
nasal	m	n	ŋ
liquid		l	

Diagram illustrating syllable nuclei and stress. A red box labeled 'pre-tonic' encompasses the vowels i, y, u, ɪ, ʏ, ʊ, e, ø, o, ɛ, œ, ɔ, ɔ: and the diphthongs eɔ, ɛɪ, ɔɪ, aʊ, ɑɪ. A blue box labeled 'post-tonic' encompasses the vowels a, a:, ɔ, ɔ: and the diphthongs aʊ, ɑɪ. A black box labeled 'stressed' encompasses the consonants m, n, ŋ, l.

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Word-medial consonants (1)

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- Word-medial flap [ɾ]
 - ▣ Context: immediately after stressed vowel, not before nasals
 - ▣ Allophone of /d/ or /r/?
 - Evolved from & in complementary distribution with both
 - ▣ '*fa[r]r* 'father' – *eɔl'va:r[r]* 'Altenwerder (village)'
 - ▣ '*knɔ[r]ɪx* 'knobby (of a tree)' – '*lɛ[r]ɪx* 'empty'

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Word-medial consonants (2)

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- Word-medial long /s/
 - ▣ Context: immediately after stressed vowel
 - Evolved from & in complementary distribution with /st/
 - ▣ '*ves:n* 'west' – '*zys:r* 'sister'
 - ▣ apparent contradiction: geminate?

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Word-medial consonants (3)

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- Word-medial obstruent voicing
 - ▣ Optional process: /ptk/ > [bdg]
 - in some dialects obligatory (/bdg/)
 - ▣ Context: immediately after stressed vowel
 - (several restrictions, e.g. /p/ > [b] only after certain vowels)
 - ▣ '*ktɔ[p|b]m* 'to knock' – '*ri[t|d]n* 'to tear, to rip'
 - ▣ '*dt[k|g]r* 'thicker'
- Optimal/preferred form for /VCV/ structures
 - ▣ = voiced C (word-based constraint?)
 - ▣ Intervocalic /fs/ are infrequent
 - ▣ Voiceless /x/ (and /ʃ/) without voiced counterpart

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Word-medial consonants (4)

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- The case of post-verbal *ik*
 - ▣ *vîln* 'to want': *ik vil* *vil + ik* → 'vilik
 - ▣ 'fropm 'to scrub': *ik frop* *frop + ik* → 'frobik
 - ▣ 'lezn 'to believe': *ik lês* *lês + ik* → 'lezik
 - ▣ 'møgg 'to like': *ik max* *max + ik* → 'maxik
- Morphophonological alternation
 - ▣ /b~p/, /z~s/, /g~x/, ...

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Word-medial consonants (5)

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- Syllable-based model
 - ▣ Resyllabification at the word boundary

σ	σ		σ	σ
vil	ik	→	vr	lik
frop~b	ik		fro	p~bik
lês~z	ik		lê	s~zik
 - ▣ *Auslautverhärtung* undone in the onset
 - ... → 'frov.bik ... → 'le.zik
 - ▣ But /g~x/ deviant from other obstruents
 - *'ma.gik ... → 'ma.xik

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Word-medial consonants (6)

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- Word-based model
 - ▣ Expansion of the phonological word (→ clitic?)

ω	ω		ω
vil	ik	→	'vilik
frop	ik		'frobik
lês	ik		'lezik
max	ik		'maxik
 - ▣ Word-medial obstruent voicing (→ optimal form)
 - *'fropik ... → 'frobik

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Word-medial consonants (7)

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- Related phenomena
 - ▣ Word-medial flap (→ optimal form)
 - *mut* 'with' + *di* 'the'
 - dat* 'that' + *di* 'the'
 - plat* 'flat' + *dytf* 'German'

ω	ω		ω
mut	di	→	'm[r]r
dat	di		'da[r]r
plat	dytf		'pla[r]lytf

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Pitch accent (1)

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- Suprasegmental feature
 - ▣ *vît* 'wide, far' – *vî̃t* 'willow'
- Phonetic features
 - ▣ **pitch** contour, vowel **duration**, possibly **intensity**

[v i t]		[v i t]
↙		↘
↘		↘
- 'Uncontroversial' transcription: ^

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Pitch accent (2)

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- Distinctive feature: controversial issue
 - ▣ Vowel quantity is distinctive
 - Binary quantity: short vs. long vowels, besides qualitatively organised vowel system (Kohler 1986, 2001)
 - Ternary vowel quantity: short vs. long vs. overlong vowels (von Essen 1958, 1964, Ternes 1981, Auer 1991, Chapman 1993)
 - ▣ Pitch contour is distinctive
 - Tonal distinction: toneme 1 vs. 2 ('Schleifton'), besides binary vowel quantity (Bremer 1927, Jakobson 1931, Ternes 2001, 2006, Prehn 2007)
 - Tonal distinction: toneme 1 vs. 2, besides qualitatively organised vowel system (Höder in prep.)

