Online Lecture N° 3

Level: Master II
Specialty: Language Sciences
Module: Analysis of Linguistic Levels

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Part One
I. Phonological Level

    1.5.   **Aspects of Connected Speech**
        1.5.1. Rhythm
        1.5.2. Elision
        1.5.3. Linking
        (Practice & Testing)
        1.5.4. Assimilation
        (Practice & Testing)

1.5. Aspects of Connected Speech

As every language holds typical properties in its own, the English language is no exception. Arguably, the notorious aspects of English and its manifolds grey areas in sound production and perception makes it compulsory for any EFL learner to be prepared adapting and adopting new arrangements in his process of learning the language to decipher and cope with the anomalies so far exhibited in the present section. These aspects relate to the way English is used in its everyday communicative instances where sounds and utterances are produced in long strings of words constituting new connected speech phenomena, may be, new to the EFL learner and surely different from the English language used in formal situations. Theses aspects are presented below as recommended steps for reaching a state of native speakerism; otherwise, every attempt to learn English will be considered useless due to the peculiarities these aspects provide to the appropriate learning of that language.

1.5.1. Rhythm

In simple terms, the word '*rhythm*' signifies the regular intervals of time. This may happen in constant and usual situations, like: heart-beats, flashing-lights, a piece of music or any other customary (expected) pace of actions occurring with equal lap of time. Significantly, the English language is said to be <u>rhythmical</u> and that the rhythm is detectable in the regular occurrence of stressed syllables (and that only the regularity is relative).

From the above statement, one may assert the theory that English has a stress-timed rhythm which implies that stressed syllables will tend to occur at relatively regular intervals whether they are separated by stressed syllables or not; i.e., only stressed syllables are taken into account to evaluate the interval of time in English speech delivery and that only these (stressed) syllables constitute the unique parameter to making equal pauses regardless to the number of interfering unstressed syllables. Below a very good example clarifies the fact:

e.g., **'*walk 'down the 'path to the 'end of the ca'nal*'**

The stress-timed rhythm theory states that the times from each stressed syllable to the next (<u>'*walk* to '*down*</u>; or <u>'*down* to '*path*</u>; or <u>'*path* to '*end*</u>; or <u>'*end* to *ca'nal*</u>) will tend to be the same, irrespective of the number of intervening unstressed syllables. From no unstressed syllable to three intervening unstressed syllables, the interval of time remains the same and this can be felt exceptionally in oral productions and perceptions.

N.b. So, if English is a "stress-timed" language like Russian and Arabic; other languages, like: French, Spanish and Yoruba are "syllable-timed" languages where all syllables have the same interval of time during their production

Back to the 'stress-timed' theory, we have a very good instance of the use of that assumption in the "<u>*foot*</u>"(a unit of rhythm in verse)

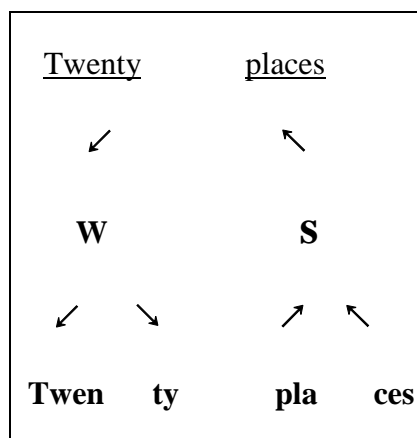**e.g., 'Walk | 'down the | 'path to the | 'end of the ca|'nal**

The foot does not include all following unstressed syllables (without including any stressed syllables). The examples below show how the foot is used in different situations:

(S: strong; W: weak)

```
   Twenty                                  places

 s↗        ↘w                    s↗        ↘w

 'Twen    ty                     'pla     ces
```

However, in the full utterance "**twenty places**"

"**places**" tends to carry stronger stress than "**twenty**"

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┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Twenty          places            │
│                                     │
│      ↙              ↖               │
│                                     │
│      W              S               │
│                                     │
│   ↙     ↘        ↗    ↖            │
│                                     │
│  Twen   ty       pla    ces         │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Other rhythmical effects:

a. Stress is altered according to context
/Kəm'pækt/ ⇒ but ⇒ **/'kɒmpækt 'dɪsk/**

/θɜ:'ti:n/ ⇒ but ⇒ /'θɜ:ti:n θ 'pleɪs/

/West'minstə/ ⇒ but ⇒ /'westmɪnstər'æbɪ/

b.Stress is altered according to speaking features:
-Rhythmically (public speaking)
-Arhythmically (without rhythm: hesitant or nervous)

1.5.2. Elision

In simple words nd under certain circumstances sounds disappear. Technically, a phoneme may be realized as zero or have a zero realisation or be deleted.

