

Lecture 3

Topic: Modifications
of English Sounds in
Connected Speech

The Plan:

- The Phenomenon of Adaptation
- Modifications of English Consonants in Connected Speech: assimilation, accommodation, elision
- Modifications of English Vowels in Connected Speech: reduction, elision
- Phoneme Alternations. The Concept of Neutralization

The Phenomenon of Adaptation

The process of articulation of a separate phoneme: **retention**

on-glide (excursion) off-glide (recursion)

In the process of speech:

retention retention

on-glide on-glide off-glide off-glide

To make a more convenient transition from one articulation to another the speech organs adjust themselves, they display a certain “economy” of effort > **the phenomenon of adaptation.**

The modifications of phonemes are conditioned :

- by the complementary distribution of the phonemes: e.g., the **fully back /u:/** > **back-advanced** as in *tune* [tju:n], *mute* [mju:t];
- by the contextual variations at the junction of words: **alveolar /n/** > **dental** as in: *in the* [ɪn ðe];
- by the style of speech – official or rapid colloquial: [ɪslait ɪpreʃc] > [ɪslai ɪpreʃc].

Modifications of Consonants : assimilation, accommodation, elision

Assimilation is the chief factor under the influence of which the principal allophones of the phonemes are modified into subsidiary ones.

Types of assimilation:

- affecting the direction:
 - *progressive* – dogs [dɔgz], price [prais];
 - *regressive* – mutton [mʌtn];
 - *double* or *reciprocal* - twice [twaɪs] ;

- affecting the place of articulation: [t], [d], [n], [l] + [θ], [ð]: [in_ðə], [ðæt_θ_i:m]

BUT! *false assimilation*: [s], [z] + [θ], [ð]: [wɒts_ðis], [lets_θ_ɪŋk];

- affecting the position of the lips: [t], [d], [k], [g], [s] + [w]: [kwait], [dwel]

BUT! *false assimilation*: [f], [v] + [w]: [əv wɔ:tə];

- affecting the work of the vocal cords:
voiceless C+S+V => S is partially devoiced:
[plei], [traɪ], [twenti];

Compare: “кот Гриша” [код_гриша] - voicing
VS “take this” [teik_ðis] - no voicing;

■ affecting the manner of voice production:

- **nasal plosion**: plosive + [n, m]: **button**
[bʌtn], **submarine**, **днем**, **обман**;

- **lateral plosion**: plosive + [l]: **candle**,
little, **метла**;

- **fricative plosion**: plosive + [s, z]: **let's**,
Betsy;

- **loss of plosion**: [pp, pb, tt, td, kk, kg,
kt, ktʃ, dg, ddʒ, etc]: **what time**, **big cat**,
went down

When a consonant is modified by an adjacent vowel or vice versa –
accommodation:

- **aspiration** – initial [p, t, k] before stressed vowels: *pit, take, case*;
- **labialization**: *Paul, too, pull*

Elision - one of the neighbouring sounds is not realized in rapid or careless speech : *a box of matches* [ə 'bɒks ə v 'mætʃɪz] => [ə 'bɒks ə 'mætʃɪz];
give me ['gɪv mi] => ['gɪ mi].

Modifications of Vowels: reduction, elision

Reduction is a historical process of weakening, shortening and disappearance of vowel sounds in unstressed positions.

Reduction reflects connection with:

- *the process of lexical and grammatical changes:*

combine _(n) ['kɒmbain] – **combine** _(v) [k ə m'beɪn];

active ['æktɪv] – **activity** [ə k'tɪvɪtɪ]

■ *rhythm and sentence stress :*

Notional words are stressed =>
pronounced with great energy of
breath;

form words are usually unstressed and
reduced:

What do you think you can do? ['wɒt dju
'θɪŋk ju kən ˌdu:].

Types of reduction in English:

- **quantitative**, i.e. shortening of a vowel sound in an unstressed position: *he* [hi:] => [hi]

Compare: *It's* [ɪts] *he who had* [hi: hu h ə d , kʌm] – *When does he* [ˈwen d ə z hi , kʌm] – *come?* [kʌm];

- **qualitative**, i.e. changing both long and short vowels into [ə, ɪ, u]: *can* [kæn] => [k ə n];
- **elision**: *I think he was* [aɪ ˈ θ ɪŋk hi w ə z] => [ʌ ˈ θ ɪŋk ɪ wz]; *here and there* [ˈhi ə r ə nd ˈðɛ ə] => [ˈhɪr ə n ˈðɛ].

Phoneme Alternations. The Concept of Neutralization

Paňov M.V. (The MPhS): *The relation of this or that speech sound to this or that phoneme is stated not by their articulatory and acoustic similarity but by the position of sounds in a morpheme.*

Compare: но[г]а – но[к] – но[ш]ка – но[ж]енька – we deal with the so called **sound alternation** which may be found in similar or the same morphemes.

Sound alternations are found while opposing morphemes: в[ó]ды – в[a]да́

The opposition в[ó]ды – тр[a]ва́ is senseless => the difference between [o] and [a] is connected not with conditions of pronunciation but with the fact that the very morphemes are different.

BUT: the difference between [o] and [a] in в[ó]ды – в[a]да́ is due to their positions in a morpheme – *strong and weak*.

- The Moscow phonological school:
alternating sounds represent one phoneme the status of which is defined by the strong position, i.e. we deal with the phoneme <o> and its positional variant [a].
- The Leningrad phonological school:
[o] and [a] represent two different phonemes because the phoneme is independent of the morpheme.

■ Trubetskoy's conception:

we deal with ***archiphoneme*** <o-a> – weak phoneme – a unity of differentiating features common for both phonemes. Archiphoneme occurs only in ***positions of neutralization***, i.e. positions when the relevant or differentiating features of some phonemes are not realized, i.e. when two usually opposed phonemes stop being the members of this opposition.

E.g. **ТОМ** – **ДОМ** => **<Т>** and **<Д>** are in *opposition* – they perform the sense-distinctive function.

But! прут[**т**] – пруд[**т**]; пруды[**д**] – пруд[**т**] => *the position of neutralization* – the articulatory difference between the sounds is not relevant and two different phonemes are realized by one sound.

in strong position

/i:/ the apple

/e/ pence

/æ/ abstract (n)

/a:/ yard

/ə:/ her

/ʌ/ such

/u:/ to do

in weak position

the day

sixpence

abstract (v)

courtyard

her (name)

such form

Do you...?

[ə]

Torsuyev: [ə] can't be viewed as a separate phoneme, only as a positional variant of any other vowel phonemes.

E.g.: **собака** [с**□**бáка] => **[□]** can never occur in a strong position.

Trubetskoy: a separate term – ***hyperphoneme*** – a weak phoneme that doesn't reveal its differentiatory features because it is incapable to be opposed to other phonemes in strong positions.