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Pitch accent (3)

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- Context
 - ▣ Once per phonological word
 - ▣ Final syllable (of certain types)
 - ▣ Variable position within the syllable
 - vocalic nucleus: *vīt* 'wide, far' – *vīt* 'willow'
 - word-final nasal: *kan* 'pot, jug' – *kañ* 'pots, jugs'
 - minimal triplet:
min 'my' – *mīn* 'mine (weapon)' – *miñ* 'mines'
- Pitch accent in compound formation
 - ▣ and in pseudo-compounds, ...

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Profile summary

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Why it matters

LG as non-standard German
LG in an areal perspective

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LG as non-standard German

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- Non-standard data in cross-linguistic typology
 - ▣ important, but neglected! (Auer 1990, 2004)
 - ▣ cf. the 'Franconian' tone contrast (Gussenhoven 2000, Peters 2006, ...)
- Revealing about northern varieties of Standard German
 - ▣ *Missingsch*-type L2 varieties
 - ▣ Contemporary regional varieties (Northern High German, cf. Ternes' [1999] analysis)
 - ▣ North German 'accent' of Standard German
 - ▣ Variation within this spectrum (cf. Auer 1998)

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LG in an areal perspective (1)

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- Transitional zone, high degree of contact
 - ▣ Danish
 - Differentiated, highly stress-sensitive vowel system (Grønnum 1998)
 - Word-medial obstruent voicing
 - Word-level suprasegmental phoneme (*stød*)
 - ▣ South Jutlandic
 - ... + pitch accent system (Ringgaard 1971, Ejskjær 2005)

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LG in an areal perspective (2)

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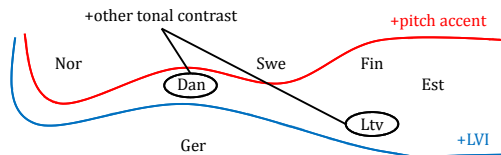
- Contact zone
 - ▣ Scandinavian languages
 - Relatively closely related subfamily
 - Historically intense contact between LG and Scandinavian, high degree of contact-induced convergence (morphology, syntax; Braunmüller 2004)
 - Pitch accent system (Norwegian, Swedish)
 - ▣ Circum-Baltic languages
 - Areal group, different language families
 - Intense contacts (Koptjevskaja-Tamm & Wälchli 2001)
 - Phonological similarities (Eliasson 2000)

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LG in an areal perspective (3)

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- Large vowel inventories and polytonicity: standard varieties (Höder forthc.)

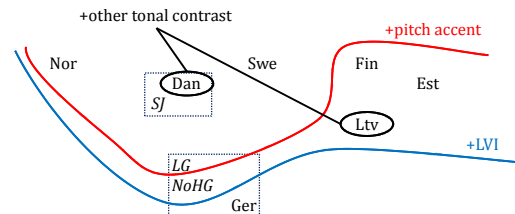


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LG in an areal perspective (4)

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- Large vowel inventories and polytonicity: standard & non-standard varieties



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Conclusion

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Conclusion (1)

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- A word language
 - Perhaps more prototypical than Standard German
 - More differentiated vowel system
 - Highly stress-sensitive system of nuclei
 - Slightly more complex word-initial clusters
 - Phonological processes (word-medial consonants)
 - Resegmentation of words (rather than resyllabification)
 - Pitch accent, i.e. word-based suprasegmental

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Conclusion (2)

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- Relevant because ...
 - LG may share features with other non-standard varieties/geographical dialects
 - LG shares features with northern varieties of Standard German
 - LG constitutes a transitional variety
 - Danish (non-standard varieties, again, included)
 - Scandinavian
 - Circum-Baltic

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Thank you for your attention!