As for assimilation, elision is typical of rapid, casual speech. Producing elision is important for foreign learners to be aware that when native speakers of English talk to each

other, quite a number of phonemes that the foreigner might expect to hear are not actually pronounced. The fact of eliding sounds has been put under the following governing rules summed up in the following examples:

-Loss of weak vowel after /p,t,k/

Words	Transcriptions
potato	/ pʰ'teɪtəʊ /
tomato	/tʰ'mɑːtəʊ /
canary	/kʰ'neɪrɪ/
perhaps	/pʰ'hæps /
today	/tʰ'deɪ /

The vowel /ə/ in the first syllable of each word may disappear

N.b. the aspiration of the initial plosive takes up over

-Weak vowel /ə/ + /n, l, r/ becomes syllabic consonants

words	Transcriptions
tonight	/ tˌnæɪt/
police	/ pˌliːs /
correct	/kˌrekt /

-Avoidance of complex consonant clusters

George the -sixth thrown / dʒɔːdʒ ðə sɪksø‿ørəʊn ⇒ /sɪks‿ørəʊn/

Acts   /æk‿ts/   ⇒ / æks /

looked back   /lʊkt‿bæk/   ⇒ /lʊkbæk/

scripts   /skrɪp‿ts/   ⇒ /skrɪps/

-loss of final /V/ in "**of** " before consonants

lots of them   ⇒ / lɒts ə ðəm /

waste of money ⇒ /weɪst ə mʌnɪ /

It is difficult to know whether 'contractions' of grammatical words are and /or should be regarded as examples of elision or not
Some illustrations are given below:

'had', 'would': spelt **'d** , ⇒ pronounced **/d/** (after vowels), /**əd**/ (after consonants)

'is', 'has':   spelt **'s** , ⇒ pronounced /**s**/ (after fortis consonants),

/**z**/ (after lenis consonants)

/**ɪz**/ (after /s, z, ʃ, ʒ, tʃ, dʒ/)

'will':   spelt **'ll,** ⇒ pronounced **/l/** (after vowels)

⇒ pronounced [l̩] (after consonants)

- 'have':   spelt **'ve** ⇒ pronounced /**v**/ (after vowels)

⇒ pronounced /**əv**/ (after consonants)

- 'not':   spelt **n't** ⇒ pronounced /**nt**/ (after vowels)

⇒ pronounced /**n̩t**/ (after consonants)

- 'are':   spelt **'re** ⇒ pronounced /**ə**/ (after consonants)

⇒ pronounced /**ə**r/ (after vowels)

N.B: there are ⇒ /ðə**ʳ** ə/: the linking /r/ may be used when a vowel follows.

So, linking is another phonological aspect of the English language as it is explicitly sketched out below:

1.5.3. Linking

The most familiar case of linking in the English language is the use if *linking* '**r**'. the phoneme '**r**' cannot occur in syllable-final position in RP, but when a word's spelling suggests a final '**r**' and a word beginning with a vowel follows, the usual pronunciation for RP speakers is to pronounce with '**r**'

Examples:

 - other elements /**'**ʌðə**ʳ** elɪmənts/

- here are /hɪə**ʳ** ə/

- four eggs /**'**fɔː**ʳ** egz /

Many RP speakers use '**r**' to link words ending with vowels even when there is no junction from the spelling, as in:

Formula A /fɔː mjələ^r eɪ/

Australia all out / ɔːstreɪlɪə^r aʊt/

Media event /'miːdɪə^r ɪvent/

this has been called: <u>Intrusive</u> **'r'**

N.B – linking and intrusive '**r**' are special cases of juncture

Juncture: ***"The manner of moving (transition) or mode of relationship between two consecutive sounds; a supra-segmental phonemic cue, by which a listener can distinguish between two otherwise identical sequences of sounds that have different meanings"***

   The above definition of the concept 'juncture relates to that relation between one sound and others that immediately precede or follow; and the following examples clarify explicitly the linguistic phenomenon:

1. Might rain   /maɪt reɪn/
.My train   /maɪ treɪ n/
2. All that I am after today   /ɔːl ðət aɪm ɑːftə tə'deɪ/
.All the time after today   /ɔːl ðə taɪm ɑːftə tə'deɪ/
3. He lies   /hiː laɪz/
.Heal eyes   /hiːl aɪz/
4. Keep sticking   /kiːp stɪ kɪŋ/
.Keeps ticking   /kiːps tɪ kɪŋ /

