

THE IMPORTANCE OF MODIFICATIONS OF VOWELS IN CONNECTED SPEECH

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Annotation: This comprehensive article delves into the intricate world of vowel modifications in connected speech, shedding light on the nuanced changes that occur in spoken language. The author adeptly navigates through various phenomena, such as assimilation, vowel reduction, elision, and linking, providing clear examples and explanations for each. Notably, the article emphasizes the dynamic nature of these modifications, highlighting their dependence on context, speech patterns, and regional accents. The incorporation of practical examples, such as phrases and words, aids in illustrating the concepts, making them accessible to both language learners and linguistics enthusiasts. Moreover, the article underscores the significance of understanding vowel modifications in enhancing both comprehension and production of spoken language. Overall, this article serves as an insightful guide, offering valuable insights into the complexities of vowel modifications in connected speech.

Key words: Vowels, Connected Speech, Assimilation, Progressive Assimilation, Regressive Assimilation, Vowel Reduction, Elision, Linking, Pronunciation, Speech Patterns, Context, Fluency, Linguistics, Language Learning, Phonetics

Human perception is a complex process of receiving and processing information. There are several theories and views on the features of speech perception. One of the points of view is that the ability to understand speech is not innate: it develops as we master the world and master the grammar of the language. Many phonetic data were obtained in the process of studying speech produced in a situation very far from natural communication — reading text, isolated words and meaningless combinations — in laboratory, strictly controlled conditions. The resulting pronunciation was called

“canonical” and recorded in dictionaries. Considering the models constructed on the basis of phonetic knowledge obtained in this way as the only acceptable given, phonologists created a gap between description and reality. One cannot but agree with J.J. Ohala that phonology has become a discipline far from phonetics and other empirically oriented disciplines; at the same time, more and more abstract models were created quite freely, the adequacy of which in real speech can be called into question.[1] Models of canonical pronunciation (hereinafter — canonical models) often reflect the phenomena of hyper articulation. Meanwhile, hyper articulation of carefully spoken speech, which is indicated, for example, by R. Smilyanik and A. R. Bradlow [2] far from universally characteristic of natural speech. This means that canonical models are clearly not enough to reflect the important phonetic processes occurring in speech. Turning to spontaneous speech allows you to penetrate much deeper into the structure and organization of oral speech. Spontaneous speech, apparently, will always attract the attention of researchers due to its naturalness, frequency, high degree of variability of the phonetic units. Scientists note a number of differences between the perception of sound and written speech. When reading, you can control the rate of receipt of information, segments the incoming signal, however, a hearing message is richer in that it is accompanied by intonation characteristics. The processes of speech perception from hearing and reading differ in a number of parameters: spatio-temporal distribution (written text is distributed in space, and sound text is distributed in time) and in terms of stability / variability, as well as ease / difficulty of segmentation. Difficulties in perceiving a sounding text can arise not only due to the nature of the different sound of segmented speech (sound-syllable-word), but also at a super-segment level (verbal stress, division into syntagmas, logical and contrast stress). Whereas when interpreting a particular linguistic reality, native speakers are often helped by the context — both linguistic and extra linguistic — foreign students tend to rely on phonetic information. Deviations from the norm of pronunciation, especially at the segment level, interfere with the perception of information for those for whom English is not native. There is no doubt that the fact that in English words are spoken in isolation and in the flow of speech sound differently depending on whether they are pronounced during speech or separately. When a word is pronounced separately, its pronunciation is perfect, and when it sounds in a stream of coherent speech, we get a completely different pronunciation. In speech, not individual sounds are pronounced, but interconnected sound sequences, and the articulation of any sound in the speech stream is influenced by the articulation of neighboring sounds. In a coherent speech there are no pauses that would correspond to

the intervals of written speech. As a rule, pauses in speech are used not between two words following each other, but between groups of words that can be considered a single phonetic word. Some researchers have argued that understanding connected speech processes may be particularly important for the development of listening skills [3] while others see connected speech processes' production as being particularly important for more intelligible pronunciation. [4] Hieke defined connected speech processes as "the changes which conventional word forms undergo due to the temporal and articulatory constraints upon spontaneous, casual speech". [5] Citation form pronunciations occur in isolated words under heavy stress or in sentences delivered in a slow, careful style. By contrast, connected speech forms often undergo a variety of modifications which cannot always be predicted by applying phonological rules. It may be that all languages have some form of connected speech processes, as Pinker claims: "In speech sound waves, one word runs into the next seamlessly; there are no little silences between spoken words the way there are white spaces between written words". [6] We simply hallucinate word boundaries when we reach the edge of a stretch of sound that matches some entry in our mental dictionary. This becomes apparent when we listen to speech in a foreign language: it is impossible to tell where one word ends and the next begins". Though connected speech processes are sometimes thought to be a result of a careless speech, they are completely normal. Highly well-educated speakers tend to make less use of some connected speech processes, however, even in formal situations, such processes are completely acceptable, natural and a very essential part of speech. In this article, we will dwell on the most typical cases of the interaction of sounds in the connected speech, which include the processes of assimilation, reduction, and elision in English and Uzbek languages. Sound modifications are caused by the fact that when connecting phonemes into chains, the speech organs adapt to a quick change of articulations, providing a information. Another modification is vowel coarticulation, which happens when the articulation of a vowel is influenced by the surrounding consonants. This can cause the vowel to sound slightly different from its isolated form. For example, in the word "black," the vowel /æ/ can be influenced by the following /l/ sound, resulting in a slight darkening or backing of the vowel. Assimilation is another process that can modify vowel sounds in connected speech. This occurs when a vowel in a word becomes more like a neighboring vowel because of the influence of the sounds around it. For example, in the phrase "green apple," the vowel in "green" might become more like the vowel in "apple" due to the influence of the following vowel. Overall, modifications of vowels in connected speech are natural and expected, and they contribute to the fluidity and coherence of spoken

language. Native speakers often make these modifications without consciously realizing it, and they are an important aspect of the rhythm and melody of spoken language. There are several types of modifications that can occur to vowels in connected speech:

1. **Vowel Reduction:** Unstressed vowels in words can be reduced in quality, often to a schwa sound (ə) or a centralized vowel sound.

2. **Vowel Coarticulation:** The articulation of a vowel can be influenced by the surrounding consonant sounds, causing the vowel to sound slightly different from its isolated form.

3. **Assimilation:** Vowels can become more like neighboring vowels due to the influence of the sounds around them, resulting in a change in pronunciation.

4. **Elision:** Vowels may be completely omitted or dropped in fast or casual speech, especially in unstressed syllables or when vowels are adjacent in connected speech. These modifications are a natural part of spoken language and contribute to the fluidity and rhythm of connected speech. They are important factors in the pronunciation and perception of spoken language.

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