

PRONUNCIATION | ADJUSTMENTS IN CONNECTED SPEECH

CONNECTED SPEECH

Connected speech refers to the way sounds change and blend in continuous spoken language. This means that the sounds of the following sentence are different if analyzed in isolation or as a continuous stream.

SOUNDS IN ISOLATION

Would – you – like – a – cup – of – black – coffee?

/wʊd/ /ju:/ /laɪk/ /eɪ/ /kʌp/ /ɒv/ /blæk/ /kɒfi/

SOUNDS IN CONNECTED SPEECH

Would you like a cup of black coffee?

/wə dʒjə laɪ kə kʌ pəv blæk kɒfi/

This phenomenon affects changes in:

- sounds e.g. /wʊd/ /ju:/ → /wədʒjə/
- boundaries between words e.g. /kʌp/ /ɒv/ → /kʌ pəv/

WEAK FORMS

Function words (i.e. words that show the grammatical relationship of words in a sentence and have little meaning when used in isolation, e.g. *the, and, to, etc.*) tend to be **unstressed** and their length and quality **reduced**.

The following is a summary of some high-frequency function words and their pronunciation forms, including contractions (e.g. *I am* Vs *I'm*).

WORD CLASS	WORD	STRONG FORM	WEAK FORM
Verbs	am	æm	əm / m
	are	ɑ:(r)	ə(r)
	is	ɪz	əz / z / s
	was	wɒz	wəz
	were	wɜ:(r)	wə(r)
	do	du:	də
	does	dʌz	dəz
	have	hæv	həv / əv / v
	has	hæz	həz / əz / z / s
	had	hæd	həd / əd / d
	can	kæn	kən
	could	kʊd	kəd
	would	wʊd	wəd / əd / d
	should	ʃʊd	ʃəd
Prepositions	to	tu:	tə
	at	æt	ət
	of	ɒv	əv
	for	fɔ:(r)	fə(r)
	from	fɹɒm	fɹəm

WORD CLASS	WORD	STRONG FORM	WEAK FORM
Personal pronouns	you	ju:	jə
	your	jɔ:(r)	jə(r)
	he	hi:	hi / i
	him	hɪm	ɪm
	she	ʃi:	ʃi
	her	hɜ:(r)	hə(r) / ə(r)
	us	ʌs	əs
	them	ðem	ðəm
Conjunctions	and	ænd	ənd / ən
	but	bʌt	bət
	than	ðæn	ðən
Articles	a	eɪ	ə
	an	æn	ən
	the	ði:	ði / ðə
Indefinite adjectives	any	eni	əni / ni
	some	sʌm	səm
	such	sʌtʃ	sətʃ

Adapted from: Kelly (2000:74)

Speakers generally produce the **weak form** of these words, unless these words appear at the **end** of a sentence, like for example in 'You're from (fɹəm) Russia' Vs 'Where are you from (fɹəm)?'

LINKING

Linking (also known as **liaison**) is a process in which the **final** sound of a word or syllable **connects** to the **initial** sound of the next.

The following are common examples.

SOUNDS	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
VC + C	The final consonant links to the following vowel.	<i>My dog <u>is</u> black <u>and</u> white.</i>
VCC + V	The last consonant in a cluster links to the following vowel.	<i>I found <u>out</u> that Bob broke his left <u>arm</u>.</i>
C + C	Two identical consonants blend into one longer consonant.	<i>They found a quick <u>cure</u> in a short <u>time</u>.</i>
C ₁ + C ₂	A stop followed by a stop or affricate: the first stop is not released.	<i>My pet <u>cat</u> entered the big <u>church</u>.</i>

Words can also be linked by adding an **extra** sound between two vowel sounds.

SOUNDS	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
/i:/ + V	Add a semi-vowel /j/ between the words as a link to the following vowel.	<i>Be ^j able</i>
/eɪ/ + V		<i>Say ^j it</i>
/aɪ/ + V		<i>My ^j own</i>
/ɔɪ/ + V		<i>Toy ^j art.</i>
/u:/ + V	Add a semi-vowel /w/ between the words as a link to the following vowel.	<i>Blue ^w ink</i>
/əʊ/ + V		<i>Go ^w out</i>
/aʊ/ + V		<i>How ^w are you?</i>
V + V	Add a /r/ sound between the final and initial vowels. This is a phenomenon that only appears in certain varieties of English (e.g. British English).	<i>Spa ^r owners</i>
		<i>Media ^r event</i>
		<i>I saw ^r a dog.</i>

Adapted from: Celce-Murcia et al. (2010)

ASSIMILATION

Assimilation is a process in which a sound **changes** and becomes more **similar** to a sound that comes **before** or **after** it.

The following are common examples.

SOUNDS	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
/t/ → /p/	/t/ changes into /p/ before /p/, /b/ and /m/	<i>That pie</i>
		<i>That boy</i>
		<i>That man</i>
/t/ → /k/	/t/ changes into /k/ before /k/ and /g/	<i>That coat</i>
		<i>That gun</i>
/d/ → /b/	/d/ changes into /b/ before /p/, /b/ and /m/	<i>Could be</i>
		<i>Could play</i>
		<i>Could match</i>
/d/ → /g/	/d/ changes into /g/ before /k/ and /g/	<i>Should come</i>
		<i>Should go</i>

/n/ → /m/	/n/ changes into /m/ before /p/, /b/ and /m/	Ten percent
		Ten boys
		Ten men
/n/ → /ŋ/	/n/ changes into /ŋ/ before /k/ and /g/	One king
		One girl
/s/ → /ʃ/	/s/ changes into /ʃ/ before /ʃ/	This shirt
/s/ + /j/ → /ʃ/	/s/ changes into /ʃ/ if followed by /j/	This year
/z/ → /ʒ/	/z/ changes into /ʒ/ before /ʃ/	Cheese shop
/z/ + /j/ → /ʒ/	/z/ changes into /ʒ/ if followed by /j/	Does your...?
/t/ + /j/ → /tʃ/	/t/ changes into /tʃ/ if followed by /j/	Last year
/d/ + /j/ → /dʒ/	/d/ changes into /dʒ/ if followed by /j/	Would you...?

A type of assimilation can also be observed in the following examples.

- have to /hæv/ /tu:/ → /hæftə/
- has to /hæz/ /tu:/ → /hæstə/
- used to /ju:zd/ /tu:/ → /ju:stə/

DELETION/ELISION

Deletion (also known as **omission** and **elision**) is a process in which a sound **disappears** or is not clearly pronounced.

The following are common contexts in which this phenomenon can be observed.

- /t/ and /d/ in consonant clusters e.g. *don't* know, *nex(t)* day, *you an(d)* me, *stan(d)* there, etc.
- complex consonant clusters e.g. *facts* /fæks/, *texts* /teks/, *mustn't* /mʌsnt/, etc.
- /ə/ in some unstressed syllables e.g. *p(o)lice*, *int(e)resting*, *rest(au)rant*, *choc(o)late*, etc.
- /v/ in 'of' /ɒv/ before a consonant e.g. *lots o(f)* money, *1st o(f)* November, *waste o(f)* time, etc.
- /h/ and /ð/ in pronouns e.g. *ask (h)er*, *help (h)im*, *tell (th)em*, etc.

References

Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D.M., and Goodwin, J.M. (2010). *Teaching Pronunciation. A Coursebook and Reference Guide. Second Edition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kelly, G. (2000). *How to Teach Pronunciation*. Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited.