

Aspects of Connected Speech

So far, we have studied words in isolation. A significant difference in natural connected speech is the way that sounds belonging to one word can cause changes in sounds belonging to the same word or to neighboring words.

Assimilation:

Assimilation occurs when a phoneme is realized differently as a result of being near some other phoneme belonging to a neighboring word.

Assimilation is something that varies in extent according to speaking rate and style; it is more likely to be found in rapid, casual speech and less likely in slow, careful speech.

With consonants, three types of assimilation may occur:

1. Assimilation of place of articulation
2. Assimilation of manner of articulation
3. Assimilation of voicing

1. Assimilation of Place

Examples of assimilation of place are observed when a final alveolar consonant is followed by an initial consonant that is not alveolar.

that person /ðæt pɜ:sən/

good thing

get those

good boy

cut through

good girl

2 Assimilation of Manner

Examples of assimilation of manner are found in cases where a final plosive becomes fricative or nasal.

that side /ðæs saɪd/

good night

get some of that soup

'poison	'poisonous	
ad'vantage	advan'tageous	
'photo	pho'tography	photo'graphic
e'conomy	eco'nomical	eco'nomics
'teapot	'blackbird	'football
heavy-'hearted	hot-'blooded	red-'handed
'desert (n)	de'sert (v)	des'sert (n)
'absent (adj)	ab'sent (v)	
'convict (n)	con'vict (v)	
'record (n)	re'cord (v)	
'object (n)	ob'ject (v)	
'import (n)	im'port (v)	
'insult (n)	in'sult (v)	
'discount (n)	dis'count (v)	
'comment (n)	'comment (v)	
'signal (n)	'signal (v)	

Strong Forms and Weak Forms

- 1- Most native speakers of English find an "all-strong-form" pronunciation unnatural and foreign-sounding.
2. Speakers who are not familiar with the use of weak forms are likely to have difficulty understanding native speakers of British English.
3. Almost all the words which have both a strong and weak form belong to a category that may be called **function words**_ words that do not have a dictionary meaning in the way that we normally expect. They are auxiliaries, prepositions, conjunctions, articles, pronouns, etc. **Content words**, on the other hand, are the words that have a dictionary meaning such as verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs. It is content words that carry stress in a sentence.

3. Assimilation of Voice

If the final consonant is lenis (voiced) and the initial consonant is fortis (voiceless), the lenis will be devoiced.

have /v/ - have to /f/

describe /b/ - description /p/

news /z/ - newspaper /s/

A similar example of assimilation of voice with the pronunciation of the final "-s", which is affected by the preceding sound.

cats/s/ jumps /s/ dogs/z/ runs/z/

Elision

Elision is when under certain circumstances a phoneme disappears to make pronunciation easier. This is typical of rapid casual speech.

A. loss of weak vowel after aspirated /p,t,k/

potato tomato perhaps today

B. avoidance of complex consonant clusters

text message - acts - scripts - best friend - George the sixth's throne

C. loss of final /v/ in "of" before consonants

Lots of f them waste of f money

Linking

The most common ways of linking are the use of the linking r and the intrusive r.

Linking r: "here are" /hɪər ə/

"four eggs" /fɔːr egz/

Intrusive r: "the idea of" /aɪdɪər əv/

Key Terms

A Phoneme: is the smallest unit of sound.

Minimal pairs: are pairs of words in a particular language that differ in only one phoneme and have distinct meanings.

- cut & caught art & ought tip & dip cot & got sin & sing
- limb & rim

Allophones: two realizations of the same phoneme.

The clear /l/ in lemon & the dark /l/ in dull

The aspirated /t/ in tea & the unaspirated /t/ in eat

Homophones: two or more words having the same pronunciation but different meanings and spelling.

- sea & see side & sighed whole & hole sent, cent & scent

Suprasegmental Phonology: is the study of features that extend beyond a single phoneme like stress, tone, or intonation.

Syllables

A syllable is a unit of pronunciation having one vowel sound, with or without surrounding consonants, forming the whole or a part of a word. There is one syllable in the word "mat". There are two syllables in the word "breakfast", three syllables in the word "dangerous", four syllables in the word "information", and five syllables in the word "university".

Stress

Stressed syllables are produced with more muscular energy than unstressed ones; they are more prominent than unstressed syllables. Prominence is characterized by four factors: loudness, length, pitch, and quality; stressed syllables are louder, longer, more distinct, and pronounced said with a higher pitch than unstressed syllables.

Examples of word stress:

- 'table 'ugly
- 'pretty 'beautiful
- ex'pensive po'lice
- dis'trust un'happy
- enter'tain refu'gee
- 'comfort 'comfortable

Weak Form	Strong Form
I am not ready yet.	How clever I am .
I can see quite well.	Oh, yes I can .
This will be good for you.	What can have happened?
What does he do for a living?	Who are those letters for ?
He said that he was tired.	He does say silly things!
Sara and her friend went shopping.	I'll take that T-shirt.
	You shouldn't use " and " at the end of a sentence.

Thus, if a function word is said in isolation or is stressed, the strong form is used, e. g. when it occurs at the end of a sentence, when it is contrasted with another word, when it is emphasized, or when it is being quoted. For example, the strong form of "can" is /kæn/, while the weak form is /kən/.

- Note: The definite article (the) is pronounced /ðə/ if it is followed by a consonant & /ði/ if it is followed by a vowel. The strong form is /ði:/.

Rhythm

Rhythm is the occurrence of certain patterns of sound at regular intervals of time. English has a stress-timed rhythm, which means that stressed syllables will tend to occur at relatively regular or equal intervals of time regardless of the number of unstressed syllables that intervene.

'Jack's in the	'kitchen	'cooking.
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'Walk	'down the	'path to the	'end of the ca	'nal.
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Intonation

Intonation is variation in the pitch level of the voice. In speech, the pitch of the voice continues to rise and fall. Intonation is important as it enables us to express emotions and attitudes (e. g. anger, surprise, etc.), it enables the listener to recognize the syntactic structure of what is being said, it can signal to the listener what is to be taken as "new" information and what is already "given".