Practice & Testing

Rhythm, elision & linking

1. Divide the following sentences up in the feet, using the | mark as a boundary symbol. If a sentence starts with an unstressed syllable, leave it out of consideration- it does not belong to a foot.

a. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush

b. Over a quarter of a century has elapsed since his death

c. Computers consume a considerable amount of money and time

d. Most of them have arrived on the bus

e. Newspaper editors are invariably underworked

2. Try to draw tree diagrams of the rhythmical structure of the following phrases

A. Christmas present

B. Rolls Royce

C. Per food dealer

D. Rolls Royce rally event

3. The following sentences are given in spelling and in "slow, careful" phonemic transcription. Rewrite the phonemic transcription as a "broad phonemic" one so as to show likely assimilations, elisions and linking

a. One cause of asthma is supposed to be allergies

  wʌn kɔːz əv æsømə ɪz səpəʊzd tə bi ælədʒɪz

        [   ]

b. What the urban population could use is better trains

  wɑt ði ɜːbən pɑpjʊleɪʃən kʊd juːz ɪz betə treɪnz

        [   ]

c. The acts particularly well in the first scene

ʃi ækts pətɪkjʊləlɪ wel ɪn ðə fɜːst siːn

        [   ]

1.5.2. Assimilation

When speaking in a rapid colloquial way with few gaps and without pausing, it is a fast rhythmic speech referred to as 'connected speech' which carries different processes, like: assimilation, elision, liaison and juncture.

Defining Assimilation:

Assimilation is a typical sound change process by which a sound is influenced by an adjacent one and so it changes to another one. It occurs mainly in rapid speech and less and less common in slow one. A common example definition is: *When a phoneme of a particular word is realised differently as a result of being influenced by the realisation of another phoneme belonging to a neighbouring word, this is assimilation''*

We have two types of assimilation:

Progressive: **Ci (initial consonant)** becomes like **Cf** (final consonant)

Regressive: **Cf** (final consonant) becomes like **Ci** (initial consonant)

Common Types of Assimilation in English

Let us consider the most observable type of assimilation which is the one related to place of articulation, then of manner and finally assimilation of voicing.

1. Assimilation of Place

Assimilation of place is the commonest and most frequent type of assimilation. It happens in some cases when a final consonant with an alveolar place of articulation is followed by an initial consonant with a place of articulation that is not alveolar. For example: 'that person' $\Rightarrow$ / ðæt pɜːsn/ becomes /ðæp pɜːsn /. In here, /t/ which is an alveolar, plosive (stop) voiceless becomes /p/ which is still a stop and voiceless but bilabial and not alveolar.

Examples of Common Assimilation of Place:

-/t/ changes to /**p**/ before /**m**, **b**, **p**/

Basket maker – mixed marriage -Great Britain - Cat burglar -Set price **–** neat people

- /d/ changes to **/b/** before /**m**, **b**, **p**/

Grand master- grand ma -Bad pain- ground plan -Red bag- blood bath

-/**n**/ changes to /**m**/ before /**m**, **b**, **p**/

Iron man- open market -Open book- chicken breast -Action planning- teen power

-/**t**/ changes to /**k**/ before /**k**, **g**/

First class- cigarette card- short cut- Fat girl- cut glass- next goal

-/**d**/ changes to /**g**/ before /**k, g**/

Hard cash- second coming- seed crown- Bad girl- closed game- bride groom

-/**n**/ changes to /**ŋ**/ before /**k, g**/

Open court- garden cress- Roman Catholic- Action group- main ground- broken glass

-/**s**/ changes to /**ʃ**/ before /**ʃ, j**/

Bus shelter- nice shoes- this shift- This year- nice yacht- bless you

-/**z**/ changes to /**ʒ**/ before /**ʃ, j**/

Cheese shop- these sheep- wise shepherd- Wise youngster- those years- breeze yard

-/**θ**/ changes to /**s**/ before /**s**/

Bath salts- birth certificate- Earth science- fourth season

2. Assimilation of Manner

Assimilation of manner of articulation of articulation is less noticeable. Generally speaking, the change is most likely to ward n 'easier' consonant (one which makes less obstruction to the air flow). For example, the expression "that side" ⇒/ðæt saɪd/, easily becomes /ðæs saɪd/ where /t/ voiceless, alveolar stop (plosive) becomes /s/ voiceless, alveolar. Another example, 'good night'⇒ /gʊd naɪt/ becomes as such: / gʊn naɪt/ where **/d/** voiced, alveolar oral stop becomes **/n/** voiced, alveolar nasal.