ʃɔi̯n̩ dan̩k̩ eɔk̩ fœrt̩ 'teɔhɔi̯rn̩

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Examples

Slide 13	<i>to</i>	/teɔ̃/	[t ^h ɛɔ̃]	‘too (much)’
	<i>Dwarg</i>	/dva:x/	[dvax]	‘dwarf’
	<i>kriegen</i>	/'kriŋ/	[k ^h ri:ŋ]	‘to get’
	<i>Zibbel</i>	/'tsɪbl/	[t ^h ɪbl]	‘onion’
	<i>kamen</i>	/koɦn/	[k ^h ɔ̃:m:]	‘to come’
	<i>finnen</i>	/fiɦn/	[fiɦn:]	‘to find’
Slide 14	<i>Steen</i>	/steɦn/	[steɦn]	‘stone’
	<i>Spraak</i>	/sprok/	[sprɔk]	‘language’
	<i>swatt</i>	/svat/	[svat]	‘black’
	<i>smieten</i>	/'smitn/	[smit ^h n]	‘to throw’
	<i>snacken</i>	/'snakŋ/	[sna ^h kŋ]	‘to speak’
	<i>Slang</i>	/slan/	[slan]	‘snake’
	<i>dwars</i>	/dva:s/	[dvax:s]	‘across’
	<i>twee</i>	/tveɦ/	[t ^h veɦ]	‘two’
	<i>Wrack</i>	/vrak/	[vrak]	‘wreck’
	<i>wrögeln</i>	/'vrøŋln/	[vrø:ŋln]	‘to nag, to niggle’
	<i>supen</i>	/'zupm/	[zup ^h m]	‘to drink’
	<i>sitten</i>	/'zɪtn/	[zɪ ^h tŋ]	‘to sit’
	<i>seggen</i>	/'zegŋ/	[zegŋ]	‘to say’
	<i>Zeddel</i>	/'tsɛdl/	[tsɛdl]	‘sheet (of paper)’
	<i>Water</i>	/'votr/	[vɔtɛ]	‘water’
Slide 16	<i>Vadder</i>	/'fa[r]r/	[faxɛ]	‘father’
	<i>Oolwarder</i>	/eɔ̃l ^h va:[r]r/	[eɔ̃l ^h vax:rɛ]	‘Altenwerder (village)’
	<i>knorrig</i>	/'knɔ[r]ix/	[k ^h nɔrɪç]	‘knobby (of a tree)’
	<i>leddig</i>	/'le[r]ix/	[lɛrɪç]	‘empty’
Slide 17	<i>Westen</i>	/'ves:n/	[ves:n]	‘west’
	<i>Süster</i>	/'zʏs:t/	[zʏs:ɛ]	‘sister’
Slide 18	<i>kloppen</i>	/'klɔpm/	[k ^h lɔp ^h m], [k ^h lɔbm]	‘to knock’
	<i>rieten</i>	/'ritn/	[rit ^h n], [ridn]	‘to tear, to rip’
	<i>dicker</i>	/'dikr/	[dɪkɛ], [dɪgɛ]	‘thicker’
Slide 19	<i>wüllen</i>	/vʏln/	[vʏln]	‘to want’
	<i>ik will</i>	/ik vil/	[ɪk vɪ!]	‘I want’
	<i>will ik</i>	/'vɪlɪk/	[vɪlɪk]	(‘want I’)
	<i>schrubben</i>	/'ʃrɔbm/	[ʃrɔbm]	‘to scrub’
	<i>ik schrubb</i>	/ik ʃrɔp/	[ɪk ʃrɔp]	‘I scrub’
	<i>schrubb ik</i>	/'ʃrɔbɪk/	[ʃrɔbɪk]	(‘scrub I’)
	<i>lesen</i>	/'lezn/	[lɛ:zn]	‘to read’
	<i>ik lees</i>	/ik lê:s/	[ɪk lɛ:s]	‘I read’
	<i>lees ik</i>	/'lezi:k/	[lɛ:zi:k]	(‘read I’)
	<i>mögen</i>	/'møŋ/	[mø:ŋ]	‘to like’
	<i>ik mag</i>	/ik max/	[ɪk max]	‘I like’
	<i>mag ik</i>	/'maxɪk/	[maxɪk]	(‘like I’)

Slide 22	<i>mit</i>	/mit/	[mɪt]	‘with’
	<i>de</i>	/dɪ/ ¹	[dɪ]	‘the’
	<i>dat</i>	/dat/	[dət]	‘that’
	<i>platt</i>	/plat/	[p ^h lat]	‘flat’
	<i>düütsch</i>	/dytʃ/	[dytʃ]	‘German’
	<i>mit de</i>	/ˈmɪ[r]ɪ/	[ˈmɪrɪ]	‘with the’
	<i>dat de</i>	/ˈda[r]ɪ/	[ˈdərɪ]	‘that the’
	<i>plattdüütsch</i>	/ˈpla[r]ytʃ/	[ˈp ^h larytʃ]	‘Low German’
Slide 23/25	<i>wiet</i>	/vit/	[vit]	‘wide, far’
	<i>Wied</i>	/vît/	[vît]	‘willow’
Slide 25	<i>Kann</i>	/kan/	[k ^h an]	‘pot, jug’
	<i>Kannen</i>	/kañ/	[k ^h añ:]	‘pots, jugs’
	<i>mien</i>	/min/	[mi:n]	‘my’
	<i>Mien</i>	/mîn/	[mî:n]	‘mine (weapon)’
	<i>Mienen</i>	/miñ/	[mi:n:]	‘mines’

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1 strong form: /dɛɪ/

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