Below are some of rare cases of assimilation of manner:

-Final plosive /t/ becomes fricative /s/

'That side' /ðæ**t** ↙ **s**aɪd/ ⇒ /ðæ**s s**aɪd/ the second word initial sound /s/ affecting the first word final sound /t **/** (W2 Ci affecting W1 Cf)

-Final plosive /**t**/ becomes nasal /**n**/

'That night' /ðæ**t** ↙ **n**aɪt/ ⇒ /ðæ**n n**aɪt **/** the second word initial sound /n/ affecting the first word final sound /**t**/ (W2 Ci affecting W1 Cf)

-Final plosive /**d**/ becomes nasal /**n**/

'good night' /gʊd ↙ nаɪt/ ⇒ / gʊn nаɪt/ the second word initial sound /n/ affecting the first word final sound /d/ (W2 Ci affecting W1 Cf)

However, from the same example provided above, we can have a progressive assimilation with the same place of articulation. These cases are shown below as follows:

-'In the'   ⇒ **Ci** <u>dental</u> /ð/ follows **Cf** <u>nasal</u> /n/   ⇒ /ɪn nə/

      Progressive assimilation of manner where the dental /ð/ becomes (is produced as) nasal/n/

-'Get them' ⇒ **Ci** <u>dental</u> /ð/ follows **Cf plosive/t/** ⇒ /get tәm/

      Progressive assimilation of manner where the dental /ð/ becomes (is produced as) plosive /t/

-'Read these'⇒ **Ci** <u>dental</u> /ð/ follows **Cf plosive /d/** ⇒ /ri: d d :z/

      Progressive assimilation of manner where the dental /ð/ becomes (is produced as) plosive /d/

3. Assimilation of Voicing

       Assimilation of voice is also found but only in a limited way. Consider the different endings of "dogs" /dɒgz/ and "cats" /kæts/and the past forms of the regular verbs such as: "kissed" /kɪst/ and "sneezed" /sni:zd/.

Assimilation of voicing can only be regressive and in a very limited way. So it can be:

-Ci (lenis) and Cf (fortis):

Examples:

a. is she   → /isʃi/ b. bad cat →/bætkæt/ c. bad temper→ /bætempə/

-Cf (fortis) and Ci (lenis): here a kind of "regressive" assimilation that occurs only among foreigners showing a **<u>strong foreign accent</u>** that **<u>must be avoided</u>**
      An example is elicited below:
      e.g., I li**k**e‿ **th**a**t**‿ **b**lac**k**‿**d**og

Note: Assimilation can be in two forms:
-Morpheme boundary (within the single morpheme)
      e.g., cats **/s/** & dogs /z/
-Word boundary (within two words)
      e.g., ha**s**‿ **s**een

(Practice & Testing)

<u>Exercise One</u> Transcribe the phrases below showing assimilation cases

Have to
   I have to go
   She has to
Used to
   I used to live there
Supposed to
   You were supposed to leave
Suffixes
Plural: funnels, beams, clothes, glasses, staffs
Verb (3rd person): goes, tries, finishes, asks
Possessive's': Alfred's comment, lice's world, cat's tail

<u>Exercise Two:</u> Identify the different assimilations in the following

Coconut butter	old man	court martial	good boy
Command post	old boy	command module	first class
In camera	town crier	common market	pot plant
Pen pal	cold call	hard court	open prison
Highland cattle	field glasses	red carpet	rose show
Where's she?	Both sexes	dress shop	where's yours?
Space shuttle	fast motion	ground cover	cold cream
Custard pie	cotton belt	fourth summer	pin money
Down payment	white paper	queen mother	private parts
Human capital	had come	put by	old maid
Fifth sense	town clerk	slide guitar	question mark

Exercise Three find examples of assimilation in the following examples of the existing languages you know

English	French	Arabic
She has finished	Sage femme	Ba3ha "بعها" (he sold it)
Big tape	Lourde tempete	Nta3houm "نتاعهم" (it's theirs)
Choose shake	Reve temps	Rijsoun "رجس" (unsanity)
Smooth choice	Grande porte	Ba3atha "بعثتها"(sent it)
Others…….		

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